

## **Order of the Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Directing Vaccine Providers' Administration of COVID-19 Vaccines**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

This document provides responses to frequently asked questions related to the Order of the Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Directing Vaccine Providers' Administration of COVID-19 Vaccines issued on February 12, 2021.

**Q: Why is this Order necessary?**

A: As there is limited COVID-19 vaccine supply compared to demand, all possible efforts must be made so that the vaccine received in the Commonwealth is quickly and effectively administered.

Implementation of the vaccine priorities, increased administration of vaccine dosages received, and accessibility to scheduling resources, in part, will ensure the effective administration of the COVID-19 vaccine within the Commonwealth and eventually slow the spread of COVID-19 until it is curtailed. This Order encompasses those factors to ensure that those individuals most at risk for getting COVID-19 and having severe illness and death are protected.

**Q: Is anyone excluded from this Order?**

A: Vaccine providers located within the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, which receives its own vaccine allocation, and facilities owned or operated by the federal government, including facilities operated by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, are excluded from this Order.

**Q: When is the effective date of this Order?**

A: The majority of the Order is effective on February 12, 2021. Certain components of the order will go into effect on later dates:

- Requirements for both online- and phone-based registration systems go into effect on February 19, 2021
- Allocation of future vaccine based on compliance with this order will begin on February 22, 2021

**Q: Do I need to be a current patient of a COVID-19 vaccine provider to receive the vaccine from them?**

A: Our goal is to reach every Pennsylvanian who wants a vaccine, regardless of affiliation with a health care provider. COVID-19 vaccine providers should ensure their distribution process allows individuals who are not affiliated with the provider to receive the vaccine. Any subprioritization of vaccine administration must adhere to the guidelines in the [COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan](#).

**Q: How do I know when I'm eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

A: The [Your Turn](#) tool is provided on the Department of Health's website for determining eligibility for receiving a COVID-19 vaccination. If it is "your turn," the tool will direct you on how to find a vaccine provider. Eligibility is based on prioritization recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices which have been implemented in the Commonwealth's [COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan](#). If you plan to get vaccinated in Philadelphia

County, please note that Philadelphia County is a separate vaccine jurisdiction and [has its own information about vaccine distribution](#).

**Q: Where can the COVID-19 vaccine priorities be found?**

A: The federal government, through the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has recommended vaccine priorities, which have been adopted by the Commonwealth. See Pennsylvania's [COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan](#).

**Q: The Order requires that COVID-19 vaccine providers must offer public appointment scheduling services via both online and phone systems. If a provider already has a comprehensive online scheduling service, why do they also have to publish a phone number?**

A: Many Pennsylvanians, including older adults currently eligible for vaccine in Phase 1A, do not have access to reliable internet and may have issues with navigating internet/online systems. We must continue to ensure our vaccine distribution is equitable and provides inclusive opportunities for all Pennsylvanians.

**Q: Some of the COVID-19 vaccine providers may not have the capacity to answer the volume of phone calls for scheduling appointments. Why can't they rely solely on online scheduling?**

A: Vaccine providers must be able to meet the requirement for having both an online and phone system for scheduling appointments. The phone system must have the capacity and capability for scheduling individuals for vaccinations without using an online system.

**Q: Are the reporting requirements any different from the [Order Requiring Reporting of Data Related to Each Administration of an Immunization for COVID-19](#) dated December 15, 2020?**

A: The information relating to vaccine administration required by the December 15<sup>th</sup> Order has not changed, including race and ethnicity of the recipient and whether or not the recipient is connected to the vaccine provider. This February 12<sup>th</sup> Order reinforces those requirements:

- Within 24 hours of receipt of inventory or administration of a vaccine, Vaccine Providers shall access the PA SIIS web application to record receipt of shipments of COVID-19 immunization inventory, to record reduction in inventory levels as vaccines are administered, and to reconcile inventory levels to ensure tracking in compliance with Section 2(A) of this Order.
- Upon the Department's request, an account of how many eligible individuals in each Phase that has been announced have been vaccinated each week.

**Q: Will a COVID-19 vaccine provider be held accountable to the requirements in the Order if there is a snowstorm and they must cancel appointments?**

A: The Department may grant a vaccine provider additional time to meet the provisions in the Order if the vaccine provider informs the Department of Health of inclement weather or infrastructure failures outside of the provider's control which impact vaccine administration.

**Q: What happens if a COVID-19 vaccine provider does not comply with the Order?**

A: It is our collective responsibility to work together to slow the spread of COVID-19 until it is curtailed. Adherence to the Order is part of that responsibility, and the Department expects that vaccine providers will comply. However, those vaccine providers who do not comply with the Order may have their allocation reduced or temporarily suspended for first dosage vaccine; the Order is not intended to stop second doses from being allocated to providers at the prescribed interval.