

Dear Shelter Providers,

Thank you for joining the CDPH / DFSS / All-Chicago webinar last week. We wanted to share more information on the vaccination efforts as it continues to evolve.

We are very excited to share that Phase 1B of COVID-19 vaccinations in Chicago will begin on January 25th! With masks, washing hands, and watching your distance, vaccines are one important part of [getting back to normal](#). Phase 1B vaccinations will include homeless shelter staff and guests, and others living in other congregate, residential settings. Healthcare workers like doctors and nurses have already been vaccinated in Phase 1A. Although Phase 1B vaccinations will begin on January 25th, **most people in Phase 1B will not receive vaccines until February or March**. This is because Chicago does not directly control vaccine supply, but rather receives vaccine from the federal government, and this supply is currently limited and may change from week to week.

We are working hard to schedule vaccine events at your shelter. We aim to vaccinate staff and guests of shelters on-site. The scheduling and staffing of these events is still being determined, but we will be starting with the largest shelters. **You should prepare your staff and guests now by having conversations about COVID-19 vaccines, so that when vaccines come to your shelter, everybody knows about the vaccine and as many people as possible feel comfortable to receive it.** Reach out to your shelter-based service teams to learn more about on-site vaccine education opportunities.

Visit chi.gov/covidvax to find out more about the COVID-19 vaccines. Some Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 vaccines in shelters are also attached.

1. Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes. The available vaccines are very safe and very effective. The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority. No steps are skipped during the clinical trial process. The Food and Drug Administration has reviewed detailed data about the vaccines, and approved them for use. By January 20, 2021, millions of doses have been successfully administered in the USA, including over 100,000 in Chicago alone.

2. Are there side effects to the vaccine?

Like most medicines and vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccines may cause some mild to moderate side-effects that usually resolve within a few days. The most common side effect is pain at the injection site. Other common side effects include fatigue (feeling tired), headache or feeling feverish. While these may be uncomfortable for a few days, these symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.

3. Which vaccine will I be receiving?

Most staff and guests in shelters will receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Data show this vaccine is very effective (94.1% effective) in preventing COVID-19 following two doses. Two doses at least 28 days apart are required for full protection. The Moderna vaccine is administered by injection, usually into the upper arm, and is authorized and recommended for persons 18 years of age and older.

Trials in children are ongoing, but the Moderna vaccine is not approved for children yet and people aged under 18 will not be offered the vaccine in this initial round.

4. When and how will my shelter be receiving the vaccine?

Teams of trained professionals will come on site to your shelter to offer staff and guests the vaccine, free of charge, during scheduled events. Your vaccination team will probably ask you to sit down and be observed for a few minutes after receiving the vaccination. Your team may come from your usual shelter-based service team (SBST) - for example Lawndale Christian Health Center, or Heartland Alliance Health, it could be from a pharmacy such as Walgreens or CVS, or could come from the teams who have been doing COVID-19 testing in shelters from Rush University Medical Center or the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). CDPH is using a range of teams to make sure the vaccine is offered to everyone as quickly as possible.

The vaccination teams will visit the largest, most congregate shelters first, where we have seen the risk of COVID-19 spread is highest. Each shelter will be visited at least twice, as the vaccine requires two doses, four weeks apart. The teams will start in late January, 2021, but reaching all shelters with all the required visits will likely last into March.

5. How can I prepare my guests and staff?

Educating your staff and guests about COVID-19 vaccines in advance of a vaccination visit is critical!

CDPH and your Shelter-Based Services Teams are available to provide on-site education and answer questions from staff and guests. If you have not received any education, or are looking to schedule more, please contact your Lead Coordinating Organization (Heartland Alliance Health: sheltercare@heartlandalliance.org or Lawndale Christian Health Center: sheltercare@lawndale.org).

There are also great resources like posters and flyers on chi.gov/covidvax

6. Who should receive the vaccine?

The vaccine is authorized and recommended for persons 18 years of age and older. All adults in shelters will be offered the vaccine.

There is no upper age limit – older people are more vulnerable to severe disease and should be particularly encouraged to receive the vaccine. All shelter staff and residents aged 18 and over should be offered the vaccine. Shelter staff include staff who work in the building, staff who come into contact with guests, and contractors who are frequently coming into contact with staff and guests in the building – all should be included in the vaccination event and offered the vaccine. People who have already had recovered from COVID-19 and recovered still need to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine or vaccination before, tell your vaccination team. Most people who have had allergic reactions can still receive the vaccine, but your vaccination team needs to know and may observe you for a period of time following vaccination. If you have already received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, tell your vaccination team so they can arrange for the appropriate second dose.

7. Will vaccines be required for entry into a shelter?

No, vaccination is voluntary. It should not be a barrier to shelter.

8. Will there be testing before the vaccine event?

No, clients and staff do not need to be tested before vaccination, but people will be asked if they are feeling unwell. If you feel unwell before vaccination, tell your vaccination team.

9. If a guest or staff person misses the vaccine event, is there another opportunity to get vaccinated?

Yes, we understand that some people may not get the vaccination at the first opportunity and that new people come into shelters all the time. **We encourage you to ensure as many people as possible are present when the vaccination events occur**, but we will continue to offer vaccine free of charge over the coming months. If someone was not vaccinated by the vaccination team and the team are not available to return, inform your shelter-based service team who may be able to help.

10. Some guests leave, or sometimes we get new people from other shelters. How long can people wait between the first and second dose?

The Moderna vaccine requires two doses, at least 28 days apart, to be fully effective. However, if someone misses their second dose, they can still receive the second dose at any time. The vaccination teams will visit your shelter at least twice, at least 28 days apart, to offer both first and second doses.

11. Are other locations – like scattered site organizations (that aren't a congregate or shelter settings but still seeing clients), or drop-in centers and other social services sites that provide on-site care to homeless individuals – included?

Scattered site, or PSH/RRH/TH units, where individuals are not sharing sleeping space will not be prioritized at the same time as congregate homeless shelters. These sites will be prioritized at a later time. We will share more information about the timing of these sites as soon as it is available. Drop-in sites are also not considered congregate living sites, and so vaccination teams will not be visiting drop-in centers at this time.

However, front-line essential workers, including many working at drop-in centers, may be eligible for vaccination through their healthcare provider or a vaccination pop-up site. Visit chi.gov/covidvax to find out more.

12. Are encampment residents and the outreach staff that serve those individuals included?

Yes, encampments and outreach staff are included in Phase 1B. However, the initial focus is on homeless shelters, where we have seen the risk of spread of COVID-19 is highest.

13. My agency has sites that are outside the City of Chicago (e.g. in suburban Cook County). How and when will they receive vaccines?

Sites located outside of Chicago should discuss COVID-19 vaccines with their local public health department. For those in suburban Cook County, the Cook County Department of Public Health has up-to-date information.

For more Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 vaccines, visit chi.gov/covidvax