

Schedule and definitions of priority populations for COVID-19 vaccine

The tables below illustrate the City's priority populations for vaccine distribution. Definitions of the populations appear below the tables. A description of the process for determining this schedule appears at the end of this document.

Phase 1a

<i>High Risk for Exposure and Transmission to Vulnerable Populations (Patient-Facing Healthcare Workers¹)</i>	<i>High Risk of Morbidity/Mortality</i>
Hospital staff	Long-term care facility residents
COVID testing site	
COVID vaccination & lab staff	
Long-term care facility staff	
Emergency medical services	
Home health care	
Prison health services	
Outpatient clinics, FQHCs	
Unaffiliated healthcare providers	
Direct support professionals	

Phase 1b

<i>High Risk for Exposure and Perform Essential Duties</i>	<i>High Risk of Morbidity/Mortality</i>
First responders ²	Persons working in congregate residential settings ⁸
Service providers working with high-risk populations ³	Persons residing in congregate settings ⁸
Public transit	Persons age 75+
Food distribution, prep, or service ⁴	Persons with high-risk medical conditions ⁹
Childcare, Education providers ⁵	
High volume essential retail ⁶	
Manufacturing critical goods ⁷	

Phase 1c

<i>Other Essential Workers but with Lower Risk of Exposure</i>	<i>High Risk of Morbidity/Mortality</i>
Sanitation workers	Persons age 65 – 74 years
Maintenance/janitorial workers	
Utility workers ¹⁰	
Postal and package delivery workers	
Higher education ¹¹	
Finance ¹²	
Transportation ¹³	
Construction	
IT & communications ¹⁵	
Public health	
Legal ¹⁴	

Phase 2

Everyone \geq 16 years of age not previously immunized
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Definitions

¹For purposes of COVID-19 vaccination program planning, we define a Healthcare Worker (HCW) as a person who delivers care or health-related services to patients, as prevention, diagnosis, or treatment, either directly as doctors and nurses or indirectly as aides, helpers, or laboratory technicians, among others. These positions have direct contact with patients, clinical specimens, or interact in the environment of patients. We consider the following positions to be covered under our definition of Healthcare Worker: Physician, Nurse, Nurse Aide, Extended Care Provider (NP, PA), Healthcare Facilities Worker, Healthcare Janitorial Worker, Healthcare Clerical, Security, Support Staff (if in contact with patients), Radiology and Diagnostic Services Staff, Laboratory Staff (including persons who conduct COVID-19 testing), Morgue Employees, Emergency Medical Technicians, Home Health Workers, and health professions students. Direct support professionals are individuals who provide face-to-face services at a care facility or community home for individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism.

²First Responder is defined as an emergency service worker, trained in urgent medical care and other emergency procedures, who is likely to be among the first people to physically arrive at the scene of an emergency. First responders include law enforcement officers, paramedics, EMT's and firefighters.

³Service providers working with high-risk populations refers to personnel who have a legal or regulatory requirement to attend persons in their home or a congregate living facility in accord with a mandate. Home visitation to assure the safety and well-being of a client who lives alone is also included.

⁴Food distribution, prep, or service refers to any worker employed in the collection, distribution, processing, preparation, sales, or service of food to the public. These positions must have frequent direct interaction with the public or be critical to the supply chain for food provision to the public, including trucking and shipping services. Private food delivery services, catering, in-home food businesses are not included.

⁵Childcare provider is defined as any employee of a licensed childcare provider, including childcare centers, group home childcares, and family home childcares. The facility must have a certificate of compliance, or equivalent, to operate as a childcare facility in Pennsylvania. Education provider refers to employees of primary and secondary schools, grades K-12. The individual must have a student-facing role or provide critical services to the operation of the school, including janitorial, food services, engineering, or social support functions. Public, private, charter, and religious-affiliated schools are eligible.

⁶High volume essential retail refers to those commercial retail businesses that serve the public by providing critical goods and materials, such as medications and personal care supplies, home repair supplies, and automotive goods. Eligible employees are those with public-facing duties. This category includes pharmacies, hardware stores, big box stores, gas stations, automotive repair shops, and similar retail. Private retail ventures and employees who do not have direct interaction with the public are not eligible.

⁷Manufacturer of critical goods refers to businesses identified by the federal government as a provider of essential supplies and materials.

⁸Persons working or residing in congregate settings refers to residential living situations where people live or work in proximity and it is difficult to maintain social distancing. These facilities have been associated with many COVID-19 outbreaks and the source of significant morbidity and mortality. This category refers to facilities with more than 20 residents. Facilities covered under this category include prisons, shelters for the homeless, drug and alcohol treatment, psychiatric facilities, rehabilitation, and specialized services housing. Visitors, salespeople, repair workers, and remotely located employees of such facilities are not included.

⁹High-Risk Medical Conditions include only the following: cancer; chronic kidney disease; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies; immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant; obesity (body mass index [BMI] ≥ 30 kg/m² but < 40 kg/m²); severe obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²); sickle cell disease; smoking; types 1 and 2 diabetes mellitus; Down Syndrome; pregnancy.

¹⁰Utility workers refers to personnel required to support society infrastructure, specifically working within an organization supplying the community with electricity, gas, water, or sewerage for the public.

¹¹Higher education refers to universities, post-graduate studies, and certificate programs. Students in healthcare professions who have direct patient contact are eligible for vaccination under Phase 1a.

¹²Finance personnel eligible for vaccination in this phase include personnel who do not work remotely and who perform critical tasks involved in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This may include positions involved in budgeting, procurement, payroll, accounting, and processing for an organization that is substantially contributing to the pandemic response. This includes healthcare institutions, governmental agencies, and essential service providers. Persons employed in public-facing positions in banks, such as tellers and loan officers, are also eligible under this category.

¹³Transportation refers to public-facing employees of agencies that are responsible for large scale movement of residents. This includes airport workers and trains. Public transit is covered under Phase 1b.

¹⁴Legal personnel eligible for vaccine during this phase are those public-facing personnel who enact, enforce, or adjudicate laws and regulations that assure the safety and well-being of the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. This may include the court system, litigators, and public aid workers.

¹⁵IT & communications refers to employees supporting communications systems, information technology, data center operations, client services centers, and applications that support workplace continuity. In addition, this category includes members of the media who provide critical information and education that serves to support the well-being of the community.

Vaccine Advisory Committee: Process for Identification of Priority Populations

In September 2020, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) launched a COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (VAC) that is comprised of a variety of stakeholders representing healthcare, persons experiencing homelessness, persons with access and functional needs, faith-based organizations, the business sector, insurers, and communities that have been disproportionately affected during the pandemic, among others. A list of VAC members is available [here](#).

The VAC has been meeting bi-weekly since September 2020 to address key issues for the planning and implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution program in Philadelphia. A central objective of the VAC is to address health equity issues, so discussions have often focused on developing strategies to build trust in the community, ensure vaccine access, and promote vaccine uptake among populations that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. These discussions are informed by the City's [Coronavirus Interim Racial Equity Plan](#).

One of the core issues addressed by the group has been the identification of priority populations for vaccine distribution. This process began in early fall 2020 with the review of vaccine prioritization guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as several other frameworks for equitable distribution of vaccine published by other organizations. After open discussions during meetings, PDPH issued a risk assessment tool and survey to VAC members.

The survey asked respondents to assess essential worker groups for risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection and risk of transmitting infection to persons at risk of severe morbidity or mortality by assigning numeric scores (1 – Low, 2 – Moderate, 3 – High) for both risk factors for each occupational category. The scores for risk of infection and transmission were summed for an overall risk score ranging from 2 – 6. Scores were then equated to low, moderate and high priority levels for each essential worker category. Rankings based on survey results were reviewed during a VAC meeting, along with several other factors, including local mortality and case rate data for essential worker occupations. An interim prioritization framework was developed based on the input from the VAC.

In December 2020, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) held a meeting and conducted a vote on priority groups for vaccination during Phases 1b and 1c. Several changes were enacted to the earlier guidance, including the removal of persons working and living in congregate settings, such as shelters, and the inclusion of persons age 75+ in Phase 1b. PDPH sought input from the VAC on these updated recommendations in a meeting held on December 30, 2020, and subsequently issued a survey to query VAC members on these updated recommendations. Survey results were then used to inform PDPH's updated COVID-19 vaccine priority recommendations.