

What Providers Need to Know: Phase 1B of COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Who may be vaccinated during Phase 1B?

Vaccinations in Phase 1B began the week of Jan. 19. Governor Mike DeWine announced a tiered system for offering vaccinations to the estimated 2.2 million people who are eligible for the vaccine under this phase. Individuals eligible during Phase 1B include:

- Ohioans age 65 years and older (approximately 1.8 million people).
 - Vaccinations will begin with individuals ages 80 and up, and eligibility will expand in five-year increments.
- Ohioans with severe congenital, developmental, or early onset medical disorders that make them particularly vulnerable.
 - Vaccinations will take place in two phases, starting with those who have a developmental or intellectual disability AND one of the conditions listed below. Eligibility will expand three weeks later to any individuals with one of the conditions below.
 - **Qualifying medical conditions** are cerebral palsy; spina bifida; severe congenital heart disease requiring hospitalization within the past year; severe type 1 diabetes requiring hospitalization within the past year; inherited metabolic disorders, including phenylketonuria; severe neurological disorders, including epilepsy, hydrocephaly, and microcephaly; severe genetic disorders, including Down syndrome, fragile X syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Turner syndrome, and muscular dystrophy; severe lung disease, including asthma requiring hospitalization within the past year and cystic fibrosis; sickle cell anemia; alpha and beta thalassemia; and solid organ transplants.
 - Vaccine recipients must be age 16 or older to be eligible for the Pfizer vaccine, and age 18 or older to be eligible for the Moderna vaccine.
- Teachers and employees in K-12 schools that want to go back, or to remain, educating in-person full time or using a hybrid model by March 1 (approximately 334,000 individuals). This includes teachers, support staff, administrators, food service staff, bus drivers, paid coaches, janitorial staff, and other adults who work in school buildings. Schools were required to submit a notice of intent to participate by Jan. 18.

Phase 1B eligibility timeline

Ohio has established a unified approach to Phase 1B, meaning that all vaccine providers should follow the tentative eligibility timeline below. When a new group begins, vaccinations may not be complete for the previous group. It will take a number of weeks to vaccinate age-eligible populations given the limited doses available. The following start dates are subject to change:

- **The week of Jan. 19:** Ohioans 80 years of age and older.
- **The week of Jan. 25:** Ohioans 75 years of age and older; those with a developmental or intellectual disability AND specific severe congenital or developmental disorders listed above.
- **The week of Feb. 1:** Ohioans 70 years of age and older; employees of K-12 schools with in-person or hybrid education models.
- **The week of Feb. 8:** Ohioans 65 years of age and older.
- **The week of Feb. 15:** Those with specific severe congenital or developmental disorders listed above.

Who will be offering Phase 1B vaccinations?

Local health departments, hospitals, pharmacies, and federally qualified health centers, and additional providers as vaccine supply increases, will administer the vaccines for eligible Phase 1B populations.

- **Ages 65 and older:** Groups defined by age can receive the vaccine from local health departments, hospitals, federally qualified health centers, retail pharmacies, and additional providers as vaccine supply increases.
- **Individuals with Phase 1B eligible disabilities and disorders:** Local boards of developmental disabilities will reach out to individuals who meet eligibility requirements to coordinate vaccinations for the first phase beginning Jan. 25. These boards will work with children's hospitals and some local health departments on scheduling. Only those individuals identified and scheduled by the local developmental disabilities board will be eligible for vaccination beginning Jan. 25. Additional guidance is forthcoming regarding those individuals who will become eligible Feb. 15.
- **K-12 school employees:** School districts will [coordinate with educational service centers and have a vaccination partner](#) to administer the vaccinations to school personnel, primarily in closed clinics for school personnel only.

The Ohio Department of Health's **COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Locations** directory at vaccine.coronavirus.ohio.gov is a new resource that shows providers who have received shipments of COVID-19 vaccines for Phase 1B. Additional providers will be added as more vaccine becomes available.

How to add or update information for online vaccine provider directory

The COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Locations directory is searchable by county and ZIP code.

[Providers should share accurate contact information](#), including phone numbers, administration addresses, and websites specific to COVID-19 vaccines, to assist the public in scheduling appointments. The directory will show all enrolled COVID-19 vaccination providers currently receiving shipments of COVID-19 vaccines for Phase 1B populations throughout Ohio. This information can be submitted by [completing this brief form available here](#). Providers must [log in to OHID](#) to access the Vaccine Provider Locations form. [Detailed instructions for how to add or update information are available in this guide](#).

Who will be offering Phase 1A vaccinations?

As Phase 1B begins, some vaccinations will continue for Phase 1A eligible populations:

- **Local health departments** should continue to vaccinate eligible and interested Phase 1A priority populations including [non-hospital affiliated healthcare workers, congregate care residents and staff, and nursing homes or assisted living facilities not enrolled in the federal long-term care pharmacy program](#) at the same time vaccinations are under way for Phase 1B. Local health departments that continue to vaccinate Phase 1A priority populations will continue to receive vaccine for those populations, and any remaining vaccine can be used to vaccinate eligible Phase 1B populations.
- **Hospitals** are now vaccinating Phase 1B eligible populations, and have completed vaccinating Phase 1A eligible staff except in extremely limited circumstances as outlined in recent [Ohio Hospital Association guidance](#). In Phase 1A, hospitals were responsible for vaccinating their healthcare workers and personnel who are routinely involved with the care of COVID-19 patients or immunocompromised patients. Hospitals will continue to administer second doses when due.
- **Phase 1B enrolled providers** who are contacted by Phase 1A populations, such as hospital healthcare workers or non-hospital healthcare workers, for vaccination should explain that the state's COVID-19 vaccination guidance requires their allocation to be used exclusively for Phase 1B populations. Direct hospital healthcare workers to confirm eligibility with their hospital, and non-hospital affiliated healthcare workers to contact their local health department to confirm eligibility.

Strategies to consider when vaccinating the 1B population

Some Ohioans are at increased risk for exposure to COVID-19 or developing serious complications from COVID-19, including severe illness and death. These vulnerable populations may have preexisting underlying medical conditions or may live or work in settings that elevate their risk. Vaccine providers should consider focused strategies to make vaccine options available to members of these vulnerable populations.

- Eliminate barriers to healthcare access for vulnerable populations. These barriers can include lack of adequate transportation, handicap inaccessible locations, lack of computer literacy or access, and employment that does not offer paid time off for medical appointments. When planning appointments or clinics, vaccine providers should consider strategies to negate potential barriers to access and help ensure vaccine availability for members of vulnerable populations. Examples include offering flexibility in scheduling appointments; advertising clinic information on print materials to display at libraries, grocery stores, or faith-based organizations; partnering with libraries, community centers, or faith-based organizations for clinics; partnering with ethnic media and trusted leaders to share information; offering after-hours or weekend services, mobile vaccination services, or clinics that offer walk-in options.
- Ensure that identification requirements are used to verify name and date of birth, not residence or immigration status.

Read ODH's complete guidance on [Health Equity Considerations for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution](#) for more strategies to eliminate barriers and help ensure equitable access.

How will vaccine allocations be determined?

At this time, vaccine supply is scarce. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) will determine allocations weekly and send notifications on Tuesday or Wednesday each week. Planned allocations are determined based upon factors including each county's share of Phase 1B populations and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [social vulnerability index](#). All counties will receive at least 100 doses. Equitable access and throughput will also be determining factors.

Expectations for vaccine providers

In order to ensure [rapid administration](#) of the vaccine to eligible Ohioans, providers must meet the following expectations:

- **Vaccinations to begin immediately** - Vaccine administration must begin within 24 hours of receipt of a shipment, and all doses should be given within seven days. If you are unable to fulfill this commitment, contact the Ohio Department of Health immediately at 1-844-963-4829 or email COVIDVACCINE@odh.ohio.gov so allocations can be adjusted promptly.
- **Providing vaccine to any eligible Ohioans** - By participating in Ohio's Phase 1B, you must agree to provide vaccine to any eligible patients, and you are not permitted to limit your distribution to existing patients and/or customers.
- **Notifying the public of how to be vaccinated** - Providers need to clearly and publicly state how they will administer the vaccine and make the information easily accessible. Providers should use all possible communication methods, including website and social media, and ensure information is frequently updated. Specifically, please inform eligible recipients:
 - Will appointments be available/required?
 - Location and contact information.
 - Is it a first-come, first-served clinic?
 - Any documentation required at appointment.
 - Hours, including extended hours (evenings and weekends).
- **Vaccinating the vaccinators** - Protecting our healthcare workers is important, and vaccinating the vaccinators is appropriate. Please limit use of allocated vaccine to no more than 5% to vaccinate your staff who are administering vaccine (e.g., five out of 100 doses may be used for vaccinators).
- **Extra doses obtainable from vials** - The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says vaccinators can pull every full dose obtainable from a vial, but excess vaccine from multiple vials should never be combined to create one dose.
 - Pfizer-BioNTech: Vaccinators may withdraw more than five doses from a single five-dose vial (perhaps six or seven doses). Ancillary kits for Pfizer vaccine will provide enough supplies to allow for six doses from each vial.
 - Moderna: Vaccinators may withdraw more than 10 doses from a single 10-dose vial (perhaps 11 doses). Some providers also report, depending on the syringes used, that they are only able to draw up nine doses.
 - Vaccine to discard: These vaccines do not contain preservative. If the amount of vaccine remaining in the vial cannot provide a full dose, the vial and its contents should be discarded.
- **No vaccine should ever be wasted** - If vaccine remains unused, such as at the end of a vaccination clinic, the primary goal should be to provide that vaccine quickly [to eligible vaccine recipients](#). When that is not possible, please administer vaccine to any available individuals who meet the FDA's requirements for that product. Providers should have a plan ready for what to do if extra doses that need to be administered urgently remain after a clinic.
- **Ensure second doses are administered** - All providers are reminded to ensure second doses are administered. A reminder about the appropriate second dose timing:
 - Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine second doses are to be administered three weeks (21 days) following the first dose.
 - Moderna vaccine second doses are to be administered four weeks (28 days) following the first dose.
 - Second doses administered within a grace period of four days before the recommended date for the second dose are still considered valid.
- **Properly store, handle, and administer vaccines** - All providers must be prepared to safely store, handle, and administer the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Ultra-cold storage units are not required. The Pfizer vaccine will be shipped in a specialized thermal container with dry ice to maintain the proper storage conditions. If an ultra-cold freezer is unavailable, the shipping container must be used to store the vaccine.
 - The shipping container may be used for temporary vaccine storage up to 30 days. However, the [shipping container must be replenished with fresh dry ice every five days](#).
 - Once the Pfizer vaccine is removed from the thermal shipping container and thawed, it must be used within five days to prevent spoilage. During this time, thawed vaccine vials cannot be refrozen and must be kept refrigerated at temperatures between 2 and 8 degrees Celsius (35 to 46 degrees Fahrenheit). Once diluted for administration, the vaccine must be kept at temperatures between 2 and 25 degrees Celsius (35 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit), and must be used within six hours from the time of dilution.

The [Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 Provider website](#) is a hub for a variety of resources for vaccine providers. Vaccine providers with questions may call the ODH Provider Call Center at 1-844-9ODHVAX (1-844-963-4829) or email COVIDVACCINE@odh.ohio.gov.

Updated January 21, 2021.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov