



## **Guidance for Medical Examiners, Coroners, and Funeral Workers to Receive COVID-19 Vaccination**

Limited amounts of COVID-19 vaccine will be available during the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination program in New York. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is developing a prioritization and allocation framework based on guidance from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). During this first phase, ACIP recommends that vaccines be provided to critical populations according to three sub-phases:

- Phase 1A: Healthcare personnel (i.e. paid and unpaid personnel working in a healthcare setting), first responders in medical roles such as emergency medical services (EMS) providers, Medical Examiners and Coroners, funeral workers, and persons living in and working in Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCFs)
- Phase 1B: Other essential workers
- Phase 1C: Adults with high-risk medical conditions and people 65 years of age or older not already vaccinated in earlier phases

The total number of healthcare personnel in New York State (including New York City) is estimated at more than two million, spanning a diverse group of settings such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, home care, EMS and funeral workers who work with infectious materials or bodily fluids. Medical Examiners, Coroners, and funeral workers must be prepared to work with local hospitals, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of the City of New York (OCME) or the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) to receive COVID-19 vaccine. It is possible that the initial supply of vaccine may not cover all personnel in these categories. The NYSDOH is directing all included personnel and their organizations to work with the vaccinator designated in the chart below to arrange for vaccination of staff.

### **Prioritization for the Second Week of COVID-19 Vaccination**

For the week of December 21, 2020, hospitals and FQHCs will receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. The following populations are prioritized for vaccination during week two:

- High-risk hospital staff including State operated OMH psychiatric centers
- Emergency medical services personnel
- Medical Examiners and Coroners
- Funeral workers who have direct contact with infectious material and bodily fluids
- Health care or other high-risk direct care essential staff working in LTCFs and long-term, congregate settings overseen by OPWDD, OMH and OASAS, as outlined below
- Persons living in LTCFs and in long term, congregate settings overseen by OPWDD and OMH

Key points include that each hospital, the OCME, or the NYCDOHMH:

- will be notified about how much of the vaccine received will be allocated for staff within that facility;
- will be notified about which additional facilities or agencies will be sending staff or residents to be vaccinated;
- will be required to provide a schedule for vaccine administration to individuals outside their facility beginning December 23, 2020 via a survey provided by the Department of Health;
- will be provided access to the Department’s Countermeasure Disease Management System (CDMS) where the priority populations outside the facility will be scheduled for vaccine in times provided by the hospital or FQHC; and
- may not be able to vaccinate their entire Phase 1A staff from the same shipment. Vaccinators will not be able to move to the next level of prioritization unless and until explicit permission is granted by New York State.

The table below shows where groups will go to get vaccinated.

Vaccine Recipient Group	Who is vaccinating them – NYS	Who is vaccinating them – NYC
All medical examiners and coroners, funeral workers	Hospitals	Hospitals and OCME/NYCDOHMH

**Responsibilities of Medical Examiners, Coroners, and Funeral Workers**

Hospitals, the OCME, and the NYCDOHMH will function as centers at which personnel will be vaccinated. The prioritization process acknowledges that not every vaccination site may receive enough vaccine to vaccinate all Medical Examiners, Coroners or funeral workers in their area at the same time. Key points include:

- Hospitals, the OCME or the NYCDOHMH in the area in which you work will be vaccinating your staff.
- You will be informed about where you can expect to be vaccinated.
- Each vaccinating site may not be able to vaccinate the entire Phase 1A staff from the same shipment. If that happens, plan with your vaccinator to return for vaccine when vaccine is available.
- You will be provided with a schedule of times that are available for your members to be vaccinated.
- You will be provided a link to use CDMS to register for an appointment.

**Identify staff prioritized for vaccine**

All Medical Examiners, Coroners and funeral workers who have contact with infectious material and bodily fluids are prioritized to receive vaccine. This does not include those who work in an office, for example. This includes staff who are paid and unpaid and who have the potential for contact with infectious material and bodily fluids. It also includes employed staff, contractors and volunteers who meet the criteria.

It may not be possible to prioritize staff who meet these criteria, since all Medical Examiners, Coroners and funeral workers likely perform these duties. Therefore, personnel should be prioritized according to age or co-morbidities if known. If there are not enough doses to vaccinate all employees, it might be necessary to randomize staff to receive vaccine. It may be advisable to divide staff into two or three groups to get vaccinated at different times, in order to maintain staffing levels should those vaccinated experience side effects that keep them from working.

### **Plan immediately for the second COVID-19 dose**

Make appointments for staff to receive the second dose 21 or 28 days (depending on which vaccine is used) later, at the time the first dose is administered, if possible. It is important to send frequent reminders about when and where to receive the second dose. All vaccinated staff must be tracked to ensure they get the second matching dose on time. Individuals must receive two doses of the same vaccine (e.g., you must receive two doses of the Pfizer vaccine or two doses of the Moderna vaccine; they are not interchangeable).

### **Proof of Occupation**

Since the vaccine is scarce, it is important to bring proof of working as a Medical Examiner, Coroner, or funeral worker to the vaccination site. This could include an employee ID card, a letter from an employer or affiliated organization, or a pay stub. Alternatively, employers could create a list of staff who are eligible for vaccination with their vaccination partner.

### **Vaccine Safety**

Post vaccination monitoring is an essential part of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is promoting and encouraging all those being vaccinated to participate in V-Safe, a smart-phone based application that will allow those vaccinated to enter their symptoms in the days after vaccination using text messaging. V-Safe also provides reminders for the second dose and telephone follow up for anyone who reports medically significant adverse events. V-Safe materials can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/vsafe>, including a V-Safe information sheet. Please print out the information sheet and ensure that each person vaccinated receives a copy.

### **Equity**

All medical examiners, coroners, and funeral workers who meet criteria for vaccination must be included, regardless of title and should all be eligible for vaccination at the same time, subject to this guidance.

### **Communicating the Plan**

Please be sure to clearly communicate to staff how prioritization will work. Identify those who meet the prioritization criteria and communicate to them your plan for having them receive COVID-19 vaccine. Organizations will need to let their staff know how to schedule an appointment using CDMS for first dose of the

vaccine series. While vaccination information will be submitted to the NYSDOH or the NYCDOHMH by the partnering vaccination providers, all organizations must track uptake among their staff and keep records of staff that decline vaccination.

This guidance is in effect from the date of issuance until it is updated, or additional guidance is issued by NYSDOH. For questions, please contact the New York State Department of Health at [COVID19vaccine@health.ny.gov](mailto:COVID19vaccine@health.ny.gov).