

Weekly LHE Meeting with the DSHS Immunization Program

Questions / Answers

DATE OF FORUM: Nov. 24, 2020

The questions (**in bold**) were collected during the weekly forum.

How will local jurisdictions know who has placed orders in their jurisdiction and will we be notified if their order is being filled?

ANSWER: Local jurisdictions will be given access to the dashboards to oversee activities in their jurisdiction. Only a provider will be notified when they receive an allocation, but the local entities can see doses allocated and shipped at the facility level in the dashboard.

Are the groups that were listed in the priority tiers listed in order of priority?

Will we get a list of those who need physician's signature so we can help reach out?

ANSWER FOR TWO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS: Yes

The provider application does not let you continue unless you enter a data logger and all the corresponding information.

ANSWER: Please reach out to the COVID-19 enrollment helpdesk at 877-835-7750 or COVID19VacEnroll@dshs.texas.gov for assistance with this.

After vaccinating, when is the person immune from COVID? Ex: Flu vaccine usually within 2 weeks. Is this a one-time vaccination?

ANSWER: The effectiveness data released by the vaccine manufacturers are 1-2 weeks post the second-dose of the vaccines. We do not have any further details around immunity. Anticipate ACIP providing additional guidance around this.

Can this information be uploaded from the 2021 TVFC/ASN Annual Enrollment Forms?

ANSWER: No. Because the COVID-19 program is completely separate from the TVFC/ASN Programs, and has a separate provider agreement, information cannot be uploaded from the 2021 TVFC/ASN Annual enrollment form.

Checking to see if there is confirmation if ancillary supplies (needles and syringes) will be included with the shipments of the vaccine? I hear conflicting information on this matter. Finding needles and syringes is very difficult via 'normal' distribution channels.

ANSWER: The ancillary supplies will come in a separate shipment from the CDC's central distribution center and should arrive around the time of the vaccine.

Can the Pfizer vaccine be stored at normal freezer conditions? If so, for how long?

ANSWER: The Pfizer vaccine cannot be stored under regular frozen temperatures based on the information we have at this point.

Is there any guidance to vaccine providers on how to validate people who say they are in phase 1A?

ANSWER: Providers should complete a micro-planning process to determine their internal processes, but there will not be standardized instructions on the steps each provider should take.

Does CDC or DSHS have a recommended data logger brand/model?

ANSWER: DSHS does not recommend a specific brand of data logger, however, there are some capabilities that are recommended by CDC that a data logger have. DSHS is preparing a Data Logger FAQ that will be posted for reference on our COVID-19 website.

Based on the numbers presented in the presentation today, most of this is divided up by Public Health Region, will allocation be based on region or by county?

ANSWER: County

For the phase 1a portion, and if Pfizer is the only vaccine available, how is the state expecting groups that are smaller to reach the 975-dose minimum for a shipment? For example, rural counties Healthcare Worker populations. Should larger metropolitan areas be working on planning to help serve those smaller counties around us, or will this be left up to the regional offices as they function as their health department?

ANSWER: Moderna should be available shortly after the release of Pfizer.

Texas has been listed as a Pfizer pilot site. As a local health department, what can we expect for this? What does this mean for us?

ANSWER: DSHS has been in discussion with Pfizer to understand the storage and handling requirements of their vaccine and has received training around this.

Will providers get a choice to choose which vaccine if there are 2 (or 3) available?

Will providers have a choice in the vaccine they receive? i.e. will providers be able to opt out of the Pfizer vaccine due to storage concerns? This is a question we have received at the LHD level.

ANSWER FOR TWO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS: Providers will order their preferred vaccine once vaccine supply allows. Initially however, providers will be allocated a specific product based on their population size and storage and handling capabilities.

How soon would a provider know when they are getting a vaccine shipment? What's the turnaround time?

ANSWER: A provider will receive an allocation notification which will require them to accept the allocation. Once shipment is initiated, the CDC has stated deliveries will be expedited and arrive within a few days.

How are state departments going to be handled? For example, when planning do we need to include the number of TX DPS officers? Or will these entities (like the capitol complex) be covered within TX DSHS as a provider?

ANSWER: This would be a part of the micro-planning process.

How will vaccines be shipped to provider sites?

ANSWER: Similar to the TVFC/ASN Programs, providers will receive vaccine shipments directly from Merck/McKesson. Only the ultra-cold vaccine presentation will be shipped from the manufacturer to the provider.

Will the ULT storage required vaccine only be sent to facilities with the capable storage (or at least initially)? Or will it also be sent to locations with the dry ice storage expectation?

ANSWER: Facilities can use and will receive the Pfizer vaccine if they would like to use the temporary storage, the thermal shipper to store the vaccine. Please follow the dry ice replenishment schedule if using the thermal shipper.

Is it up to the organization to move from Phase 1A 1st Tier to 2nd Tier or will the state direct us as to which groups are eligible at any given time?

ANSWER: During the allocation process, the provider will be notified for the populations which they should vaccinate.

Can you speak to recommendations on reserving vaccine supply for 2nd dose? Will the state monitor our usage of vaccine and ship at appropriate interval or will we need to reserve enough vaccine to provide 2nd dose?

ANSWER: Facilities do not need to reserve vaccine supply for the 2nd dose. The CDC will hold the reserve for the 2nd dose. Sites need to ensure they are reporting their doses administered within 24 hours.

Hi - can LHDs be given a list of which COVID-19 vax providers in our jurisdiction are not yet "cleared" (no population, no data logger certificate, etc) so we can assist?

ANSWER: Please reach out to the COVID-19 enrollment helpdesk at 877-835-7750 or COVID19VacEnroll@dshs.texas.gov for assistance with this. A link to a list has also been emailed out but please contact us if you need additional information on providers in your jurisdiction.

Have all of the currently listed providers gone through this review process?

ANSWER: DSHS Central Office staff are reviewing each provider listed. All providers will go through the same review process before approved to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

How do we know if an enrollment has been approved or is being held up for some reason?

ANSWER: When DSHS Central Office staff are reviewing and approving provider enrollments, communication is sent via email to the primary contact if there are corrections that need to be made. Likewise, when an enrollment is approved, email confirmation is sent.

Will temperature log be required? If so where can we obtain?

ANSWER: Yes. Immunization staff can help obtain this information.

Do we foresee vaccine deliveries on weekends?

ANSWER: No deliveries on the weekend.

My population on the enrollment is based on my ASN clients, meaning uninsured adults, seen in the previous year. This number is considerably smaller than the number of people in the county who may seek the vaccine from my facility. Will my allocation amounts be based on the population listed on the enrollment and if so can I go back in and update my enrollment to show potential clients in my county who may seek the vaccine from my facility?

ANSWER: Yes. Please reach out to the COVID-19 enrollment helpdesk at 877-835-7750 or COVID19VacEnroll@dshs.texas.gov for assistance with this.

How are informed that our provider application/registration has been approved?

ANSWER: When DSHS Central Office staff are reviewing and approving provider enrollments, communication is sent via email to the primary contact if there are corrections that need to be made. Likewise, when an enrollment is approved, email confirmation is sent.

Are allocations made in quantities that can be administered in one week or will we receive larger quantities?

ANSWER: Initially, multiple factors can/will be incorporated into the allocations. This includes facility type, storage capacity, storage capability, and populations served. Vaccination throughput is obtained during the registration process and will be incorporated later.

Does CDC recommend that EMS/healthcare workers, that have already tested positive for COVID 19, be in the first phase to get the vaccine?

ANSWER: EMS/healthcare workers are recommended to be vaccinated in the first phase. There is no guidance previous positive test.

If we are primarily pediatrics ambulatory practices, will our practices not be accepted prior to the adult offices.

ANSWER: The current vaccines are not recommended for children. However, your staff fall in Phase 1A and can be vaccinated as healthcare workers.

Will both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines be reviewed for EUA by FDA on December 10?

ANSWER: At this point, only Pfizer vaccine is scheduled to be reviewed by the FDA advisory committee on Dec. 10.

How will COVID providers learn the detailed information about the storage & handling of the different vaccines? Are they being invited to these calls?

ANSWER: We will be holding a training session for providers.

We are waiting on calibration of our data loggers, and have been told this is holding up our application. However, we just heard that temp tracking is not mandatory. How can we resolve this so our application can be approved?

ANSWER: For clarification, data loggers, along with their certificates of calibration, are required for all units that will hold COVID-19 vaccine. Trish Stowe, in her presentation for the statewide call, mentioned that the temperature recording forms that are used for TVFC/ASN Program vaccines, while a great best practice for temperature monitoring, are not required for COVID-19 Program providers.

We service many patients who live in New Mexico. Should these patients be included in the client population numbers or will they be unable to administer vaccine to out of state residents?

We serve a large amount of New Mexico patients, are we able to give them vaccines or is it just for Texas residence?

ANSWER FOR TWO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS: Vaccine allocations by the CDC will be made to each state based upon that state's population. A provider can vaccinate the eligible population that they see fit.

What do we do if the pre-filled information is incorrect? Do we need to renew our site agreement in ImmTrac?

ANSWER: Please reach out to the Immtrac2 helpdesk at (800) 252-9152 or ImmTrac2@dshs.texas.gov for assistance with this.

What if when we applied we didn't have an ultra low cold freezer but we have acquired one now, how do we get that new information to you?

We recently ordered an Ultra Cold Freezer and data logger this week with an expected arrival date of mid-January. Do we have to wait until these units are in our possession before adding the pertinent information on our application?

ANSWER FOR TWO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS: Please reach out to the COVID-19 enrollment helpdesk at 877-835-7750 or COVID19VacEnroll@dshs.texas.gov for assistance with this.

Our county recently appointed a Local Health Authority and our plan is to vaccinate county residents from his office in the County Operations Center/EMS Building. Since there is no previously establish clinic and patient population, do we use the patient profile demographics of the county as our Patient Database?

ANSWER: It is doubtful one facility would vaccinate the entire county population. Rather, a realistic figure of expectations should be utilized. Perhaps you can estimate a percentage of the county population you expect to vaccinate?

Are you recommending flu vaccines with COVID-19? Many providers enrolled for COVID-19 have not enrolled in the adult flu vaccine program?

ANSWER: Adult flu vaccine providers may enroll to be COVID-19 vaccine providers. ACIP will be providing guidance on co-administration of flu vaccine with COVID-19 vaccine.

What is the minimum storage capacity required for Moderna vaccine?

ANSWER: Moderna vaccine is stored at frozen temperatures; doses will be shipped at a minimum order of 100 doses in 10 dose MDV.

Could the school nurses be included in the staff of their supervising physician's clinic staff?

How will the school nurses receive the vaccination?

ANSWER FOR TWO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS: School nurses will be included within the vaccination phases. They can receive their vaccinations at any site which is conducting an open POD.

Do you require a Biomedical Certification on the refrigerators?

ANSWER: No. Data loggers used to monitor refrigerators should have certifications that indicate that they have met International Organization for Standardization/International Electronic Commission (ISO/IEC) 17025 standards.

How will home health workers be accommodated when shipments are going only to large hospitals?

Home health care would be challenged to use 975 doses so they are not inclined to place an order. Will HHSC require initial recipients to share?

ANSWER FOR TWO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS: Home health workers will be included within the vaccination phases. They can receive their vaccinations at any site which is conducting an open POD. Vaccine will not only be sent to large hospitals. They will receive the very first shipments but allocation will quickly move to all other provider types that attested during enrollment they serve healthcare workers as part of their populations. This could include medical offices, occupational health clinics or pharmacies.

Is this guidance or a requirement? What if a hospital or a community wanted to prioritize differently?

ANSWER: Part of the provider agreement that all COVID-19 vaccine providers sign: Organization must administer COVID-19 Vaccine in accordance with all requirements and recommendations of CDC and CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). These recommendations form the basis of all state allocation recommendations but may be more specific based on Texas vaccine supply at the time.

We will be notified when we are approved?

ANSWER: Yes, when DSHS Central Office staff are reviewing and approving provider enrollments, communication is sent via email to the primary contact if there are corrections that need to be made. Likewise, when an enrollment is approved, email confirmation is sent.