

Ensuring Equity in COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution: Engaging Federally Qualified Health Centers

To ensure our nation's underserved communities and those populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19 are equitably vaccinated against COVID-19, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are launching a program to directly allocate a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine to select HRSA-funded health centers starting the week of February 15.

This will be an incremental effort as more vaccine becomes available and will be carried out in coordination with the jurisdictions and health centers. This program complements existing jurisdictional efforts to ensure equitable and effective access by providing an additional vaccine supply directly to targeted HRSA-funded health centers that specialize in caring for disproportionately affected populations.

HRSA-funded health centers are community-based and patient-directed organizations that deliver affordable, accessible, quality, and cost-effective primary health care to medically underserved communities and disproportionately affected populations, including high-need urban, rural, and frontier communities across the United States.

Nationwide, nearly 1,400 HRSA-funded health centers operate approximately 13,000 sites, providing primary and preventive care on a sliding fee scale to nearly 30 million patients each year. Over 91% of health center patients are individuals or families living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and nearly 63% are racial/ethnic minorities. Health centers across the nation are playing vital roles in supporting local community responses to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Initial Health Center Selections

The program will begin incrementally at select HRSA-funded health centers that specialize in caring for particularly hard-to-reach and disproportionately affected populations. Health centers will continue to follow state priority guidelines in administering the vaccine and be required to store, handle, and administer vaccine according to stated requirements, and meet necessary reporting requirements.

Initial health centers chosen for this program include those that serve a large volume of one of the following disproportionately affected populations:

- Public housing residents,
- Migrant/seasonal agricultural workers,
- People with limited English proficiency
- People experiencing homelessness

Vaccine supply will be in addition to jurisdictional supply

The allocation provided for this program is separate from jurisdictions' weekly allocations. Like other programs recently announced, the federal government is providing vaccines to health centers as a way to increase access to vaccines for health centers serving the nation's underserved communities and disproportionately affected populations. HRSA and CDC will analyze vaccine allocation, distribution, and uptake data to assess onboarding of additional health centers and to inform future vaccine allocation efforts.

This separate federal allocation will be deployed in coordination with jurisdictions.

Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program - FAQ

Q: What are the goals of this program?

The Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program complements existing jurisdictional efforts to rapidly increase vaccinations and ensure equitable and effective access by providing an additional COVID-19 vaccine supply directly to targeted HRSA-funded health centers that specialize in caring for disproportionately affected populations. This effort will be carried out in coordination with health centers and jurisdictions. The program is designed to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccine for our nation's underserved communities and disproportionately affected populations.

[This is consistent with the Administration's National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness and through collaborative efforts of the Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\).](#)

Q: How were the Health Centers chosen for the Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program?

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The program will begin incrementally at select HRSA-funded Health Centers that specialize in caring for hard-to-reach and disproportionately affected populations. Health Centers will continue to follow state priority guidelines in administering the vaccine and be required to store, handle and administer vaccine according to the stated requirements and meet necessary reporting requirements. Initial health centers chosen for this program include those that serve a large volume of one of the following disproportionately affected populations:

- Public housing residents
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Q: Will the Health Centers receive a direct federal allocation of vaccines (separate from the state allocation) or will there be a supplement to the existing state allocation of vaccines?

The allocation provided for this program is **separate** from jurisdictions' weekly allocations. This program is designed to reach select Health Centers uniquely positioned to target hard-to-reach and disproportionately affected populations. Initially, Health Centers will vaccinate according to state priority groups. As the program expands, HRSA and CDC, in coordination with the jurisdictions, will analyze vaccine allocation, distribution, and uptake data. These data will inform future vaccine allocations to Health Centers in the program and to assess the extent and nature of the need for onboarding additional Health Centers. This separate federal allocation will be deployed in coordination with jurisdictions and the number of Health Centers participating will increase over time.

Allocations provided through this program are in addition to any decisions made by jurisdictions to provide COVID-19 vaccine to these Health Centers. Health Centers and jurisdictions should continue to work together to allow for any state allocations provided to Health Centers to be used to help advance jurisdictional equity goals.

Q: How much product will the selected Health Centers receive? How much product will the individual service sites receive?

The program will take an incremental approach in enhancing equitable vaccine access for hard-to-reach, disproportionately affected populations through Health Centers that currently serve large numbers of people from these populations. HRSA will work closely with Health Centers to determine the quantity of doses that will be provided to health center sites.

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HRSA will serve as the network administrator and manage vaccine allocations for Health Centers, working with health centers to determine how many doses will be provided to each Health Center/site in collaboration with jurisdictions. As vaccine supply increases, adjustments will be made based on vaccine supply and Health Centers' ability to manage vaccine provided.

Q: When will Health Centers receive vaccine doses?

Beginning the week of February 15, 2021 Health Centers can place weekly orders for vaccine. Vaccine shipments are generally delivered to shipment sites within several days of order receipt.

Q: If my Health Center was selected to participate in this program, will staff members who have not been vaccinated be able to receive a dose through this program?

Yes, Health Center staff that serve these hard-to-reach and disproportionately affected populations that have not received a vaccine may be able to receive a dose from the vaccine allocation provided through this program.

Q: Will Health Centers vaccinate their patient population in accordance to vaccine priority groups determined by states?

Health Centers should follow state guidelines for vaccination administration, including which populations to prioritize.

Q: Where can I find more information on this program?

[More information can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/health-center-program.html.](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/health-center-program.html)