

FAQs for Pennsylvania's Provider Network: COVID-19 Vaccine

From daily "PA COVID-19 Provider Allocation Discussion" WebEx calls between 2/22 - 2/24

Note: Daily calls are not currently being recorded

2nd dose challenge and impact on providers

- **What is the current 2nd dose challenge the state is facing?**
 - Currently, vaccine demand for first and second doses outweighs our share of federal vaccine supply. In fact, demand for second doses alone nearly outweighs our entire 1st AND 2nd dose supply
 - To meet urgent supply-demand gaps, our new allocation strategy smooths 2nd dose demand over ~3 weeks, spreading out demand while we wait for additional inventory
 - Practically speaking, what this means is that we reduce allocations this week by up to 50% of requests and expect to similarly reduce allocations (by a lesser %) for the next few weeks
 - As part of this smoothing strategy, when you receive a notification regarding your 2nd dose allocations later this week, this will include approximately 50% of February 16 requests and 30% of February 9 week's requests
 - We are using previous 1st dose allocation and administration data to determine an accurate number of 2nd doses to ship every week, understanding that some 2nd doses were mistakenly used as 1st doses in the past
 - At the state level, we are also re-allocating some percentage of first doses as second doses, to minimize 2nd dose disruption and prevent a back-log from being created. This re-allocation should be transparent to you, and those of you receiving vaccine will receive designated 1st and 2nd doses
 - You should have received an email Monday notifying you of 1st dose allocation to be delivered and administered this week, and another email yesterday notifying you of 2nd dose allocations that you should receive this week and administer next week
 - Our goal remains getting the extremely limited supply of vaccine to people as quickly and efficiently and equitably as possible
- **Why aren't we using all 1st doses as 2nd doses if we are facing a 2nd dose shortage?**
 - Our goal is to protect as many Pennsylvanians as we can, while getting everyone fully vaccinated – across all counties and communities. Partial immunization, although not ideal, offers a significant degree of protection. We must make tradeoffs between halting new immunizations and getting those with partial immunity fully vaccinated, and we have decided to pursue a strategy (which we are referring to as "smoothing") that meets both goals. While we understand it is

complicated and frustrating, we are endeavoring to remain equitable and find a solution that can help providers and patients across the board.

- **So how does the smoothing strategy affect providers?**
 - The impact this has on you is that we are requesting providers to adjust the timing of second dose administration, pushing some 2nd dose appointments out 1-2 additional weeks
 - Doing so will “do no harm” by keeping administrations in line with CDC-recommended timeframe of administering second doses. We encourage providers to visit the CDC website for more information, and to continue to communicate this information to their patients
- **How should I reschedule appointments for second doses that were not fulfilled and that I have to re-request?**
 - If you are re-requesting doses, be aware that these timelines: fulfilled 1st dose request can be administered 1 week after the survey has closed; fulfilled 2nd dose requests can be administered two weeks after the survey was closed
 - So, if you were alerted that your 2nd dose request was not fulfilled, reschedule the appointments at least two weeks out – ensuring that you are still within CDC-recommended timelines for each patient
- **Can you guarantee us doses to cover all patients within the 42-day CDC window?**
 - We will endeavor to provide 2nd doses for all Pennsylvanians who require them within the proven 42 day window, and through the same provider who administered their 1st dose.
 - In forthcoming 2nd dose allocation notifications, you will be told how many additional 2nd doses you are to receive next week, in order to help you more adequately plan your appointments
- **What happens if a patient exceeds the 42 day CDC recommended timeline?**
 - The CDC’s recommended timeline is based on testing that they have done to date. There is NO, repeat NO so-called “cliff” at 42 days. Patients may STILL RECEIVE a 2nd dose after 42 days. This is not best practice, however, so we are striving to keep all 2nd doses within that timeframe
 - We encourage all providers to help us keep all 2nd dose administrations within this timeline, and to reach out to our resource account with urgent concerns regarding your ability to do so. We will work closely with our allocations team to make sure your patients are getting the coverage they need

Requesting doses via weekly survey

- **When should we submit the survey for our 2nd doses?**
 - Under our smoothing strategy, we are asking providers to push out their 2nd dose appointments 1-2 weeks to support us in distributing 2nd doses equitably across the state
 - While we work through this 2nd dose issue, please continue to submit your request for 2nd doses up to 2-3 weeks after 1st dose administration and schedule appointments according to the notification email you receive
 - The vaccine request survey opens on Thursday and will remain open until Tuesday at noon – this represents no change to the current ordering method for COVID vaccine.
 - Do not place requests in PA-SIIS; they will be deleted
- **Can we re-submit the weekly survey?**
 - No – you must submit denied requests in next week’s survey. If this pushes you beyond an acceptable timeline, please reach out to us directly with the phrase falling out of 42 day window in the email header, so that we may prioritize these requests
- **Should we re-order 2nd doses that were not delivered to us due to the new smoothing strategy?**
 - Yes – please place your full order every week, including backlog from the smoothing strategy
 - We are tracking your backlog but are using this as a sense check on our allocations. For the next few weeks, these allocations are based on a combination of your previous doses administered and allocated – to make sure we are accounting for providers who accidentally used 2nd doses as 1st doses
 - We will make sure you receive the outstanding vaccines you were not delivered previously
 - In the future 2nd dose requests will be used as a check; allocation decisions will be based on 1st doses allocated

DOH notification letter

- **When will we be notified about approval/denial of 2nd doses for the requested week?**
 - Notifications for last week’s survey went out February 22nd for 1st doses and February 24rd for 2nd doses from RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov
 - Going forward, if you are an officially registered provider who requested doses through our survey, you should receive an email from RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov by

approximately the end of the week that the survey closes/beginning of the next week

- Once your order has been placed in PA-SIIS by us, you can check PA SIIS to find more information on approved orders including the quantity and brand of vaccine ordered for your site
- If you have not received an Order Notification/Rejection Letter from us, please reach out to RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov
- **I am not receiving these notifications for any of my requests! What should I do?**
 - If you have not received an Order Fulfilled/Unfulfilled Letter from us, please first check that our communications are not being filtered into your spam, and then reach out to RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov immediately. Please include the phrase not receiving notification emails in the email header, so that we can prioritize these.
- **If I receive an unfulfilled/rejection letter for vaccines, is this for first or second doses?**
 - If you receive an “unfulfilled” notification for vaccines, this will state if it is for 1st or 2nd doses – two separate letters will be sent out
- **Can you get weekly allocation letters out sooner?**
 - We understand and sympathize that these past several weeks have involved many changes and frustrations on the part of our providers, including the lack of transparency into a weekly schedule for each step in the process – including when you should expect notifications from us
 - We had to delay recent notifications on fulfillment regarding survey requests in the survey closing on February 23rd due to continued concerns over 2nd dose allocations
 - We will endeavor to get all 1st dose fulfillment letter out by around the Friday of the week the survey closes, and 2nd dose fulfillment on the Tuesday ONE WEEK AFTER the survey closed

Order delivery and administration

- **Relative to when I submitted the survey, when can I expect to receive my vaccines?**
 - You should expect to receive vaccine the week after your request. Plan to administer first doses the following week.
 - 2nd doses will arrive later in the week and should be administered two weeks after you submit a request via the weekly survey
 - This means that for the vaccine requests you entered between Friday and Tuesday February 23rd, you can expect to receive fulfilled requests next week. 1st doses

should be administered next week (starting 1 March), and 2nd doses the week following (starting 8 March)

- Vaccines will not be delivered on the weekend. Please monitor PA-SIIS for shipment updates
- **How has the weather impacted deliveries?**
 - Providers should expect to receive both fulfilled requests from last week and this week over the next few days, weather permitting. Please monitor your inbox for communication from the manufacturers, as well as PA-SIIS for updates
 - Exact timing for postponed last week's deliveries depends on the weather and how fast McKesson and Pfizer can ship vaccine. We will update you as we receive information from them.
- **How will we receive shipment notifications?**
 - Please monitor your email for notification from providers, as well as PA-SIIS for shipping updates
 - If you have questions about shipping, contact us via phone or email to the resource account. Please do not contact McKesson or Pfizer directly
- **How should I know if the shipment will deliver 1st or 2nd doses?**
 - The notification letters you receive from us will stipulate how many 1st doses vs 2nd doses you will be receiving, per vaccine type
 - Please adhere to these numbers when you administer this week and the following
- **How can we meet the Governor's order of 80% throughput if we have not received 100% of requested 1st dose vaccines?**
 - The February 12th order refers to vaccines received- thus, please administer 80% of all 1st dose vaccines received within the week
- **If we did not receive a notification and did not receive orders, should we re-request?**
 - Yes- please re-request any orders that were not fulfilled according to the notification letters that you received

"Bonus" doses

- **What should I do with "bonus" doses in a second dose vial, if I have been instructed to not use them as first doses? Should I really waste them?**
 - Given the supply-demand gap we have described previously and ensuing allocation cuts, there is no such thing as "bonus doses." All doses will have to be used to compensate for reduced allocations by providers (by up to 50%) over the next 3 weeks!
 - We urge you to not use 2nd doses as 1st doses in any circumstance

- Given our recent smoothing strategy, any additional 2nd doses will have to be used to make up for reduced second dose allocation
- Moreover, since 1st dose vials now contain additional doses, you will require these 2nd doses to meet your patients' requirements
- **If we have remaining 1st & 2nd doses from "bonus" doses can these be combined and redistributed in equal amounts as first and second doses?**
 - No, as per CDC guidelines residual doses cannot be combined.

2nd doses used as 1st doses

- **How are you accounting for accidentally using 2nd doses as 1st doses when determining 2nd dose allocation?**
 - Today, if a provider was allocated 100 1st doses but mistakenly administered 300 doses, we will allocate 300 2nd doses to them over the next 2-3 weeks, to guarantee that their patients are covered
 - However, in the future - once the entire provider network is adjusted to the new doses/vial ratio - allocations for 2nd doses will be capped at 1st dose allocations. This is to ensure that providers abide by designated 1st and 2nd doses; providers must ensure that they are not accidentally using 2nd doses as 1st doses
 - So, in 2 weeks, if a provider requests 300 2nd doses but we see that they were previously allocated 100 1st doses, we will only allocate 100 2nd doses - irrespective of administration
 - Our logic here is that going forward, every provider should get the same number of extra doses from 1st dose vials, they should also from 2nd dose vials.
 - Additionally, the State only gets a set number of 2nd doses from the federal government equal to our 1st doses. If we give a provider another tray to cover those bonus 10 1st doses, we are effectively taking that tray from another provider.
 - The state cannot supply extra trays to cover that difference to every provider

PA-SIIS

- **We have two different numbers, a PIN # and a clinic_id#. Which one do we use?**
 - The Clinic_id is the identifier used in SIIS
 - Your PIN is linked to Tiberius and is specifically for COVID
 - We ONLY want to use the PIN for COVID-19 vaccine distribution
- **Who should we contact to receive or confirm our PIN number?**
 - You can look up your PIN # in PA-SIIS on the clinic page
- **Where in PA-SIIS can we check the status of a vaccine order?**

- Your vaccine coordinate can access your inventory from the Inventory button in the left toolbar. Then select the Order button. You may view orders in various statuses by changing the status dropdown option

Use of 1st vs 2nd doses

- **I have 300 doses arriving today designated as 1st doses; however, I have a backlog of over 1200 booster doses due now and I have patients scheduled this week. Can I use 1st doses to reduce our backlog of booster doses? Why would I not using 1st doses to backfill 2nd doses?**
 - Current DOH guidelines are to use stipulated 1st doses (as indicated in order notification letters) as 1st doses and 2nd doses as 2nd doses. As you know, adhering to our directives will help us move closer towards increasing Pennsylvania's immunity rate and getting more vaccines into arms.
 - That being said, we trust our providers to know their patients and their administration capacity best. You are ultimately responsible for managing schedules and administering vaccines to best meet your patients' and the community's needs.
 - In the future, please schedule appointments by taking into account predicted supply shortages and the option of pushing 2nd dose appointments 1-2 weeks out, per CDC guidelines. Additionally, please maintain administration and inventory data on PA-SIIS current and complete
 - Finally, we urge you to NOT use 2nd doses as 1st doses!
- **We were supposed to receive 1st doses last week, but they were delayed due to weather. Should the vaccines from last week be used for this week's 2nd doses?**
 - Please adhere to the guidelines included in your confirmation/notification letter for administration of your doses, to the best of your ability
 - If you received confirmation of 1st doses last week but the shipment did not arrive, please utilize them for re-scheduled 1st doses this week

Provider network

- **If we have the capacity to administer more vaccines than we are being allocated, what can we do to ensure more of our requests are met and we can serve more patients?**
 - Our entire provider network is being affected by supply shortages
 - As we re-think our network for the future, we will certainly be taking into account individual provider capacity
 - You may have heard that changes to the network will disproportionately affect certain types of small providers in particular

- We will strive to maintain equity in our health system. To define our network in the future we will look at throughput and performance while also trying to ensure our smaller counties without large systems are still taken care of. Over the next couple of weeks we will continue to communicate changes to the provider network as they are confirmed. We recognize our small providers are crucial in helping us reach all Pennsylvanians, and appreciate your patience as we determine the best way to work with our providers to distribute vaccine.
- Please provide timely responses to any request for information from the DOH to better help inform these decisions over the coming weeks – such as the one-time survey that many of you completed last Friday
- **How will providers know if we will be included in the provider reduction?**
 - We will be providing more information regarding our “network of the future” over the next couple of days. Please continue to monitor all communication for DOH for updates on this
- **Why is the distribution so unequal across counties?**
 - We continue to allocate at a county level based on population, population over 65, COVID cases and COVID deaths. We want all populations in Pennsylvania to receive the right level of care during this difficult time
 - There will continue to be fluctuations to county-level allocations as our total provider network shifts and all we are ensuring all counties get their fair share of vaccine
- **I am a small practice. I have heard from unofficial sources that individual physician offices will no longer be sent any vaccines, just pharmacies and hospitals. Is this true?**
 - No. Please continue to only refer to official DOH sources to receive updates on changes to the provider network
- **It was announced last Friday that all PCPs not affiliated with a hospital or large system were being eliminated. Is this permanent or just short term?**
 - This has not been announced. We are planning to adjust our overall network, but are not planning to eliminate all PCPs.
- **If I do not get any 1st doses, does that mean I will no longer get any in the future?**
 - No! We have not communicated nor finalized any adjustments to our network, and will be sure to communicate these to you all as soon as we have. Our current allocation decisions are based on previous allocation and administration data, as well as additional factors to guarantee equity across our network

Additional questions

- **How can we meet the Governor's order of 80% throughput if we have not received 100% of requested 1st dose vaccines?**
 - The February 12th order refers to vaccines received- thus, please administer 80% of all 1st dose vaccines received within the week
- **What happens if I have doses on hand for more than 7 days?**
 - At a minimum, vaccine providers must administer 80 percent of their 1st doses of vaccine received within seven days of receipt of those doses
 - Please refer to the <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/> for further storage guidelines for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines
- **What is the implication of Pfizer's recent research submitted to the FDA last week?**
 - There has been no change to guidance surrounding the use of Pfizer vaccines. This may change in the future, but currently should not affect any provider plans.
- **Are we not allowed to schedule 2nd doses at the time of the first doses as previously required?**
 - You can still schedule these right after 1st dose administration, but to help us meet our new smoothing strategy, we ask that you schedule them for 5-6 weeks after 1st dose administration, in keeping with CDC guidelines
- **What should we do if we have additional 2nd doses and no second dose appointments?**
 - You can follow CDC guidelines for storage of these 2nd doses to meet the needs of your partially immunized patients, or follow state redistribution guidelines to get them to where they are needed.
 - If you anticipate receiving 2nd doses but have no patients in need of them, please contact us through the RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov account.
- **Can you provide any information on how the CDC supplemental COVID 19 vaccine redistribution agreement works? We are a rural area that is struggling to get vaccine supply and would like to work with larger entities to get supply that is desperately needed?**
 - All redistribution must occur through authorized channels; you can find additional information on how to apply on our website. It is critical for us to be able to track this information to minimize risk of transferring vaccines inappropriately, and to have as much visibility as possible into our providers' inventory to make informed allocation decisions. We encourage you to reach out with any additional questions regarding the process to apply for redistribution
- **Can we use remaining lots of 1st dose vaccines, or should we first use the doses we have just received?**

- You may use remaining lots, to help ensure that vaccines do not exceed their shelf-life in storage
- **Why are you also delaying allocation of Pfizer 2nd doses?**
 - Our smoothing strategy currently applies to Moderna 2nd doses only. However, some providers have been ordering Pfizer 2nd doses a week early. We are delaying allocation until the correct week.
- **Do you anticipate the same 2nd dose shortage for Pfizer?**
 - We do not expect a similar shortage at this time.
- **Is there an appeal process for second dose allocations?**
 - Currently there is no appeal process. However, if you are facing an urgent issue – such as facing patients falling out of the tested 42 day window – please reach out to our resource account and include the phrase falling out of 42 day window in the email header, so that we may prioritize these requests
- **If we recently got a super freezer, how can I get approval to order Pfizer?**
 - Please reach out to our resource account to let us know that this is the case with the phrase Pfizer storage capacity in the header, so that our PA-SIIS team can make sure you are getting approved to order these vaccines as soon as possible
- **Do you have any updates on J&J?**
 - J&J is still in the process of being approved in the US and we do not have a confirmed distribution timeline yet. We will continue to provide updates on the JJ vaccine in the coming weeks
- **Who is on the DOH task force? Do you have representation from all stakeholders including pharmacies, FQHCs, hospitals, PCPs, etc.?**
 - The Legislative Taskforce is a joint task force between the Governor’s office and the legislature with members from each legislative caucus, working together to help drive the agenda and conversation around key vaccine issues
 - As you may recall, the DOH had a Vaccine Task Force that held regular meetings with 50+ participants from across various stakeholder groups (e.g., FQHC, Pharmacies, Providers). We have since pivoted to smaller individual meetings with our key stakeholder partner groups