

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

From daily "PA COVID-19 Provider Allocation Discussion" WebEx calls between 2/24 - 2/26

Note: Daily calls are not currently being recorded

Recap of 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.
 - 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 approximately 50% of needed 2nd doses and expect to similarly reduce allocations (by a lesser %) for the next few weeks
 - To determine doses needed, we are using previous 1st dose allocation and administration data to determine an accurate number of 2nd doses to ship every week. We are using your 2nd dose request as a sense check, and you are not guaranteed a percentage of those requests.
 - You should have received an email Monday Feb 22 notifying you of 1st dose allocation to be delivered and administered the week of Feb 22, and another email on February 24th notifying you of 2nd dose allocations that you should receive the week of Feb 22 and administer the week of 1 March.
 - The notification you received on 24 February regarding your 2nd dose allocations should have included approximately 50% of needed doses from the February 16th survey, and 30% of needed doses from the February 9th survey. This will not be the case for every single provider, as we are also considering historical allocation and administration data when making allocation decisions! For this reason, we ask that you prioritize all information requests that come in from DOH, and ensure that the data you provide is as accurate as possible
 - 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. We must make tradeoffs between halting new immunizations and getting those who have received their first dose 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 keep administrations within CDC's 42-day 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 of 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

Requesting doses via weekly survey

- **When should we submit the survey for our 2nd doses?**
 - Under our smoothing strategy, we are asking providers to be prepared 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 week of Feb 22, the vaccine request survey will open today - on Friday - and will remain open until Tuesday at noon
- **Should I or should I not re-request vaccines / re-submit our allocation information if I did not receive 2nd doses and have to re-schedule appointments?**
 - If you receive a notification that your request was unfulfilled after the survey closed, we ask that you re-request in the next open survey
 - 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

- 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 and administered
- **What if I made a mistake in my survey request? Can I re-submit it?**
 - If the same weekly request survey where you submitted originally is still open, please re-submit. We will correct your submission in the background and use the submission with the latest timestamp.

“Smoothing” and the allocation process

- **Could we know the actual number of doses that need to be smoothed out?**
 - In all future notification letters regarding 2nd dose Moderna allocations, you will be notified of how many “smoothed” doses from your current allocation you can expect to receive in the coming weeks. We hope that this will help our provider partners better adjust their timelines and appointment scheduling
 - Additionally, this number is dependent on our supply from the federal government. If we receive enough supply to cover 2nd dose needs, then no smoothing will be needed.
- **Do you have projections on when the smoothing phase will end?**
 - We expect to continue implementing our smoothing strategy over the next 2-3 weeks to make up for the severe-supply and demand gap that the state is facing. We hope to transition out of this as soon as we have increased vaccine supply and accurate visibility into our provider’s data
- **Does the smoothing strategy apply to Pfizer?**
 - Our smoothing strategy currently applies to Moderna 2nd doses only. However, some providers have been ordering Pfizer 2nd doses a week early or have not entered correct administration data. We are delaying allocation until the correct week. We do not expect a 2nd dose shortage with Pfizer
- **If I got less than 50% of my vaccine request fulfilled last week, does that mean there was an error in the smoothing strategy?**
 - If you had zero 2nd dose Moderna requests fulfilled, you should know that we are considering historical 1st dose administration and allocation numbers and dates. If your request did not line up with our data on patient numbers or 1st dose timing, then you may have been allocated 0 doses for the week.
 - Please ensure your administration and inventory data is current in PA-SIIS, as well as in other information requests you receive from the DOH (e.g., the one-time survey you completed last week). Moreover, allocations will continue to depend on our total federal allocation

- **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 allowable 42-day window, and through the same provider who administered their 1st dose.
- **What happens if a patient exceeds the 42 day CDC recommended timeline?**
 - The CDC's recommended timeline is based on the best data that are currently available. 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
 - If you have patients that will hit the 42 days during the week of March 1st and you have not had vaccine approved, 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. Please only do so if your patients are coming up on 42 days the week of March 1st, to allow us to prioritize request. We thank the providers who have already begun to do so, and are helping better inform our future allocation decisions
- **I have been ordering Pfizer 1st doses and have not received any. Why?**
 - Demand for vaccines across the state continues to exceed the state's allocation of federal supply across the board. We are distributing as much Pfizer vaccine as we receive from the Federal government each week
 - If you recently obtained Pfizer super-freezer storage capacity, 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, given that Pfizer supply continues to increase across the country
- **Will the smoothing process affect providers getting vaccines for the first time?**
 - We hope to complete the smoothing process in the next few weeks as supply increases; however, if we continue to face shortages of 2nd doses, then new providers may be subject to smoothing
- **Why don't you automatically send the 2nd doses per 1st dose allocation 4 weeks ago?**
 - This is how we hope to be able to allocate in the future, to ease the process for everyone. To make this possible, we need providers' support in providing accurate data and abiding by the DOH's guidance regarding 1st and 2nd dose use, and in requesting permission to redistribute doses.
- **Once the J&J vaccine is approved, how long will it take to become available to request?**

- J&J is still in the process of being approved in the US and we do not have a confirmed distribution timeline yet.
- No allocation decisions have been finalized and will not be until after emergency use authorization (EUA) is granted. We await guidance from the FDA, CDC, and ACIP.
- If EUA is granted and approved with ACIP recommendations, the Legislative Task Force and Department of Health will make determinations on allocations early next week
- We are expecting there to be limited supply of vaccine available at first, and that it will not be widely available to request for the provider network until manufacturing capacity ramps up

The provider network

- **I did not get 2nd doses this week. Does that mean I will never get 2nd doses again?**
 - 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. We urge you to not communicate to your patients that you will not be receiving 2nd doses again if a request was denied for a particular week
- **I was denied 1st doses this week. Did my doses get re-allocated to big pharmacy chains' clinics, such as Rite Aid?**
 - Large pharmacies receive their vaccines through the Federal Pharmacy Program, which is a separate pot of vaccines from the State's allocation.
 - We are currently facing a shortage of vaccines across the state, and have needed to make allocation decisions based on which providers can vaccinate the most people quickly, while maintaining coverage across the state
- **As an independent pharmacy should we give up on getting first doses in the future?**
 - No. There have been no decision made as to providers group types (such as independent pharmacies) being no longer eligible to distribute vaccines. Please continue to refer to official DOH sources to receive updates on changes to the provider network
- **Isn't it less equitable to have more doses go to large pharmacies or providers that are further away from communities?**
 - In considering how much vaccine we are sending to providers, 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
- **Is there a time frame by when I must request vaccines as a first-time provider to stay in the network?**
 - There is no deadline by when you should request vaccines as a first-time provider. However, we may make future network determinations based on administration data and proven effectiveness in distributing vaccines, which you may want to be aware of if you want to distribute vaccine in the future

PA-SIIS

- **Note: We are in the process of developing additional provider training materials for the use of PA-SIIS and encourage providers to complete the existing training to better utilize the system. We also want to reinforce that all providers are required to submit their administration and inventory information in SIIS per their enrollment agreement. We are actively using this information to determine allocation decisions each week – please keep your information as current and complete as possible**
- **Where can we find our PIN number? Is this the same as the PA-SIIS Clinic ID on our COVID-19 enrollment letter?**
 - The Clinic_id is the identifier used in SIIS
 - You can find your PIN in PA-SIIS under Clinic Settings. The PIN is labeled “VFC PIN” and is located in the upper right corner of the screen. Your PIN is linked to various federal systems used for supply chain management.
 - We ONLY want to use the PIN for COVID-19 vaccine distribution
- **Can you send or post the link to COVID Vaccine Waste form?**
 - You can report waste in PA-SIIS. Go to the inventory item and enter the waste under the “Reconcile” button. When entering waste, please make sure you include a description of what caused the waste to occur.
- **What do orders pending approval mean?**
 - This is a temporary status that you may see as we are entering an order into PA-SIIS. Once we have completed the entry of the order, the order will move to the approval state. If you accidentally tried to enter your order in SIIS, it will also show as

“pending” – however, as previously mentioned, it will ultimately end up being deleted

- **What does “on-hold” mean in PA-SIIS?**
 - If your clinic type in PA-SIIS includes the term “on hold”, this indicates that your COVID Provider Agreement has been processed but your clinic is not currently active to receive COVID vaccine. This status is used internally to assist us in managing the vaccine program including automating processes surrounding which clinics appear on the Department’s COVID vaccine map.
- **Is there a way to tell in PA-SIIS how much vaccine has been used per 1st dose vs 2nd dose?**
 - While you can determine which patients have received a first and/or a second dose, PA-SIIS does not track 1st dose vs 2nd dose usage in inventory management since the exact same product is used for both doses.
- **Where in PA-SIIS can we check the status of a vaccine order?**
 - Your vaccine coordinator 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.
- **Can you add a label to doses to be able to tell more easily which are 1st vs 2nd doses?**
 - This is a great idea! Unfortunately, the vaccines are being shipped directly from the manufacturers, and we do not have control over this process. We encourage you to keep all notification letters on file, as these should tell you which are 1st and 2nd doses. Please reach out to us if you are not able to determine after doing so. We will think in the future of ways to make it clearer for providers what dose they have received.

DOH notification letter

- **Please note: there have been no notifications sent out regarding requests placed in the survey that closed on February 23rd yet**
- **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 24th (yesterday) for 2nd doses from RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov. We apologize for the delay in sending these notifications to you
 - 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. Notifications will be by approximately the end of the week that the survey closes for 1st doses and beginning of the next week for 2nd doses.

- 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 my doses were not approved, will I still get a notification?**
 - Yes – you will receive an “unfulfilled” notification for vaccines, this will state if it is for 1st or 2nd doses – two separate letters will be sent out
 - If you are not getting these communications, please reach out to us
- **How do I know if I am getting 1st vs 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 read these closely to understand what you should be receiving the following week. There will be no label on the Moderna vaccine containers indicating which are 1st vs 2nd – it is up to your internal accounting to keep track
 - Please adhere to these numbers when you administer this week and the following
- **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 1st dose fulfillment letter out by around Friday of the week the survey closes, and 2nd dose fulfillment letters out on Tuesday ONE WEEK AFTER the survey closed
 - We are unable to get the letter out any sooner than that given when federal allocations are released

Order shipment and delivery

- **Is it normal to not have your 1st doses delivered by Thursday?**

- No – you should typically expect 1st doses to be delivered early in the week. However, as we have previously mentioned, distribution was severely disrupted due to weather last week, and we are continuing to hear of delays and slower shipments than usual. We appreciate your patience with this matter
- **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
 - To put this in real terms: 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 will we receive shipment notifications?**
 - Please monitor your email for notification from suppliers, as well as PA-SIIS for shipping updates. Please be sure to let us know if you are getting communications from suppliers and not from us, as this may indicate that we have an incorrect email address for you on file
 - If you have questions about shipping, contact us via phone or email to the resource account. Please do not contact McKesson or Pfizer directly

Scheduling and administration of doses

- **Is 2nd dose scheduling for 3-4 weeks both Pfizer and Moderna?**
 - Per CDC guidance, 2nd doses for Pfizer are ideally given 3 weeks (21 days) after the 1st dose, and for Moderna at 4 weeks (28 days) following 1st dose administration.
- **Are we not allowed to schedule 2nd doses at the time of the first doses as previously required?**
 - You can still schedule these immediately after 1st dose administration, but if supply constraints continue you may need to re-schedule them for 5-6 weeks after 1st dose administration, in keeping with CDC guidelines.
- **If we receive the first dose shipment on 2/24, how can we be expected to administer that same week? When are we supposed to schedule appointments?**
 - Going forward, you should be notified around Friday evening of 1st doses being shipped, to be administered the following week. You have 7 days from receipt of 1st doses to reach the 80% administration target

- **Can we administer doses before 21 or 28 days?**
 - ◊ Per CDC, persons should not be scheduled to receive the second dose earlier than recommended (i.e., 3 weeks [Pfizer-BioNTech] or 1 month [Moderna]). However, second doses administered within a grace period of 4 days earlier than the recommended date for the second dose are still considered valid. Doses inadvertently administered earlier than the grace period should not be repeated.
- **When does the timer start to administer 80% of vaccines?**
 - The February 12th order refers to vaccines as soon as the vaccines have been received. You can mark this timeline by when you have accepted the shipment in PA-SIIS
- **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
- **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.
- **Can I use 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!
- **Why should we follow the Governor’s mandate when no providers are following it, regarding online/phone scheduling options?**
 - The Governor’s Order is designed to ensure that all Pennsylvanians are able to make appointments, regardless of their digital literacy. Many providers are following this order in the interest of their communities. Please continue to follow all guidelines stipulated in the Governor’s February 12th order, and let us know if you expect to have trouble meeting those guidelines

Additional questions

- **Do recipients have to be Pennsylvania residents to get vaccinated?**
 - No. An individual does not need to show proof of residency to be vaccinated in Pennsylvania. Please visit our website for more vaccine FAQs and details on eligibility
- **We have continued to receive calls regarding vaccines since our information was put on the DOH site, but we no longer have any supplies. Can our information be removed from the site?**
 - We are attempting to balance transparency for the public with support for our providers. We plan to continue to publish which providers are receiving vaccine on a weekly basis. We are taking into account what we have heard from providers regarding information they want to see
- **Are we still immunizing only in Phase 1A or has that been expanded to include other groups?**
 - Pennsylvania is still Phase 1A, which is by far the largest phase in Pennsylvania – encompassing somewhere between 5-6M people (excluding Philadelphia)
 - Please visit our website if you would like to review information on who exactly falls within 1A
 - There are ongoing discussions within the legislature and government to determine if this group should be expanded. We will try and pre-empt any expansions with communication out to our provider network so that you can be prepared. However, we would like to re-enforce that at this time there are no additional groups that have been added
- **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?**
 - 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