

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

From weekly "PA COVID-19 Provider Allocation Discussion" Go to Webinar calls from Apr 19 - April 30, 2021

Note: Provider calls are not currently being recorded

PA-SIIS

Our practice is no longer included in the dropdown PIN menu of the weekly survey. How can we order vaccine?

If you are unable to find your practice listed as an option in the dropdown menu of the survey, you are still able to order vaccine. There is a place in the survey where you can manually type in your PIN. Please email the resource account at RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov if you have any specific questions or need additional assistance.

We are still listed "on hold" in PA-SIIS. Should we keep requesting first dose allocations?

Yes, fill out the survey and email RA-DHPASIIS@pa.gov if your PA-SIIS status does not change.

At our facility, we have seen a few cases where the individual is listed as already having received a dose of the vaccine in their SIIS record. When asked these people claim that they have not received the dose that has been entered in SIIS. It appears another facility entered the administered dose on the wrong record. What should we do?

In such situations, please email our resource account with detailed information about the facility that shows in the SIIS record. We will have to investigate it further to see what caused the error, if any. Please be mindful that a person needs only two doses of Pfizer and Moderna each, or just one dose of Janssen vaccine to complete the series. Please use the CDC issued COVID-19 vaccination card as a record reference.

How do you enter the provider in PA SIIS? It will not allow me to associate the provider with the clinic.

Please email the RA- DHPASIIS@PA.GOV with your concern and our SIIS team will guide you through the process.

When a provider is reporting that a dose(s) was wasted, are there options available to choose why it was wasted? Will the data for each provider be reported weekly/monthly in aggregate?

When providers are reporting the wasted vaccines in PA SIIS, they can select the option "wasted". Under that option, there is a free text option where providers can put a note detailing the manner of waste. Providers must report any type of vaccine wastage that did not make it into people's arms, even when they are not at fault. Please categorize the wastage into the following six types with a

reasoning whenever applicable.

1. Open vial but not administered. (e.g. – may be due to expiration of doses, no shows, cancellations, patient refusal, patient reactions, patient illness/hospitalization, vial dropped on floor, cross contamination, reconstitution error etc.)
2. Doses drawn up in syringes but not administered (e.g. – may be due to cross-contamination, needle stick, needle dropped, syringe malfunction, patient refusal, patient reaction, dose mismatch etc.)
3. Broken vials/syringe (e.g. – broken vials, bent needles, broken needles)
4. Lost or unaccounted for vaccines (example includes – lost vials/ drawn up syringes)
5. Non COVID vaccine product
6. Others

Once DOH decision is updated, we will notify providers on the frequency of public reporting of wasted vaccines.

Provider Enrollment

Is there a way to find out where my facility sits on the "list" expected to start receiving the shipments?

Please email our resource account RA-DHCOVIDVax@pa.gov for more information. Let them know that you are a provider who has not yet received vaccine and would like to start receiving it/would like to know when that would begin. Also please remember that you should submit a request through the weekly request form that closes at 8 p.m. on Tuesday. Last week all providers who requested vaccine were allocated some. If the enrollment process is not yet complete, please reach out to us.

Can a medical assistant be a backup coordinator? Or does it have to be a nurse?

The Primary Vaccine Coordinator should be the staff member who is responsible for ensuring the proper receipt, storage and handling, and inventory management of vaccines received from DOH. The backup coordinator should be the person who can perform the duties mentioned above in cases when the primary vaccine coordinator is not available.

As a newly approved facility, what is the time frame to begin receiving vaccine?

We generally notify providers about vaccine orders that are processed, and shipments from the source begin on Friday afternoons. Pfizer doses typically arrive on Tuesdays and sometimes Wednesdays following the weekend. Moderna typically arrives on Mondays and sometimes Tuesday. Johnson and Johnson's shipping time is 1 -2 business days. So, if an order is put on Friday, its expected to be delivered on the following Tuesday. Note that there are not, and have not been, any weekend deliveries. Moderna and Johnson and Johnson have easier shipping dynamics which is why they can arrive sooner.

As a reminder, every provider willing to receive vaccine allocation should submit a request through our weekly vaccine request survey that closes at 8 p.m. Tuesday. If you are not receiving reminders to fill out the survey, please reach out to us via our resource account.

Allocation and Administration

Is the 80% throughput rule still in effect?

No, its not. On May 7, 2021, Acting Secretary of Health Beam issued an additional amendment to the February 12 order directing the administration of vaccine which states that effective Monday, May 10, the new amendment eliminates several of the original provisions within the order including the requirement to administer 80% of vaccine within 7 days, the requirement to adhere to the phased approach in the Interim Vaccination Plan, and requirements related to providing and scheduling second doses.

Are there any updates on when individuals ages 12 to 15 years old will be approved to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Pfizer has applied to include 12- to 15-year-old patients. We should receive more information on this in next few weeks.

If a patient received their first dose at another location, then went to a different provider to receive their second dose, does the provider who administered the second dose include that data in their total count when reporting?

Yes. Please include all data in the second dose count so that we may have an accurate representation of your need for additional (second) doses. We prefer that patients receive their first and second dose at the same location, but some patients may not be able to do this (such as college students). If you are experiencing an increased number of patients receiving their second dose at your practice who received their first dose elsewhere, record the data in PA-SIIS and leave a note in the survey about this so we are aware.

If we have a vaccination event planned but cannot be guaranteed first doses, what should we do?

We base allocation on your current needs. If there is a planned event, then please explain this to us ahead of time in your survey and we can evaluate your request on a case-by-case basis to provide what you need to meet the demand.

We are a rural health center and haven't received vaccine in weeks. When can we get more? Our patients cannot travel to mass vaccination sites.

Please email RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov the name of your site and PIN so we can make sure we are assessing the area and your site. Also please remember that the first step is to request vaccines by

filling up the weekly request survey that opens on Saturdays at 8 a.m. and closes on Tuesdays at 8 p.m.

Can we order fewer amounts of Pfizer?

- We've been informed that Moderna will transition to a 14-dose vial in about two weeks. The week of May 3, you will start to see 14-dose vials mixed in with the 10-dose vials as they start to taper off that supply (140 doses in each box of Moderna).
- Pfizer is currently a six-dose vial at 1170 doses per shipment. There will be a 450-dose shipment (still six doses) and will be shipped the same way as before, but in a smaller increment. Pfizer hasn't applied to the EUA to change that out, but it's looking like this will change in early June.

If we do not use our entire allocation in one week, can we use it the following week?

Yes, you can. Please make sure you are aware of the vaccine's expiry date and BUD.

We are an FQHC and haven't received vaccine for weeks, but we have local providers who need to vaccinate over 400 staff members. How can we get vaccine to meet this need?

We want all FQHCs to receive vaccine. Make sure you have a PIN number and include information on your survey indicating that you want to conduct a vaccination event with an employer.

Can we choose which vaccine is best for our facility - Pfizer or Moderna?

We want providers to be comfortable with the product they've been allocated. If the provider can't properly store Pfizer, for example, then we will certainly take this into consideration. Please communicate what you can handle. If you can take either/or please let us know to aid in the allocation process.

Do you recommend only offering first dose appointments initially or can we open appointments to both first and second dose patients?

Providers are expected to schedule second dose appointments for the patients right after they receive their first doses. This is the current CDC guideline.

Are there plans to distribute Johnson and Johnson vaccines to hospitals for administration to patients?

Johnson and Johnson supply availability remains low currently. So even though the pause is lifted from FDA/CDC, we have limited supply available. We will be looking at potential partners for that product and it is possible that it will continue to expand in the coming months.

If we are requesting allocation for the first time, do we need to wait to schedule appointments until after we have received allocation confirmation? If so, how do we determine the number of doses to order? Do we just base it off our capacity?

Yes, please do not schedule appointments until you can verify that you will be receiving vaccine. We would suggest you take capacity into consideration, but also suggest being somewhat conservative in your first request.

If the person is getting a first dose, does that person have to go back to same pharmacy to get the second dose?

Yes, we are requesting providers to offer second dose appointment to patients when they come to get first dose of vaccination. There might be a few cases when a person who got his/her first dose may have to go to a different place for their second dose appointment. Some examples are- person discharged from Long term care where he /she got their first dose, someone migrating to a different place due to school/job, someone released from prison, or in some cases if the facility that offered first dose is now closed. Please do not refuse vaccination to eligible people in these instances.

If the patient is past 42 days, do they still get a second vaccine?

Yes, they can still be administered their second dose.

What is the guidance on parental consent of minors?

- Immunizations, like other general medical services, require consent.
- The Department of Health recommends that vaccine providers follow their current policy for vaccinations of minors.

Provider Network

Are primary care offices and pediatricians required to be fully open to administering vaccine to the public?

If you're receiving vaccine, then you should be open to the public. Please tune into our all provider calls on Fridays for most recent updates. If anything changes, we will make sure to announce it on those calls as well as via our weekly newsletter and emails through resource account.

When will our pharmacy be listed on VaccineFinder.org?

Vaccine finder is now vaccines.gov. PA now has public display of providers and the availability of vaccine in their stock. All providers who have inventory on hand will be displayed, except for certain facility types (e.g., correctional facilities, long-term care facilities) since those are not sites where the public can go for vaccination.

How many "new" providers will be added this week?

It is hard to quantify an exact "new" number, but it is around 100 "new" providers getting vaccine for the first time this week. This number can and will continue to increase in the coming weeks.

We are an approved provider, but we are not part of the focused network. When will we be able to order and receive vaccine again?

As we have a sustained supply of vaccine, we are expanding our network of providers and allocating vaccine to more providers than before. If you are an enrolled provider, please fill out the weekly request survey if you want to receive allocation.

Additional Questions

Can we request Johnson and Johnson now that the pause has been lifted, or is it still reserved for special initiatives?

We have been strategizing the placement of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine to see how we land in terms of allocation and how much supply we have. We are not ruling it out, but we must first see how much we have on hand to allocate. If you have special circumstances, please let us know through our resource account and we will check with our allocation team to see if it's a possibility.

Are there any updates on when the county jails will receive and administer vaccine?

Yes, DOH has already started allocating vaccines to providers who will be vaccinating the county jail population in respective areas.

How can we get on the list to get the newsletter?

The email list for distribution of newsletter is sent out from our resource account. Please email our resource account RA-DHCOVIDVAX@pa.gov so that we can make sure you get all communication materials from DOH. On another note, our newsletter can be accessed on our website under 'Vaccine provider resources' topic.

Since growing vaccine hesitancy is one of the main reasons behind vaccine wastage, how is DOH messaging it to the public? Since vaccine wastage data is going public, it is importance to let public know that with growing vaccine hesitancy, it's difficult to find individuals willing to be vaccinated, especially on a short notice.

DOH acknowledges providers for all the efforts that they have made to vaccinate Pennsylvanians. Governor Wolf and Acting Physician General Johnson are working with providers, stakeholders, and communities to address vaccine hesitancy, and its effect on vaccine rollout and distribution to create an overall positive impact. Regarding the wasted vaccines, our numbers are comparable to several other states and providers have remained accountable and good keepers of vaccines allocated to them. DOH has addressed the issue of vaccine wastage repeatedly by sending out

messaging to the public reminding them to not cancel appointments and not book appointments in multiple locations, as this can lead to potentially wasted doses of vaccine that could be used for other individuals. Providers should also make every effort to minimize wastage; however, with the supply of vaccine increasing, CDC and DOH are encouraging providers not to let the fear of wastage turn into missed opportunities to vaccinate individuals. Providers should continue to report the wastage numbers as required.

We are not getting enough appointments scheduled to cover the entire vials of the vaccine, leaving waste. Should we vaccinate and waste supply or cancel appointments?

The priority is to always vaccinate if an eligible person in need is there and ready to go. As per CDC is, we should not allow a lost opportunity to avoid waste. We want to do everything possible to minimize waste, so please try strategies to not waste doses in a vial.

Who do we reach out to if we have additional vaccine that we may not be able to distribute quickly enough before it expires?

Please use the following strategies to figure out proper distribution of vaccines and prevent wastage from expiration.

1. Only order the amount of vaccines that you can administer.
2. Assess the needs and demand of vaccines at your facility regularly.
3. Rotate stocks frequently to ensure vaccines with short expiration dates are used first.
4. Review the cancellation/no show trends on a weekly basis to make sure you update your requests accordingly.
5. If you have additional vaccines that you cannot use, please identify a provider in your area who might be able to use them. Both facilities should them be filing a redistribution agreement.
6. Reach out to county leadership, school districts, colleges/universities to find out if a partnership with them is a possibility.

What strategies are providers using for walk-in clinics, taking attendance and wastage into account? Interest for the vaccine has waned in our area, so we want to operationalize vaccines and offer walk in options, but we are worried that we will puncture a vial and not be able to find enough people to use all doses.

The following best practices were shared by our guest providers (WellSpan Gettysburg and Allentown Health Bureau) to reduce vaccine wastages. **Please note that the following ideas/views/opinions are solely of the original author and not that of the DOH. DOH doesn't assume liability for the consequences arising from the actions taken based on these views/ideas/opinions.**

- Start walk- in clinics at a time later than a regular clinic would start.
- Make the total duration for walk-in clinics for just 3 hour/day.
- Cancel scheduled clinics on the days walk in clinics were operated, as most people would cancel their scheduled appointments on those days and chose to walk in.
- Engage with local employers who employed large number of minority population to provide time slots for vaccination on workdays (while receiving payment), as some groups of people wouldn't go for vaccination on a day off. It decreased the cancellation rates.
- For unused vaccines at the end of the clinic, reach out to the grocery store workers and housing projects.

Campaigning and letting people know that even if they were once infected with COVID-19, they still need to get vaccinated.

What is the most recent data on vials of Moderna punctured or unopened?

Moderna Vials may be stored refrigerated between 2° to 8°C (36° to 46°F) for up to 30 days prior to first use. Vials may be stored between 8° to 25°C (46° to 77°F) for a total of 24 hours. After the first dose has been withdrawn, the vial should be held between 2° to 25°C (36° to 77°F). Vials should be discarded 12 hours after the first puncture. Thawed vials can be handled in room light conditions. Do not refreeze once thawed.

