



State of New Jersey  
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Commissioner

January 8, 2021

**TO:** Points of Dispensing participating in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program  
**FROM:** Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A. Commissioner  
**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 Vaccination Eligibility Expansion to Phase 1B First Responders

This memo serves to alert you to an expansion in the phased rollout of New Jersey’s COVID-19 Vaccination Program. **Effective January 7, 2021, sworn law enforcement, firefighters and other first responders who are part of Phase 1B are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination.** At this time, only this limited population from Phase 1B is eligible. Further information is enclosed.

The priority is to serve those at highest risk of work-related exposure to acquiring COVID-19. Police and fire personnel are often at very high risk of contact during their daily work with COVID-19 infectious people and/or infectious materials.

In the phased rollout, phases overlap and build systematically. People eligible in Phase 1A (healthcare personnel and long-term care residents) remain eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination. Further information about Phase 1A eligibility can be found here: <https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/VaccinePhasesFactSheet.pdf>

**Please share this information with all the appropriate staff in your vaccination program and begin vaccinating or scheduling appointments for those who self-identify as part of these groups.**

The New Jersey Department of Health expects availability of COVID-19 vaccines to remain limited in the near-term, so the expansion from Phase 1A to Phase 1B will be staggered. Further guidance about the definition of Phase 1B beyond first responders is forthcoming. Phase 1B will include frontline essential workers and some high-risk populations, including those aged 75 or older.

Thank you for your partnership in this initiative. This memo supplements the CDC Provider Agreement. Facilities should be familiar with terms outlined in that document, New Jersey’s Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, and other materials circulated by NJDOH regarding the provision, delivery and administration of COVID-19 vaccines. <https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019/vaccination.shtml>. Points of dispensing may contact the New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine Operations Center at [Vax.Operations@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Vax.Operations@doh.nj.gov) with any further questions.

### **Who are first responders eligible for COVID-19 vaccination starting January 7, 2021?**

First responders include paid and unpaid sworn law enforcement, fire and rescue services, and search and rescue organizations.

Personnel in emergency medical services, corrections, juvenile justice, and county jails were included in Phase 1A and remain eligible as the State progresses into Phase 1B.

The priority is to serve those at [highest risk of work-related exposure](#) to acquiring COVID-19. At this time, support staff and civilian personnel with limited exposure to COVID-19 (e.g. dispatchers, clerks) should wait to be vaccinated until vaccine is more readily available. We encourage those individuals who are not engaged in frontline work to allow their fellow first responders first access.

New Jersey is working to expand eligibility as vaccine supply increases. The New Jersey Department of Health expects availability of COVID-19 vaccines to remain limited in the near-term, so the expansion from Phase 1A to Phase 1B will be staggered. Phase 1B will include frontline essential workers and some high-risk populations, including those aged 75 or older.

### **What are examples of sworn law enforcement eligible for vaccination starting January 7, 2021?**

The priority is to serve those at [highest risk of work-related exposure](#) to acquiring COVID-19.

Illustrative examples include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ New Jersey State Police troopers
- ✓ Municipal and county police officers
- ✓ Campus police officers
- ✓ Detectives in prosecutors' offices and state agencies
- ✓ State agency/authority law enforcement officers (e.g. State Park Police and Conservation Officers, Palisades Interstate Parkway Officers, Human Services police, and NJTransit police)
- ✓ Investigator, Parole and Secured Facilities Officers
- ✓ Aeronautical Operations Specialists
- ✓ Sworn Federal Law Enforcement Officers and Special Agents
- ✓ Bi-State law enforcement officers (e.g. Port Authority)
- ✓ Court Security Officers

### **What are examples of firefighters and other first responders eligible for vaccination starting January 7, 2021?**

The priority is to serve those at [highest risk of work-related exposure](#) to acquiring COVID-19.

Illustrative examples include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Paid and unpaid members of firefighting services (structural and wildland)
- ✓ Paid and unpaid members of Search and Rescue Units including technical rescue units and HAZMAT teams
- ✓ Paid and unpaid firefighters who provide emergency medical services
- ✓ Paid and unpaid members of Industrial units that perform Fire, Rescue and HAZMAT services
- ✓ Members of State Fire Marshal's Offices
- ✓ Bi-State Fire Service Personnel (e.g. Port Authority)

**Can a first responder only be vaccinated in their occupational jurisdiction?**

No, individuals eligible to receive vaccination in New Jersey must live, work, or be educated in New Jersey. Thus, federal (e.g. Federal Marshals), bi-state (e.g. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey), state, county, and local first responders are eligible to receive vaccination across New Jersey.

Note: Some federal officials may also be able to access vaccination through their federal agency (e.g. Department of Defense), so federal officials are encouraged to speak with their agencies.

**When will New Jersey change phases?**

Specific dates are not known at this time. New Jersey is using a phased approach to COVID-19 vaccination to ensure that limited vaccines are distributed in a fair and equitable manner. Phase 1A began December 15, 2020. Vaccination for first responders in Phase 1B began January 7, 2021.

Factors like supply of vaccine, public confidence and uptake, time, and federal guidance will inform data-driven decisions. Governor Phil Murphy and Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli will announce when New Jersey changes phases.

**How did New Jersey determine the Phased Approach?**

New Jersey’s phased approach is informed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP), the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), the New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Professional Advisory Committee (PAC), the Coronavirus Task Force (CTF), and extensive stakeholder engagement.

**How does a consumer prove that they are eligible for vaccination?**

A person is eligible if they live, work, or are being educated in New Jersey and can self-identify as meeting the criteria for the current sub-phase. No professional nor medical documentation is required.

**How can a first responder schedule an appointment to be vaccinated?**

New Jersey has launched a statewide vaccine scheduling system to help consumers connect with identified nearby points of dispensing sites. The New Jersey Vaccine Scheduling System (NJVSS) is available here: <https://covidvaccine.nj.gov/>.

There are also some points of dispensing not participating in NJVSS. To schedule an appointment at one of those sites, please contact PODs directly using information available on the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub: <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/healthcare-worker-covid-19-vaccine-locations>

Note: Whenever New Jersey expands eligibility, it may take several weeks for appointments to be available to all eligible. Vaccine availability remains very limited in New Jersey.

**What data will vaccine recipients need to share to be vaccinated?**

NJIS will securely store the vaccine recipient’s name, address, date of birth, race, ethnicity, and gender. These are standard data elements that have been used across vaccines administered in New Jersey. These will be requested during pre-registration and/or on-site. Information about the vaccine provider, substance, and administration will be collected from the POD personnel.

There are other data that may be asked of vaccine recipients and that will not be stored in NJIS. Depending on the POD and its scheduling process, New Jerseyans can also expect to provide additional demographic and occupational data to ensure equitable and efficient scheduling of vaccinations. These

data points will be informed by ACIP recommendations about prioritization (e.g. Phase 1A will include healthcare personnel).

Finally, medical screening questions will be asked to assess eligibility under the EUA and ACIP recommendations specific to the vaccine product offered at the point of dispensing.



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Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A.  
Commissioner