

PENNSYLVANIA'S COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FRONT LINES

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended long-term care residents and staff receive first priority for the COVID-19 vaccine, it was cause for celebration for tens of thousands of frontline workers and the vulnerable residents they serve. However, delays in the distribution of the vaccine to Pennsylvania's long-term care providers have continued to raise concerns. Moving forward, state officials must collaborate with providers to address ongoing challenges and protect our seniors and healthcare heroes.

To ensure a successful, continued vaccine rollout in long-term care in Pennsylvania, the following recommendations must be considered:



PRIORITIZE AND INCREASE THE ALLOCATION OF THE VACCINE TO LONG-TERM CARE

According to recent CDC data, less than 20% of the COVID-19 vaccine in Pennsylvania has been allocated to residents and frontline workers in nursing homes, assisted living communities and personal care homes - the epicenter of the pandemic. If we are truly prioritizing our long-term care residents and staff, we must ensure an increased allocation of the vaccine is distributed to those who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 virus.



BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE, COORDINATED PLAN TO VACCINATE RESIDENTS AND WORKERS AFTER THE FEDERAL PHARMACY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM ENDS

Federal pharmacy partners have been tasked with completing three vaccine clinics for residents and staff in long-term care, but what happens when those clinics are completed? How will providers ensure new residents and staff members receive both doses of the vaccine? And who will absorb these costs? We must develop a plan now to provide certainty in the months to come for providers, residents, workers and their families.



ISSUE POST-VACCINE VISITATION GUIDANCE TO REUNITE RESIDENTS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

Long-term care providers are eager to reopen their doors and reunite their residents with families and loved ones. But providers must have clear, post-vaccination guidance from the Department of Health and Department of Human Services to facilitate visitation and limit the risk of outside exposure for residents and staff.



DEVELOP ROBUST PLAN FOR COMMUNITY AND MASS VACCINATION CLINICS

Independent research is clear: community spread of COVID-19 equals a greater likelihood of spread in our long-term care facilities. State officials must develop a plan to ensure Pennsylvania's general population can be vaccinated as soon as possible. After all, if we decrease the number of COVID-19 cases in our community, we can better protect our residents and their providers of care.