

COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation: Phase 1b

The State of Alaska is using a phased approach to allocate the initial limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine to Alaskans. At the national level, allocation recommendations are being made by the Centers for Disease Control's [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#). To suitably adapt the ACIP recommendations for Alaska, the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, in cooperation with the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association, convened the [Alaska Vaccine Allocation Advisory Committee \(AVAAC\)](#).

AVAAC includes representatives from the areas of emergency medicine, family medicine, infectious disease, EMS, long-term care, the American Association of Retired Persons, pharmacy, and medical ethics. AVAAC uses currently available science and guidance provided by DHSS, ACIP, the National Academy of Sciences, and other sources to inform its COVID-19 vaccine allocation recommendations to DHSS.¹⁻⁶ The AVAAC recommendations do not apply to Indian Health Service, Veterans Affairs, and Department of Defense COVID-19 vaccine allocations. AVAAC is guided by the following key elements designated in the [ACIP framework](#):

Science

- Maximize benefits and minimize harms
- Protect the population's health by reducing mortality and morbidity and preserving societal functioning

Implementation

- Assure feasibility of vaccine distribution
- Uphold community and individual values

Ethics

- Achieve equitable access for all Alaskans
- Ensure transparency and promote education on both the science and implementation

On Dec. 2, 2020, ACIP recommended that during Phase 1a, COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to health care personnel (HCP) and residents of long-term care facilities (LTCF). Phase 1a recommendations were reviewed by AVAAC, were adopted by the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and are currently being implemented across Alaska. A more thorough description of the Alaskans who are included in Phase 1a is available [here](#).

On Dec. 20, 2020, ACIP recommended that during Phases 1b and 1c, the COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to the following groups:

- Phase 1b: persons aged ≥ 75 years, and frontline essential workers*
- Phase 1c: persons aged 65–74 years, persons aged 16–64 years with high-risk medical conditions, and other essential workers

To better guide the distribution of our limited COVID-19 vaccine supply, and after receiving input from the public and AVAAC, the State of Alaska will use the following four tiers to vaccinate Alaskans, as well as non-residents who provide education and healthcare in Alaska, in Phase 1b:

Phase 1b, Tier 1

- Persons aged 65 years and older

Phase 1b, Tier 2

- Frontline essential workers* who are aged 50 years and older and whose work-related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in close proximity (<6 feet) to the public or to coworkers:
 - Education (PreK–12 educators and school staff, childcare workers and support staff, including Indigenous language and culture educators);
 - First responders and public safety personnel, including state troopers, public safety officers, police, firefighters, and Office of Children’s Services staff and public health workers in direct contact with individuals and families not vaccinated in Phase 1a;
 - Food and agriculture (e.g., seafood, food distributors);
 - Grocery store workers;
 - Public transit workers, including rural** aviation workers serving communities defined as essential air services***, and rural cab service workers;
 - U.S. Postal Service workers and contract rural postal workers including mail planes;
 - Utility and power workers – rural communities**;
 - Water and wastewater – rural communities**
- People living or working in other congregate settings not covered in Phase 1a, such as:
 - Acute psychiatric facilities;
 - Correctional settings;
 - Group homes for individuals with disabilities, including serious mental illness, developmental and intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, or substance use disorders;
 - Homeless and domestic violence shelters;
 - Substance misuse and treatment residential facilities; and
 - Transitional living homes

Phase 1b, Tier 3

- Persons aged 55–64 years
- All persons aged 16 and older living in “unserved communities”±
- Frontline essential workers* aged 16–50 years with two or more high-risk health conditions[§] whose work-related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in close proximity (<6 feet) to the public or to coworkers:
 - Education (PreK–12 educators and school staff, childcare workers and support staff, including Indigenous language and culture educators);
 - First responders and public safety personnel, including state troopers, public safety officers, police, firefighters, and Office of Children’s Services staff and public health workers in direct contact with individuals and families not vaccinated in Phase 1a;
 - Food and agriculture (e.g., seafood, food distributors);
 - Grocery store workers;
 - Public transit workers, including rural aviation workers serving communities defined as essential air services, ** and rural cab service workers;
 - U.S. Postal Service workers and contract rural postal workers including mail planes;

Updated 12/31/2020, 4:00 pm to address accidental omission.

- Utility and power workers – rural communities; and
- Water and wastewater – rural communities

Phase 1b, Tier 4

- Persons aged 50 years and older with two or more high-risk health conditions⁵
- Frontline essential workers* aged 16–50 years not covered in Tier 1–3 whose work-related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in close proximity (<6 feet) to the public or to coworkers:
 - Education (PreK–12 educators and school staff, childcare workers and support staff, including Indigenous language and culture educators);
 - First responders and public safety personnel, including state troopers, public safety officers, police, firefighters, and Office of Children’s Services staff and public health workers in direct contact with individuals and families not vaccinated in Phase 1a;
 - Food and agriculture (e.g., seafood, food distributors);
 - Grocery store workers;
 - Public transit workers, including rural aviation workers serving communities defined as essential air services,** and rural cab service workers;
 - U.S. Postal Service workers and contract rural postal workers including mail planes;
 - Utility and power workers – rural communities; and
 - Water and wastewater – rural communities

** Frontline essential workers are defined as people who are working in sectors essential to the functioning of society and are at substantially higher risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 because their work-related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in close proximity (<6 feet) to the public or to coworkers.*

Where sub-prioritization of frontline essential workers is needed due to limited vaccine supply, consider:

- *Workers in locations with limited access to health care and sanitation resources, such as people working in rural locations, off the road system, and/or in communities without piped water*
- *Workers in locations where high rates of transmission is occurring*
- *Workers who are at increased risk for severe illness based on age or underlying medical conditions (see: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-2020-12/slides-12-20/03-COVID-Oliver.pdf>)*

*** Rural is defined as communities with a population less than 10,000 and off the road system. “Road System” is defined as any community connected by a road to the Steese, Elliot, Dalton, Seward, Parks, Klondike, Richardson, Sterling, Glenn, Haines, or Top of the World Highways.*

**** Essential air services as defined by the U.S. Department of Transportation. See:*

<https://www.transportation.gov/policy/aviation-policy/small-community-rural-air-service/essential-air-service>

± A served community is one in which ≥55% of homes are served by a piped, septic tank and well, or covered haul system. An unserved community is one where ≥45% homes have not been served either via pipe, septic tank and well, or covered haul system. See: <https://dec.alaska.gov/water/water-sewer-challenge/rural-communities/>

Updated 12/31/2020, 4:00 pm to address accidental omission.

[§] Adults of any age with the following conditions are at increased risk for severe COVID-19–associated illness: cancer; chronic kidney disease; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); Down Syndrome, heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies; immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant; obesity (body mass index [BMI] ≥ 30 kg/m² but < 40 kg/m²); severe obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²); sickle cell disease; smoking; type 2 diabetes mellitus; and pregnancy (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fgroups-at-higher-risk.html).

Additional Notes:

- Settings and roles within each tier should have equal priority.
- The list order within tiers does not imply priority group ranking.
- Persons with a documented SARS-CoV-2 infection in the preceding 90 days may choose to delay vaccination until near the end of the 90 day period in order to facilitate vaccination of those who remain susceptible to infection, as current evidence suggests reinfection is uncommon during this period after initial infection.

References:

1. CDC Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>
2. AK epidemiology mortality and morbidity reports highlighting Covid-19 health disparities stratified by age and high-risk conditions: http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2020_13.pdf
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2020_12.pdf
3. Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25917>. Accessed at <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/25917/framework-for-equitable-allocation-of-covid-19-vaccine#resources>.
4. Evidence Table for COVID-19 Vaccines Allocation in Phases 1b and 1c of the Vaccination Program. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/covid-19/evidence-table-phase-1b-1c.html>
5. CDC Phased Allocations slides: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-2020-11/COVID-04-Dooling.pdf>
6. CDC MMWR The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Updated Interim Recommendation for Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine — United States, December 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm695152e2-H.pdf>