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Preparing for a COVID-19 Vaccine IDPH Planning & Distribution Update

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has convened a stakeholder workgroup, comprised of IMS and other leaders within the provider and public health community, to assist with planning and distribution of an anticipated COVID-19 vaccine. IMS has prepared this update to quickly convey the latest updates and will continue to provide these regular updates as they become available. Please note, this information is rapidly evolving and may change. Practices are encouraged to contact IMS with any questions about this information.

November 16, 2020

This morning, Moderna joined Pfizer as the second pharmaceutical company to announce that it is nearing completion of its Phase 3 clinical trials with initial data in both trials showing more than 90% vaccine effectiveness. Today's workgroup meeting shed further light on this development and planning efforts. CDC officials have indicated that Pfizer could be ready to submit its Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) as early as this week, with Moderna's EUA application anticipated by the end of November. It is critical that clinics use this time to train staff and prepare to begin receiving initial doses of the Pfizer vaccine, likely in early December.

Provider Enrollment Update

To date, 1,142 Organizational [COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Agreements](#) have been submitted to IDPH. Of these, 1,074 provider agreements have been approved as of this morning. This includes all 99 local public health agencies, 83 hospitals, 260 long-term care facilities, 192 pharmacies, 135 public entities like FQHCs, and 304 private entities including many independent physician clinics. State mapping shows no major gaps in provider distribution across the state and IDPH reports that Iowa's provider enrollment rates are significantly ahead of neighboring states. As a reminder, IDPH will not be closing the provider enrollment process throughout the COVID-19 vaccination campaign and practices will have the ability to enroll at any time.

Vaccine Administration Update

Once a practice has been approved as a COVID-19 vaccine provider, federal officials will enroll each practice for a [Vaccine Finder](#) provider account, if you do not already have an account. This will serve as the public-facing portal for individuals to locate providers offering the COVID-19 vaccine. Practices will need to finalize their profile for this system. Practices have the option to list themselves as accepting new patients to receive the vaccine or to hide their location to not show as accepting new patients, if they wish. As a reminder, practices are not required to accept new patients as a condition of enrolling as a COVID-19 vaccine provider.

Once Pfizer and Moderna have received EUA approval for their vaccine candidates, federal officials have indicated that each will release a short vaccine-specific administration training video, along with patient education materials and talking points, in a manner similar to the initial roll-out of the HPV vaccine. Federal officials have also indicated that initial EUAs of the vaccines will only be approved for administration to the adult population.

This report is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal guidance. Practices are encouraged to contact their legal counsel and medical liability carrier as they prepare for participation in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution program.

As has been noted, healthcare providers are included in the initial priority population to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Shortly after the EUA application materials have been completed, IDPH will be issuing a statewide vaccine shortage order that includes guidance on prioritization of recipient populations within the initial Phase 1a and 1b populations (details for subsequent allocation phases leading to broader public availability will also follow). This will include greater detail on prioritizing administration of the vaccine to different groups of healthcare workers with preference given for groups including those providing direct patient care to COVID-19 patients. Local public health agencies will make final determinations, within the context of this shortage order, regarding allocation of vaccine supply in their county. Practices are encouraged to contact their local public health agency, if you have not done so already, to discuss plans for receiving the vaccine for clinic staff and strategies to stagger staff vaccinations to account for any staff members who experience side effects.

Long-Term Care Patient Vaccine Administration

IDPH has received the list of chain pharmacies to complete a [federal agreement](#) to partner with one or more local long-term care (LTC) facilities to handle administration of the anticipated vaccine for this priority patient population. In addition to Walgreens and CVS, HyVee and Walmart have also enrolled to participate in this federal program. This provider enrollment information has been shared with local public health agencies, who will be utilizing this information to determine distribution of Iowa’s allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccine doses allocated directly to these chain pharmacies as part of the federal LTC program, will not be counted toward Iowa’s allocation of initial doses. Staff at the LTC facilities and pharmacies will not receive their individual vaccine doses through this federal program and will instead receive doses from the state supply.

Vaccine Cold Storage & Prepositioning

State officials have identified 29 locations across the state that have on-site ultra-cold capabilities to store those anticipated vaccines, which will require lower temperature storage (-60° to -80° C). These sites will be prioritized to receive the initial doses of the anticipated Pfizer vaccine with other sites receiving doses that can be stored on dry ice, once supply is more widely available. Federal officials have asked state officials to designate a handful of cold-storage facilities that have access to a large population of priority Phase 1 recipients. IDPH has designated six sites across the state to receive this initial shipment of Pfizer vaccines. As soon as Pfizer submits its EUA application, federal officials plan to begin prepositioning vaccine doses at these six sites, with the hope of having initial doses on-site prior to the EUA approval. The minimum order for initial dose orders for the Pfizer vaccine is 975 vials. Once these initial doses have been shipped, it is anticipated that additional doses will be ready to ship in short order, with more wide-spread availability coming within a matter of weeks after the EUA is approved.

IDPH COVID-19 Vaccine Resources

IDPH reports they are fielding a large volume of similar questions as practices are preparing to administer the COVID-19 vaccine. The state has prepared numerous FAQ and training documents, which cover much of this information. Practices are encouraged to review the extensive materials on the [IDPH COVID-19 Vaccine Website](#) to familiarize themselves with the resources available prior to contacting the IDPH call center.

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