More Georgians to Become Eligible to Receive COVID-19 Vaccine

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Atlanta – Governor Brian Kemp and Commissioner Kathleen Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., tonight announced plans to add adults aged 65 and older, law enforcement officers, firefighters and first responders to the current group of individuals eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination. Healthcare workers and staff and residents of long-term care facilities are already in this highest priority group. The expanded administration of vaccine is expected to begin within the next two weeks provided there is adequate vaccine supply available.

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is following the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for prioritizing vaccination. States have the flexibility to tailor these recommendations based on their specific needs and available vaccine.

"Following the expert guidance of Dr. Toomey, the CDC, and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, Georgia will move to expand Phase 1a vaccination criteria within the next two weeks to include the elderly, law enforcement officers, firefighters and first responders - provided the state continues to receive adequate vaccine supplies," said Governor Kemp. "We will continue to monitor the administration efforts of our public health workers and partners in the private sector, and the supply chain of both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines to ensure eligible Georgians are vaccinated without delay."

"Different areas of the state are completing Phase 1a at different times based on the number of healthcare workers and LTCF residents and staff they have to vaccinate," said Commissioner Toomey. "This expansion of 1a eligible vaccination criteria will allow vaccine to be administered as quickly as possible to our most at-risk populations in terms of exposure, transmission and severity. It also gives healthcare providers and public health staff time to plan and work with local communities across the state to ensure safe and efficient deployment of limited vaccine supplies."

It is critical that even as vaccine becomes available to more people, all Georgians must continue to wear a mask, practice social distancing and wash your hands frequently. While the COVID-19 vaccine is 95% effective in preventing illness in the individual being vaccinated, it is not yet known if the vaccine fully prevents person to person transmission or asymptomatic infections.

For updates on COVID-19, follow @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Twitter and @GaDPH and @GovKemp on Facebook.