The Governor's accelerateSC task force has launched accelerate.sc.gov, South Carolina's one-stop-shop for COVID-19 response information.

South Carolina to Move to Phase 1b of COVID-19 Vaccination Plan on March 8, 2021

Public Health

March 2, 2021

COLUMBIA, S.C. – Governor Henry McMaster and the South Carolina Department of Health

Officials Unveil Plans for All Vaccination Phases

and Environmental Control (DHEC) announced today that South Carolina will advance to Phase 1b of the state's COVID-19 vaccination plan beginning Monday, March 8.

"Throughout South Carolina's vaccination efforts, our priority has been – and continues to be – saving lives," **said Gov. Henry McMaster**. "In the month of February, South Carolina made tremendous progress on expanding access to vaccinations as the supply of vaccine increased. Our hospitals, pharmacies and healthcare providers became more nimble and efficient at getting shots in arms. Because of these successes, we're now in a position to make the majority of South Carolinians eligible to receive the vaccine."

"South Carolina remains focused on protecting the lives and health of South Carolinians from COVID-19," **said Dr. Edward Simmer, DHEC Director**. "With the significant increase in vaccine supply and progress in vaccinating people in group 1a, front-line health care workers and those aged 65 and over, we are now ready to move to our next phase. Our state's vaccine plan prioritizes those with greatest risk, while ensuring equal access to the vaccine for every South Carolinian aged 16 and over."

South Carolina's phased approach to its COVID-19 vaccine rollout recognizes the risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19 increases with age, and people with certain medical conditions and occupations are at higher risk of exposure to the virus. Because of this, South Carolina will continue to move phase by phase, based on risk level, with the goal of vaccinating every South Carolinian who wants to receive a vaccine by this summer.

Beginning March 8, appointments to get the COVID-19 vaccine can be made by people in the following groups:

- **Anyone aged 55 and up**
- **People with increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease**
    - People aged 16-64 with one or more of the following high-risk medical conditions:
        - Cancer (current, not a history of cancer), chronic kidney disease (any stage), chronic lung disease, diabetes (Type 1 and

Type 2), Down syndrome, heart disease (congestive heart disease, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy, pulmonary hypertension), HIV/AIDS, solid organ transplant, obesity (BMI >30), pregnancy, sickle cell disease**.**

    - People who have a developmental or other severe high-risk disability that makes developing severe life-threatening illness or death from COVID-19 infection more likely
- **Frontline workers with increased occupational risk**
  Frontline workers with increased occupational risk are people who:
    - Must be in-person at their place of work, and
    - Perform a job that puts them at increased risk of exposure due to their frequent, close (less than 6 feet) and ongoing (more than 15 minutes) contact with others in the work environment

Examples of frontline workers include, **but are not limited to**, school staff and daycare workers, manufacturing workers, grocery store workers, law enforcement officers, etc.

- **Individuals at increased risk in settings where people are living and working in close contact**
    - Residents and workers in group home settings for the mentally or physically disabled or those with behavioral or substance abuse conditions
    - Workers and residents in homeless shelters
    - Workers and residents in community training homes
    - State and local correctional facility staff with direct inmate contact
    - Correctional and immigration detention facility inmates
    - Migrant farmworkers living in shared housing or reliant on shared transportation
- **All workers in healthcare and community health settings who have routine, direct patient contact and were not vaccinated in Phase 1a**

“The arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines, including the recent approval of the new one-shot Janssen vaccine, has given us renewed hope for a return to normalcy and a light at the end of the tunnel,” **Dr. Simmer said**. “At the same time, we know our fight is not yet over. Until enough of us get vaccinated, we must all continue to wear masks, stay six feet away

from others, and avoid crowds, even after we have received the vaccine. In addition, being tested can help reduce the spread of the disease and identify the presence of variants as early as possible."

Public health officials estimate it will take 70 to 80 percent of the population getting vaccinated in order to reach herd immunity and stop COVID-19.

Based on current vaccine supply levels, DHEC anticipates Phase 1c will begin on approximately April 12, 2021. The phase will include:

- **People aged 45 and up**
- **Essential workers**
    - This group includes those who work in essential job categories as defined by the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) who are not included in Phase 1b because they do not have frequent, close contact with others in the work environment (examples may include construction workers, delivery drivers, utility workers, etc. who do not have frequent, close and ongoing contact with others).

Phase 2 will begin on approximately May 3, 2021, and will include:

- All South Carolinians aged 16 and up

South Carolinians are urged to get vaccinated according to the state's plan, and not to jump ahead of others.

"We're asking South Carolinians to consider others, and the fact that this plan is risk-based to prevent severe illness and death," **Dr. Simmer said.** "You're urged to not jump the line and put your loved ones, friends or neighbors at risk by doing so."

How to make an appointment?

Online appointments can be made by using scdhec.gov/vaxlocator or you can call DHEC's COVID-19 Vaccine Information Line at 1-866-365-8110 for help.

How will people demonstrate eligibility?

When seeking vaccine services, people included in Phase 1b or 1c may show eligibility by showing an ID that incudes their date of birth,

verifying that they meet the criteria for a frontline or essential worker, or by verifying that they have an eligible high-risk medical condition.

For a copy of the plan, click here. To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, visit scdhec.gov/vaxfacts.

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The Honorable Henry McMaster
State House
1100 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

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