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News Release
December 30, 2020

Contact information

Minnesota advisory group working on phased approach for COVID-19 vaccines

MDH now seeking statewide public input on how to sequence target groups identified by federal guidelines for upcoming vaccination phases

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) today announced it is seeking Minnesotans' feedback on how to continue progress toward the goal of distributing the initial supply of COVID-19 vaccine in a way that saves the most lives and puts us on a path to ending the crisis brought on by the pandemic as quickly as possible. The limited initial supply of COVID-19 vaccine means there is not enough for everyone who needs it. The state must therefore determine a process that ensures fair, equitable, and effective distribution of the vaccine.

As Minnesota health officials work with a wide range of partners to distribute the first small shipments of COVID-19 vaccines to health care workers and long-term care residents and staff (in “Phase 1a” of vaccine distribution), they continue planning for the larger shipments of vaccine expected in the coming weeks and months.

Minnesota is following federal recommendations to start vaccine distribution with the people who are most likely to get COVID-19 and those most at risk of serious complications.

Minnesotans can provide feedback about part of this process to the state’s COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group. The advisory group includes health care experts from across the state who review guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) about who should get the vaccine first, and make detailed recommendations for how to apply the guidelines in Minnesota to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

Minnesotans may provide feedback about how to implement ACIP’s guidelines in Minnesota through the MDH website: Minnesota COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group (/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/advisory.html).

Ultimately, Governor Walz makes the final decisions about COVID-19 vaccine distribution. But those decisions are based on advice from public health experts at MDH and the Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group, whose advice will be informed by public feedback.

The group is scheduled to meet later today, and again on Jan. 11 to discuss distribution of vaccine for frontline essential workers and Minnesotans age 75 and older (in “Phase 1b” of vaccine distribution). The group will deliver its final recommendations to Gov. Walz. Public feedback submitted via the website by 5 p.m. on Jan. 7, 2021, will be provided to the advisory group ahead of their Jan. 11 meeting.

About COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution in Minnesota:
The process for distributing the vaccine is complex and is led by the federal government. To get the vaccine to Minnesotans, there are specific roles for various partners:

The federal government is responsible for regulating vaccine development and approving those that are safe and effective. It also works with vaccine manufacturers like Pfizer and Moderna to procure vaccines, and it tells states how much vaccine they get and when. The federal government then ships the vaccine to states.

The State of Minnesota works with hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, tribal health, local public health, and other vaccination partners to get the vaccine out to Minnesotans.

Earlier this month, Governor Walz described for Minnesotans the three principles guiding distribution of the vaccine in Minnesota. These include:

- Immunize for impact: Maximize immediate health benefit, reduce death, and minimize the harm created by COVID-19 by starting with those most susceptible to serious complications and those who care for them.
- Equitable distribution and access: Make sure no procedural or structural issues impact access to the vaccine among any particular group or population. And help ensure Minnesotans in every corner and every community know they can trust the process, the safety, and the effectiveness of the vaccine.
- Transparency: Share information as quickly as possible with Minnesotans.

About the COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group:

- MDH convenes the COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Advisory Group after new federal recommendations have been made that need to be adapted for Minnesota, as well as any time they need to provide information to the group.
- MDH identifies advisory group members in consultation with the Governor’s office and other advisory group members. Initial members were convened in September, and more members were added in December as the group moved to consider recommendations for the next phase of vaccine allocation (Phase 1b). New members brought expertise in ethics, health equity, economics, and labor and industry.

- The advisory group's goal is to have equitable distribution of the limited COVID-19 vaccine supply in a way that has the most significant positive impact on health.
- Agendas and minutes from advisory group meetings will be posted to the website by early next week. Going forward, meeting minutes and agendas will be posted within a few days of each meeting of the group.
- The advisory group is made up of statewide representatives of leading care providers; bioethicists; state, local, and tribal public health representatives; health care associations; and health care experts serving diverse community groups.

-MDH-

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