COVID-19 vaccination eligibility will open on Friday for Rhode Islanders who are 60 to 64 years of age and who are 16 to 64 with specific underlying health conditions, Governor Dan McKee and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) are announcing today.

"Our goal is to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible, and opening eligibility to this next group of Rhode Islanders is an important and encouraging step toward that goal," said Governor McKee. "We will continue to build out and increase our state's vaccination capacity to ensure we are prepared to get shots in arms when the vaccine supply increases."

New appointments at Rhode Island's State-run vaccination sites will be added to VaccinateRI.org beginning at 5 p.m. on Friday. (New appointments are regularly added on Tuesdays beginning at 9 a.m. and Fridays beginning at 5 p.m.) Walgreens and CVS expect to adjust their eligibility criteria to take appointments for people in these two groups at 11 a.m. on Friday.

People age 16 to 64 are eligible to be vaccinated if they have one of the following conditions: diabetes (type 1 or type 2); lung disease (such as COPD, emphysema, or cystic fibrosis); heart disease; or kidney disease. People age 16 to 64 are also eligible if they have a weakened immune system. That includes people who have cancer, people who get chemotherapy or radiation, people who have HIV/AIDS, people who have sickle cell disease, people who take medicine that weakens the immune system, and people who are pregnant. A full list of qualifying conditions is available online.

Rhode Island currently has three State-run vaccination sites, located in Providence (at the Dunkin' Donuts Center), Cranston (at Sockanosset Cross Road), and Middletown (1400 West Main Road). People who cannot register online for an appointment at a State-run site through VaccinateRI.org can get help by calling 844-930-1779.

To make an appointment through CVS, go to CVS.com, use CVS Pharmacy phone app or call 800-746-7287. To make an appointment through Walgreens, go to Walgreens.com/ScheduleVaccine or call your local Walgreens.

In addition to retail pharmacies and the three State-run vaccination sites, Rhode Islanders are also getting vaccinated at city- and town-run clinics and through hospital systems, community health centers, and other targeted locations. City- and town-run sites are currently focused on administering second doses to people who are 75 and older and on vaccinating teachers, school staff, and child care workers. On Tuesday Governor Dan McKee announced a plan to get first doses to all teachers, school staff, and child care workers at these sites by the end of March.

People who are not yet eligible to get vaccinated against COVID-19 can sign up for the COVID-19 Vaccine Interest Notification List by visiting http://portal.ri.gov. Rhode Island is using this list to let people know when they are eligible to make a vaccination appointment. The State-run vaccination sites are also using this list to identify and contact Rhode Islanders if they anticipate having any unused doses in open vials as they near the end of the day, beginning with currently eligible groups. People who need help being added to the Vaccine Interest Notification List can call 844-930-1779.

People who live, work, or go to school in Rhode Island can now get additional support when scheduling a COVID-19 vaccine appointment. People can call 2-1-1 to talk to a live, trained person, who can offer help in multiple languages when scheduling appointments on VaccinateRI.org or signing up for the COVID-19 Vaccine Interest Notification List. RIDOH is working with the United Way to provide this free support for all Rhode Islanders, including those with technical challenges and barriers, the deaf and hard of hearing community, those who speak a language other than English, and people with speech disabilities. This help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information about COVID-19 vaccination in Rhode Island, visit RIDOH's COVID-19 Vaccine page.

People who are 16 and 17 are only eligible to receive Pfizer vaccine. This may mean that it may be more challenging for these people to make appointments initially.

There is no insurance requirement to get vaccinated in Rhode Island, and no one has to pay to get vaccinated. For general information about COVID-19 vaccination in Rhode Island, visit C19vaccineRI.org.