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Ask the Mayor

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Mayor Bowser Thanks President Biden for Answering the Call for More Vaccine

Wednesday, January 27, 2021
As Vaccine Demand Remains High, DC Continues to Advocate for More Vaccine

(Washington, DC) – This week, the Biden Administration committed to increasing the District's vaccine allocation by 15% for the next three weeks. Mayor Bowser and DC Health, led by Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt, recognized this announcement as a

promising indicator of the new Administration's commitment to increasing the supply of the COVID-19 vaccine. And while the Mayor will continue to advocate for Washington, DC to receive more doses, the District continues to make progress in vaccinating District residents and workers.

The following populations are now receiving the vaccine in Washington, DC: individuals who work in health care settings; members of the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department; residents of long-term and intermediate care facilities and residents of community residential facilities/group homes; DC residents who are 65 years old and older; individuals experiencing homelessness; members of the Metropolitan Police Department and personnel responsible for Continuity of District Government; and teachers and staff who are, or will be, working in person at a traditional or public charter school. This week, DC Health will also begin on-site vaccinations at two DC Housing Authority senior properti as part of the senior vaccination initiative. Also in the initial stages of rollout are vaccinations for Department of Corrections employees and residents.

Tuesday, January 26 was the first day of vaccinations for DC Public Schools staf To date, 2,542 of 3,840 appointments have been filled, and approximately 460 doses administered. Additionally, as of January 26, 1,015 out of 1,025 appointments for public charter school teachers and staff were booked and scheduled for this week.

Earlier this week, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education also contacted licensed childcare providers and private and independent school leaders to begin collecting contact information for in-person staff to ensure that as vaccine supply allows, the District can work quickly to make appointments available to eligible staff.

Updates to the vaccinate.dc.gov Portal and Coronavirus Call Center

DC Health and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer continue working together, using feedback from the community, to improve the process of booking a vaccination appointment through vaccinate.dc.gov and the Coronavirus Call Center.

Improvements made to vaccinate.dc.gov after January 13 include:

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- Removal of CAPTCHA during the booking process: the only remaining CAPTCHA (with enhanced performance) is during the initial screening and is required to secure the site
- Increased site resources: the site was moved to better infrastructure to support the numbers of users clicking on the site at one time and to increase the speed of confirmation email delivery
- Removal of the "change booking" capability: this functionality was removed since new appointments could not be guaranteed and the user did not know if other appointments were available until having already canceled their appointment

Improvements going into effect tomorrow include:

- Enhanced vaccination site management: the website will automatically hid vaccination sites where all appointments are booked; previously, this was manually performed and would lead to the public seeing sites without available appointments
- Streamlined process: the removal of questions regarding insurance information will further streamline the process of booking an appointmen
- Site navigation improvements: updated help text and easier to understand buttons will make the website easier to navigate
- Additional confirmation options: users will now have the option to print a confirmation page in lieu of showing an email

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Additionally, tomorrow, the zip code 20024 will be included in the list of priority zip codes, meaning residents who live in that zip code will have access to the appointments released on Thursday. DC Health has also more than quadrupled the number of call takers who will be available on mornings when appointments become available, and on Thursday morning, more than 200 call takers will be available to help residents make appointments over the phone. It is still recommended that residents with internet access use the vaccinate.dc.gov portal to make an appointment.

Updates to COVID-19 Testing

DC Health and the Downtown and Golden Triangle BIDs are partnering to offer

additional free COVID-19 testing to DC's community of essential workers through a new pop-up testing site downtown. Tests will be PCR-based and provide a 3-5 day turnaround on results. Those eligible to get tested include: hotel staff, restaurant workers, building engineers, environmental service staff, janitorial staff, security staff, and any individual unable to perform their daily work from home. These essential workers can get tested on Mondays from 2 pm until 6 pm, Tuesdays from 10 am until 2 pm, and Thursdays from 2 pm. until 6 pm at a pop-up testing site on I Street NW near the intersection of Black Lives Matter Plaza. The pop-up will kick off this Friday from 2 pm until 6 pm, and this site is in addition to the other free public testing sites.

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