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COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force Announces Subcommittees Focused on Key Audiences and Issues

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Prison Reform, Public Health, Public Safety

Governor Tom Wolf announced the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force less than one month ago. Since that time, the task force and Wolf Administration have accomplished bi-partisan initiatives to help advance the state's vaccination rollout and COVID fight.

Last week, the task force announced a special initiative to vaccinate teachers, school staff and child care workers, helping to get children back in the classroom and further protecting our educators and communities.

Most recently, the task force announced the formation of subcommittees focused on key issues and audiences, bringing more voices to the table to aid in representing all Pennsylvanians.

Subcommittee members represent stakeholders and advocates, state agencies, workers, academics, industry, and other interested parties. The overriding purpose of all subcommittees is collaboration and stakeholder input through productive conversation.

Subcommittees include:

Aging

As Pennsylvania continues to implement the Interim Vaccination Plan, which prioritizes those 65 and older and individuals living in long term care facilities, the legislature and advocates have raised concerns related to access to vaccine for seniors. This subcommittee will augment steps already taken to alleviate concerns by highlighting local efforts and creating this centralized forum for advocates on these issues.

Racial Equity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found "long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19."

The Department of Health (DOH) has worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to address these disparities, but community partnerships and leadership from trusted messengers is critical in addressing racial inequities.

This subcommittee will help with messaging of current efforts to advocates and stakeholders, lift issues for the consideration of the administration and the legislature and provide more public input into the current vaccine rollout process.

Business/Workforce

The legislature and advocates have raised concerns related to the economic impacts on both employees and employers resulting from limited vaccine availability.

This subcommittee will help with messaging of current efforts to advocates and stakeholders, lift issues for the consideration of the administration and the legislature and provide more public input into the current vaccine rollout process.

Education

Amid concerns related to access of vaccine for educators, the Task Force recommended and is moving forward with vaccinating teachers, school staff and child care workers. This subcommittee will evaluate how this initiative is working and provide an ongoing forum for the education community to share concerns and successes.

“The productive and focused working relationship with our legislators is delivering successes toward vaccinating more and more Pennsylvanians,” Gov. Wolf said. “To hear even more voices and feedback from stakeholders and communities is why the task force developed these subcommittees focused on key audiences with their own unique needs and challenges. I look forward to seeing the results of the subcommittee meetings, which are already taking place.”

Members of the task force include co-chairs Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam and Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency Randy Padfield; for the Senate Democratic Caucus, Sen. Art Haywood; for the House Democratic Caucus, Rep. Bridget Kosierowski; for the Senate Republican Caucus, Sen. Ryan Aument; and for the House Republican Caucus, Rep. Tim O’Neal.

Task force members represent their caucus’s point-of-view and work to streamline conversations to focus and drive issues of importance. Wolf Administration members will serve as task force members with the subject matter expertise to listen, collaborate and provide information, answers and suggestions to solve problems in a timely manner.

The task force has been meeting at least twice weekly to advance initiatives, listen and recommend plans and programs. Subcommittees are or will meet at least weekly.