

LETTER TO FAMILIES

FEBRUARY 1, 2021



Dear DDDS Families,

As I have promised throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to keep you updated on the evolving plans for COVID-19 vaccination. You may have seen and heard that the federal warehouse of reserve vaccine is low and this in turn has caused states to have to modify their vaccine roll-out plans.

Delaware moved into Phase 1b last week with a focus on vaccinating Delawareans age 65 and older. If you or anyone in your family is over 65, including service recipients, please utilize the link <https://vaccinerequest.delaware.gov> to register your interest in receiving the vaccine. This registration form adds those interested people 65 or older into the queue. When vaccine is available, individuals will be contacted with an appointment time. Appointment slots are being offered as vaccine becomes available. Please register and be patient for your appointment. Additionally, four local pharmacies are also vaccinating Delawareans over 65, based on vaccine availability. Please consider registering with them as well (Walgreens, Rite Aid, Giant and Camden Rx). More information is available on the Delaware COVID-19 Vaccine website at <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/vaccine/>. The information is routinely updated, as information changes frequently, so it's probably worth checking the site regularly.

Delaware is still in the process of vaccinating Phase 1a essential healthcare personnel, including direct support professionals, personal care attendants, etc. If you are employed to provide direct care for an individual with disabilities, you should be eligible to receive a vaccine under the 1a designation. DDDS is working with our sister Divisions in DHSS to hold small vaccine events for those 1a workers. These events are dependent on when we have vaccine to distribute.

For DDDS service recipients who live at home, we continue to plan for the Paratransit home vaccine distribution. The timing of this is all dependent on vaccine availability.

Based on the very limited supply of vaccine coming into the state, DHSS is planning the first Paratransit home vaccine distribution event to ONLY include those people in the household aged 65 or older who are eligible for Phase 1b. As Delaware moves into different phases of the

vaccine distribution plan, DHSS will adjust the focus of the Paratransit home vaccine distribution plan. As DDDS gets more information about the availability of doses for these efforts, service recipients will be contacted through our network of Community Navigators, LTSS Care Coordinators, Support Coordinators and Family Resource Coordinators. At this time though, the network does not have any additional information beyond what I just shared.

I strongly recommend that if anyone in your household is part of Phase 1a or 1b, that they take the opportunity to get the vaccine when it is offered to them. This includes DDDS service recipients who fall into Phase 1a or 1b based on their employment, age, or other demographics. If someone is eligible for the vaccine, I encourage those individuals to take advantage of any opportunity to get the vaccine when it is offered to them, whether that is at their work site, a local pharmacy, or some other vaccine event. I suggest not waiting for the Paratransit delivery if the vaccine is offered sooner.

DDDS service recipients who are not eligible in Phase 1a or Phase 1b will have access to the vaccine in Phase 1c (also referred to as Remaining Phase I). Phase 1c is tentatively planned to begin in March. This timeframe may change depending upon the availability of the vaccine. Find out more about Delaware's vaccination distribution plan for Phase 1c on the Delaware COVID-19 Vaccine website at <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/vaccine/vaccination-timeline/#remaining-phase-1>.

It's important to remember that the vaccine is just one of the tools we use to combat COVID-19. It is not a cure-all. Everyone must continue to use the other strategies as well- wear a face covering when around anyone not from your household, maintain social distance of six feet and practice frequent hand hygiene. Remember Delaware offers free COVID-19 testing, with results averaging within 48 hours. Test locations can be found at: <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/testing/>

I will continue to update you as we are notified of changes, timeframes, etc. Please know DDDS is working daily to ensure fast access to the vaccine for service recipients and the direct support professionals who care for them. I know it is frustrating to have tentative timeframes, but it is all based on how much vaccine the federal warehouse sends to each state, and the ability of the manufacturers to keep up with the demand.

We will get through this together. Thank you for your on-going patience.

Be well,



Cory Ellen Nourie, MSS, MLSP

Director of Community Services