

HHS Provides Answers to LeadingAge Questions on New Vaccine Initiative

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LeadingAge participated in a question and answer session with HHS officials leading the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program for COVID-19 Vaccination.

LeadingAge, along with three other Associations, participated in a question and answer session with HHS officials leading the [Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program](#) for COVID-19 Vaccination (vaccine initiative). Here is an [FAQ](#) from HHS about the program.

On the call HHS officials clarified a number of issues. They started by restating that the program is optional for providers of congregate residential settings for older people. Further, the plan is contingent on both an FDA emergency use authorization for a vaccine; and a statement from the FDA Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, saying that older people are a top priority.

They made clear that HHS's intention is to make the CVS-Walgreen's initiative a turn key operation. CVS and Walgreen's will receive the vaccine from HHS, everyone who administers it will be COVID tested and have PPE, and CVS/Walgreen's will take care of all the reporting and IT. The pharmacy chains will be paid through Medicare and Medicaid for administering the program, but not for the vaccine itself since HHS is providing that.

Here are the questions that were discussed during the call.

Q. Beyond nursing homes and assisted living communities and memory care, what settings are included?

A. Independent living, including on the campus of a Life Plan Community, is included. Every site should complete the **REDCap online survey** during the two week period that it is open, starting October 19 and going through October 30 at 11:59 PM Eastern time.

Q. Assisted living definitions vary by state. How will the program account for that?

A. HHS understands this and defers to state definitions. The HHS goal is to reach all older people living in congregate settings.

Q. What about affordable housing?

A. CDC officials said that they'd been contacted by HUD and would be speaking with them as soon as possible. They are interested in working with LeadingAge to understand this type of housing.

Q. What about people receiving home care and the workers who serve them?

A. The top priority, per ACIP, is likely to be first health care workers, then older people in congregate settings. Older individuals living in the community and receiving home care (personal care, home health, hospice, etc.) are considered community residents, not residents of congregate settings. It is expected that they will receive vaccines soon, but not in this first group.

Staff who work in home care settings are included in the top priority group, health care workers.

Q. And adult day or PACE?

A. Not in the first effort that targets residential settings. After that, it is anticipated that these settings and others where older people come together to receive services (e.g., senior centers) will be good sites for delivery of vaccines.

Q. How will aging services workers receive vaccines?

A. CDC anticipates that public health departments will set up clinics for immunization of health care workers; in addition, they will have agreements with pharmacies to provide immunizations. If a staff member is unable to get to one of these clinics, they may receive vaccine from CVS or Walgreen's through the onsite program in the community in which they work.

Q. What about payment for the immunization?

A. For the CVS/Walgreen's initiative, the pharmacy will take care of billing Medicare or Medicaid. If they immunize staff with private insurance they will ask for the staff person's insurance card. HHS intends for all COVID vaccination to be at no cost to anyone.

Q. What if a provider wants to go with an existing LTC or local pharmacy?

A. The program is optional. If a provider has a trusted LTC or local pharmacy, they should be sure that the pharmacy enrolls and is approved by the state. These pharmacies should check with the state health department immediately to enroll.

Q. What's the timing?

A. HHS anticipates that within 24-48 hours of a vaccine receiving the FDA emergency use authorization and the ACIP has weighed in, the program will begin. It is essential that providers take advantage of this two week period ending October 30 at 11:59 PM eastern time to sign up in NHSN or REDCap or with the state.

Q. What if an aging services community resident receives a first dose of a vaccine that requires two doses – and they leave the community prior to getting the second dose?

A. The information system (VTrckS – vaccine management system that allows CDC, providers and others to track and manage publicly funded vaccines) will enable follow up so the person gets a second dose, if needed.