

## February 26, 2021 Maine Adopts Age-Based Approach to COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility

**Next Eligibility Group:** The State of Maine has updated its vaccination plan to reflect emerging science, progress in vaccinating its oldest residents, and increasing vaccine supply. The planned schedule, which is subject to change depending on fluctuations in vaccine supply including an acceleration if supply increases, is as follows:

- March 3: Eligibility expands to residents age 60 and older
- April: Eligibility expands to age 50 and older
- May: Eligibility expands to age 40 and older
- June: Eligibility expands to age 30 and older
- July and beyond: Eligibility expands to ages 29 and under, including youth and children pending authorization of age appropriate vaccines

This update to Maine's vaccination strategy reflects recent scientific data indicating that age is among the strongest predictors of whether an individual is likely to get seriously ill and die from COVID-19.

While vaccine providers may start vaccinating people ages 60 to 69 on Wednesday, March 3, some providers may not have the scheduling systems or capacity to begin vaccinating individuals in this age group at that time. Providers can also determine when they open existing pre-registration systems to this new age group. Please let Sally Weiss ([Sally.Weiss@Maine.gov](mailto:Sally.Weiss@Maine.gov)) know if you would like to modify the information on the [State's website](#) about when and how this new eligibility group can sign up for an appointment.

**Clinics for Age-Eligible School Teachers and Staff:** Governor Mills shares President Biden's goal of returning to in-person learning as soon as possible. Both Dr. Anthony Fauci and U.S. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky have stated that vaccinating teachers and staff is not a prerequisite for in-person learning. That said, we share the priority to vaccinate them as soon as possible.

To that end, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Education (DOE) will work in partnership to organize special clinics for age-eligible teachers and staff in pre-K through 12 schools. This means that, in March, approximately 10,500 school teachers and staff aged 60 and older will qualify for vaccination at the school clinics. These clinic sites will initially be organized in the nine superintendent regions, with DOE providing superintendents, teachers, and staff with information on the locations and dates of clinics so that eligible staff can register. In recognition of school staff's time constraints, these special clinics will target hours on Friday afternoons and weekends, starting the week of March 8. Age-eligible teachers and school staff can also seek vaccines on their own from publicly accessible vaccine sites, like other eligible Maine residents, if they prefer. DOE and DHHS will communicate with eligible teachers and staff in the coming weeks on their options.

These clinics may take the form of on-site school vaccination clinics, local EMS clinics for schools in the region, or special days set aside at large throughput sites for rosters of eligible teachers and staff. Additional information will be sent to vaccine providers next week on how

they can help with this work. While not all providers may be needed for school clinics, it is an expectation that each provider work with the State as needed as a condition of receiving vaccines.

**Prioritization Within Age Groups:** With expanded supply and larger numbers of eligible individuals in each age group, the question has arisen: can vaccine providers prioritize individuals within the age band? The answer is yes, if doing so helps vaccinate those at greatest risk such as the oldest people within the eligible age group or age-eligible patients with medical conditions that increase the risk for severe COVID-19. Additionally, as stated in February 8 guidance, equity of vaccination can lead to stratification among eligible individuals. As such, providers may within the eligible age group prioritize individuals who live in marginalized, medically-underserved, and remote communities, including racial and ethnic minority groups, sexual and gender minority groups, tribal communities, or individuals living with a disability. The Department does not support sites prioritizing people within an eligibility group based on factors such as being on the vaccine provider's board of directors or being friends or family of a provider's leadership.

If you receive questions from community members about the State's vaccination strategy, please feel free to direct them to the State's website, [www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines](http://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines), for the latest information. We thank you again for your work in this effort to protect the health of Maine people.