



State of New Jersey  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
PO BOX 360  
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0360  
[www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health)

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER  
Lt. Governor

JUDITH M. PERSICILLI, RN, BSN, MA  
Commissioner

January 22, 2021

**TO:** Points of Dispensing participating in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program

**FROM:** Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A. Commissioner

**SUBJECT:** Expectations for 'Open' COVID-19 Vaccination Points of Dispensing

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According to New Jersey Department of Health records, your site is considered an 'open' point of dispensing (POD). This memo serves to emphasize key expectations for open points of dispensing. Thank you for your partnership in this initiative.

The list below is not exhaustive. All points of dispensing must adhere to expectations outlined in New Jersey's Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan. This memo also supplements the other materials circulated by NJDOH regarding the provision, delivery and administration of COVID-19 vaccines [https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_vaccination.shtml](https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml).

Please share this information with all the appropriate staff in your vaccination program. Points of dispensing may contact the New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine Operations Center at [Vax.Operations@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Vax.Operations@doh.nj.gov) with any further questions.

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New Jersey's decisions about (1) which PODs to open and (2) how much vaccine to send to each POD are guided by the strategic aims identified in New Jersey's Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan:

- Provide equitable access to all who live, work, and/or are educated in New Jersey,
- Achieve community protection, assuming vaccine effectiveness, availability, and uptake, and
- Build sustainable trust in COVID-19 and other vaccines.

New Jersey is primarily an 'open POD' state, because open sites provide the greatest access and efficiency for all New Jerseyans. Whereas 'closed' PODs may be used sparingly to serve vulnerable sub-populations who could not otherwise readily participate in an open POD (e.g. residents of long-term care facilities), an open POD is a point of dispensing serving all eligible populations.

Given variability in vaccination availability as well as variability in POD performance, the State of New Jersey cannot guarantee new first ('prime') doses for every POD. Allocations may vary week-to-week due to irregularities in the federal supply to New Jersey. The State of New Jersey allocates all doses available to the state—there is no state stockpile at this time. However, PODs that adhere to the following

performance expectations may be eligible to receive an at most four-week forecast of predicted future doses.

Noncompliance with the following may adversely impact ongoing eligibility to receive new first dose allocations. PODs should also take note of compliance expectations under [New Jersey Department of Health Executive Directive No. 20-035](#) (regarding New Jersey’s Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan).

For any site that distributes multi-dose vaccines, the second (‘booster’) doses will be sent to the site separately from the first (‘prime’) doses and should be administered at the appropriate interval.

In addition to minimum requirements under the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Agreement, New Jersey’s Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, and state and federal law, New Jersey expects all ‘open’ points of dispensing to adhere to the following as part of continuing eligibility for vaccine allocations:

**Continued Site Readiness**

- Your POD must remain in compliance with the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Agreement.
- Your POD must remain up-to-date with any trainings for vaccine administrators and vaccine site operations as required by state or federal authorities.
- Your POD must ensure sufficient and adequate storage and handling of the vaccine product(s) allotted to your site. Please consult the CDC [COVID-19 Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit](#).

**Vaccine Recipient Eligibility**

- Your POD must follow the statewide vaccination phasing and eligibility criterion.
  - POD websites, outreach materials, and scheduling systems must reflect statewide priority groups.
  - The following groups are currently eligible:

Phase	Sub-Population	Start Date
1A	<a href="#">Healthcare Personnel</a>	December 15, 2020
1A	<a href="#">Long-term and Congregate Care Residents and Staff</a>	December 15, 2020
1B	<a href="#">Frontline First Responders, including sworn law enforcement and fire professionals</a>	January 7, 2021
1B	<a href="#">Persons aged 65 and older</a>	January 14, 2021
1B	<a href="#">Persons aged 16 to 64 years old who have at least one medical condition, as defined by the CDC, that increases the risk for severe COVID-19</a>	January 14, 2021
1B	Other 1B Sub-Populations	<i>To be announced pending vaccine supply. Additional sub-groups may be defined.</i>
1C	1C Sub-Populations	
2	General Population	

- Your POD must not ask for any supplemental documentation to prove eligibility.
  - Self-identification by a vaccine recipient is enough. A doctor’s note should not be collected. Proof of profession should not be collected. Proof of residency should not be collected.
  - Screening should occur in advance, but PODs may verbally confirm at the time of vaccination that the vaccine recipient is part of a currently eligible group.
  - Your POD may not require provision of social security numbers.
  - Eligibility is based on the individual vaccine recipient’s occupational and/or demographic factors – it does not extend to the recipient’s family or friends.
  
- Your POD must be open to eligible individuals who live, work, or are educated in New Jersey.
  - Note: Although the State encourages all vaccination sites to make appointments available to all eligible individuals, county-run PODs may prioritize individuals who live work, and/or are educated in their county. If so, the POD must institute a remote ‘wait list’ of currently eligible consumers who can be offered last hour appointments at the end of the vaccine clinic day if there are remaining doses (e.g. if extra doses can be acquired from a vaccine vial and/or if scheduled recipients miss their appointments).

### **Communications to Vaccine Recipients**

- Your POD must provide the applicable emergency use authorization (EUA) fact sheet to each vaccine recipient.
  - EUA fact sheets in a variety of languages can be found [here for Pfizer](#) and [here for Moderna](#).
  
- Your POD must provide interpretation/translation services on-site or telephonically.
  - Languages commonly used in New Jersey include English, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Haitian Creole, Polish, Mandarin, Hindi, Portuguese, Korean, Gujarati, Vietnamese, Yiddish, Russian, and Filipino-Tagalog.
  
- Your POD should disburse information about next steps for their vaccine recipients in the observation area(s).
  - For example, advise vaccine recipients to: (1) check that they received their COVID-19 vaccination cards, (2) schedule their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose appointments, (3) sign-up for the [v-safe app](#) to check-in about their health after the appointment, (4) encourage their friends and family to [get vaccinated](#), (5) share why they got vaccinated on social media, (6) [provide feedback to NJDOH](#) about their experience, and/or (7) join New Jersey’s COVID-19 [exposure notification app](#).
  - Information about health insurance enrollment and health promotion activities are also appropriate to be distributed to vaccine recipients in the observation area.
  
- Your POD must be listed on the [New Jersey COVID-19 Information Hub](#) and your POD must update NJDOH in a timely manner if any information on the state website is incomplete or out-of-date.
  - The COVID-19 Information Hub includes site sponsor/name, location, telephone number for appointments (if applicable), website for appointments (if applicable, including NJVSS for those using the statewide scheduling system), and minimum age based on vaccine product. Other variables may be added.

- If your POD can be accessed by public transportation, this should be advertised to vaccine recipients on your website and/or scheduling platform.

### **Scheduling**

- It is recommended that all expected vaccine dose administrations be scheduled in advance. Walk-ins are discouraged in the interest of preventing long wait times.
  - PODs are encouraged to offer appointments during non-business hours to accommodate working families.
  - Your POD may institute a remote 'wait list' of currently eligible consumers who can be offered last hour appointments at the end of the vaccine clinic day if there are remaining doses (e.g. if extra doses can be acquired from a vaccine vial and/or if scheduled recipients miss their appointments). If doses remain after serving those in current priority groups, other individuals who qualify under the EUA may be vaccinated to ensure no doses are unnecessarily wasted.
- Your POD is strongly encouraged to use the New Jersey Vaccine Scheduling System (NJVSS) to schedule appointments at your site. Your POD may use an additional IT system for billing.
- Your POD's scheduling system must adhere to generally recognized IT industry security controls and standards, and users must be advised that data will only be used for public health purposes.

### **Vaccine Administration**

- Your POD must begin administering vaccine within 24 hours of each shipment receipt.
- Your POD must administer and report into the New Jersey Immunization Information System at least 75% of new first doses of COVID-19 vaccines within three full days of each shipment receipt.
  - During periods of vaccination scarcity, New Jersey must factor throughput performance into weekly allocation determinations.
- Your POD must administer and report into NJIIS 100% of new first doses of COVID-19 vaccines within six full days of each shipment receipt.
  - No doses should be left 'on the shelf' and no doses should be wasted unnecessarily. Efficiency and safe delivery are paramount during this period of significant demand and significant scarcity.
- Your POD must provide for appropriate accommodations for all vaccine recipients.
  - Vaccination sites are subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please visit [the ADA website here](#) for resources on accommodations for persons with disabilities, including [this guide on access to medical care](#). Individuals with disabilities must be permitted to be accompanied by a support person or companion, and individuals with disabilities cannot be denied access if unable to wear a mask due to a disability of medical condition.
  - All sites are encouraged to provide a designated quiet space to accommodate individuals with autism spectrum disorder or other behavioral or sensory challenges who may become overwhelmed.

- All sites are encouraged to establish dedicated vaccine ‘lanes’ for those requiring additional time or additional assistance.
- All sites are encouraged to establish dedicated appointment blocks for groups of two or more vaccine recipients to be scheduled together.

### Multi-Dose Vaccine Scheduling and Reminders

- Your POD must accommodate all multi-dose vaccine recipients who received their first dose at your location for their second dose appointment at the appropriate interval. Your POD is responsible for ensuring scheduling of the second dose appointment.
  - NJDOH guarantees that second doses will be made available to your site at the appropriate interval and first doses should not be reserved at the site for this purpose.
  - NJDOH recommends that second doses are scheduled while the vaccine recipient is waiting in observation after the first dose is administered (before departing first dose appointment), or that first and second dose appointments should be scheduled simultaneously.
- Your POD must issue second dose reminders to each multi-dose vaccine recipient to encourage completion of vaccine course.
  - Formats and mechanisms (e.g. phone, email, mail) for these reminders are outlined in Section 10 of New Jersey’s Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan.
  - Each vaccine recipient must be informed about how long they must wait between their first and second vaccinations.
  - Under the current EUAs and [FDA guidance](#), the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) vaccine doses should be administered 21 days apart and the [Moderna](#) vaccine doses should be administered 28 days apart. Vaccine products are not interchangeable – the same person must receive the same vaccine product at the appropriate interval to optimize vaccine efficacy.
  - If a vaccine recipient fails to return for booster at the scheduled second dose appointment (loss to follow-up), the dose may be reallocated as a new first dose.

### Reporting

- Your POD must continue to report to the New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIS) accurate and complete accounts of each dose administered within the shorter of:
  - 72 hours after administration, or
  - by the specified checkpoints (For first doses: 75% of each shipment is administered and reported within 3 full days of receipt, 100% of each shipment is administered and reported within 6 full days of receipt).
- Please see [New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Administrative Order No. 2021-04](#) (regarding NJIS reporting for COVID-19 vaccines).
- Race and ethnicity data are essential to monitor equitable access and uptake. Please ensure questions pertaining to race, ethnicity, and other demographics are asked of each vaccine recipient (note: a recipient may decline to answer, and this should be accounted for accordingly).

- Near real-time reporting is essential and timely reporting will inform ongoing performance assessments.
- Your POD must complete and submit daily Site Report surveys administered by NJDOH via NoviSurvey or other format.
- Your POD must provide a COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card to each vaccine recipient.
- The standardized cards developed by the federal government are included in the ancillary kits and, on request, NJDOH can provide a template for any additional cards needed.

### **Billing**

- Your PODs must vaccinate individuals regardless of whether they have health insurance coverage or what type of coverage they have. PODs are prohibited from balance billing or otherwise charging vaccine recipients (no out-of-pocket costs).
- Your POD may bill insurance to recoup administration costs ([more information here](#)) and/or may seek reimbursement from the Health Resources & Services Administration for uninsured vaccine recipients ([more information here](#)).
  - Providers that administer vaccinations to patients without health insurance or whose insurance does not provide coverage of vaccination administration fees may not charge enrollees directly for any vaccine administration costs. See [GetCoveredNJ](#) for information to assist in enrolling consumers in health insurance coverage.



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Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A.  
Commissioner