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Sent: Sunday, February 7, 2021 7:30 PM

To:

Subject: Important Information about 65+ Launch This Week

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dear Connecticut COVID-19 Vaccine Providers,

This email contains important information about expanding eligibility for COVID-19 vaccines in the State of Connecticut. It has three key messages:

- The formal launch of 65+ will be announced tomorrow (2/8) effective Thursday (2/11). The “formal launch” means that on Thursday, all providers should update their portals and eligibility language to include 65+ and schedule individuals 65+ over the subsequent 4 weeks.
- However, if you have extra capacity in schedules and available first dose supply now, you may begin scheduling and administering doses in advance of Thursday.
- We expect all providers to continue to actively address equity as part of our collective roll-out. The state will be providing additional information with specific guidance and direction to further achieve our mutual equity goals.

Formal launch to 65+ on Thursday

At the Governor’s news conference tomorrow afternoon, Governor Lamont is expected to announce that 65+ expanded eligibility starts on Thursday, February 11. The age 65-74 population in CT is approximately 350,000 individuals.

However, because there is some appointment availability this week prior to Thursday, we will begin offering appointments through VAAL and VAMS to those 65+ beginning tomorrow. In addition, if you don’t use VAAL or VAMS and have appointment slots for this week that are currently unfilled and have maximized your outreach to those 75+, please begin filling those slots this week with individuals 65+. More information about this below.

We know that many of you will not begin to immediately take additional appointments, as you have full schedules. The announcement will set public expectations that most 65+ vaccine appointments will occur in late February and March. We also know there are pockets of available appointments before Thursday – read further about this point.

Addressing extra capacity and filling schedules

We want to ensure that all appointment slots this week are filled. Given both snow delays as well as observed extra capacity in some schedules, we want to “catch up” on doses administered. Please make a proactive plan to use all doses on hand and those arriving this week by Monday, February 15. Please advise us via the order process if you foresee any challenges doing so.

Starting immediately, you may start to fill schedules and administer doses to 65+. As you do so, please remember:

- Continue to conduct outreach to 75+ groups. Including phone calls, social media utilization, neighbor-to-neighbor programs, and mobile clinics.

- Conduct active outreach and scheduling to all recipients who are eligible for second doses. Our goal is to complete all second doses on schedule! You have responsibility for your first dose recipients.
- Consider offering walk-up appointments to 75+ throughout the 65+ phase.
- Adopt a proactive approach to addressing technology, language, and transportation that ensures greater equity in the vaccine roll-out.

Equity in our COVID-19 vaccine roll-out

The State of Connecticut has observed the same fact as states across the US: A disproportionate share of COVID-19 vaccine has gone to wealthier and whiter residents of Connecticut (even when adjusting for age).

As we move ahead to 65+ roll-out, we want to reiterate our commitment to equity and ensure we work with all our providers as part of the solution.

Specifically:

- We will continue to support the work of our local health departments, FQHCs, hospitals, and city partners to conduct outreach for vulnerable populations. This includes mobile clinics at senior housing; protected appointment slots for community members who cannot easily self-schedule at mass vaccination sites; transportation solutions; and more. We will continue to provide dedicated allocation for these efforts – with a focus on high-[Social Vulnerability Index](#) (SVI) towns.
- We will launch a trusted messenger, train-the-trainer program to support community leaders to be COVID-19 vaccine ambassadors. We will have a webinar and toolkit available to support these efforts during the month of February.
- We will continue to site clinic locations in high-SVI towns and areas. The placement of the CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart pharmacy locations this week (nearly entirely supported out of the [Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program](#) dose allocation) is nearly entirely dedicated to high-SVI areas.

In addition, we expect all providers to:

- Monitor your own data regarding race, ethnicity, and zip codes of the patients you serve.
- Work collaboratively with local health departments and ensure appropriate outreach and engagement of vulnerable residents.
- Offer scheduling support options that go beyond technology and self-serve – help people through your front doors.

Actions steps for providers

- Update portals to reflect 65+ eligibility on or before Thursday. Please also verify that your portal reflects eligibility for congregate settings per the eligibility guidance on the DPH website and in previous bulletins.
- Update communications such as websites, social media, posters, attestations, and other materials relative to eligibility by Thursday.
- Publish schedules for the ~4 weeks beginning this Thursday – do not schedule first doses beyond Sunday, March 14, and do not schedule beyond your baseline allocations until you receive specific allocation to do so.

- Make sure that you are continuing to reach out to all first dose recipients who are due for second doses.
- Conduct outreach and scheduling to fill all available appointment slots this week. This can include scheduling 65+ before Thursday if needed. Catch-up on all doses on hand and arriving this week with a deadline of Monday, February 15. Please contact Sam.Kruse@ct.gov if you cannot meet this plan.
- Review race and ethnicity data for doses administered so far; adjust outreach efforts; work closely with all local providers.