



STATE OF CONNECTICUT



January 17, 2021

Dear Superintendents and Heads of Private Schools:

The COVID-19 pandemic, including the effort to distribute the vaccine, has presented new challenges – nationally, and here in Connecticut. While access to the vaccine for all who need it is ultimately the goal, the distribution requires careful planning.

As you know, **teachers and other school staff are part of “Phase 1b”** as frontline essential workers, but they are **not in the current group permitted to schedule appointments at this time**. We appreciate our school staff and understand the intense interest in ensuring they are vaccinated as soon as possible. However, as was communicated by DPH, the available vaccine in Connecticut is limited, so the first appointments available are for individuals 75 years of age or older. It must be noted that in Connecticut this is our group with the highest mortality rate, as **those who are 75 years of age or older represent only 8% of the population, but comprise 71% of COVID-19 deaths**.

It has been reported to both the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) that some school districts prematurely uploaded their entire school staff rosters to the federal Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS) last week. Since DPH has not yet authorized appointments for school staff, DPH has issued a clarification notifying Superintendents that all school staff who received communication from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to schedule an appointment must not do so at this time. **School districts must not upload any additional staff rosters until notified**. Those who uploaded rosters should be aware that the VAMS system will continue to send out reminders, but school staff must not access appointments until notified.

We appreciate the patience of school leadership during this time, and applaud the school communities for honoring our collective responsibility to those most vulnerable. Together, we can make sure that the members of our communities most at risk – those 75 years of age or older – have first access to the available COVID-19 vaccine supply in Connecticut. We will provide additional updates as this phase of Connecticut’s vaccine implementation moves forward.

Sincerely,

Deidre S. Gifford
Acting Commissioner
Department of Public Health

Charlene M. Russell-Tucker
Deputy Commissioner
State Department of Education