



Behavioral Health COVID 19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1. Do the behavioral health residential programs in Phase 1A include mental health, substance use disorders, detox and children's residential programs?

A1. Yes, these facilities and programs are included in Phase 1A, Group 2. All residents who meet the age eligibility for vaccines per the FDA, plus all paid and unpaid health care workers or direct care workers serving in these settings, are eligible to receive the vaccine.

Q2. Are patients in psychiatric hospitals, such as the Oregon State Hospital and Cedar Hills Hospital, included in Phase 1A? If so, in what group?

A2. Yes, patients in psychiatric hospitals are included in Phase 1A, Group 1, because their risk factors and length of stay are similar to residents in skilled nursing and memory care facilities.

Q3. How do I find out when my facility will provide vaccinations?

A3. Initial vaccine administration is occurring with specific groups as outlined by the [Phase 1A Vaccine Sequencing Plan](#). Vaccine is being administered by hospitals, emergency medical service (EMS) agencies, local public health authorities (LPHAs), skilled nursing facilities and other partners serving Phase 1A populations. If further guidance is needed, please contact the OHA Vaccine Planning unit by emailing COVID19.Vaccine@dhsoha.state.or.us.

Q4. Do all residents have to agree to receive the vaccine, and how are physicians involved in this decision?

A4. No, residents are not required to receive the vaccine, but OHA strongly recommends vaccination for the safety and health of the entire community. Programs are encouraged to develop internal policies for serving residents who decline the vaccine and to clearly communicate these policies. Residents should be encouraged to consult with their physician about any concerns they may have about vaccine safety.

Q5. Do I get to choose which vaccine my facility receives?

A5. No, not at this time. OHA does not get to decide which vaccine it receives from the federal government.

Q6. If someone in my facility has already had COVID-19, do they still need to get the vaccine?

A6. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people receive the vaccine regardless of their history of COVID-19 infection, with or without symptoms. The CDC does not recommend testing to check for prior infection before administering the vaccine.

Q7. If my facility's residents or staff have more health questions about the vaccine, where do they go for more information?

A7. They can contact their local public health authority or physician. They may also contact the OHA Vaccine Planning unit by emailing COVID19.Vaccine@dhsoha.state.or.us.

Q8. Our facility registered to be part of the Federal Pharmacy Program in 2020, but we haven't received information about when or how this will happen. Where do we go to get information and/or when will we receive information?

A8. If you registered for the Federal Pharmacy Program, one of the three participating pharmacies (Walgreens, CVS or Consonus) will contact you directly to schedule a vaccine clinic for your facility. If you have not received information or an initial contact from the assigned pharmacy by Feb. 1, 2021, please contact Cissie Bollinger, Licensing, Certification and Technical Assistance Manager, at Cissie.m.bollinger@dhsoha.state.or.us.

Q9. We didn't register for the Federal Pharmacy Program because we weren't aware our facility needed to do this. What do we do now to access the vaccine?

A9. If you did not register, there are several options for your facility to receive the vaccine, including:

- **Contact the local public health authority (LPHA):** Providers can contact their LPHAs to access vaccine services with the LPHA and other community resources. LPHAs will provide both doses and will report updated vaccine data to OHA.
- **Register as a vaccine provider:** Agencies who can provide 100 or more vaccines per site can register to receive a shipment and store/administer the vaccine. These providers can bill as normal and will administer both doses.
- **OHA state options and contracts:** OHA will identify resources, such as pharmacies and other state contractors, to provide vaccinations for behavioral health programs.
- **Other community resources:** Agencies can access community resources such as OHSU, state-sponsored clinics, hospital clinics, primary care providers or pharmacies.

OHA continues to monitor access to vaccines and will continue to partner with facilities to ensure vaccines are made available.

Q10. Will you supply information to our residents in advance to answer their questions?

A10. Currently, OHA is not providing answers to anticipated questions from residents. OHA encourages providers to use the information in this FAQ, remain neutral about the vaccine when answering questions, and make educational information available to assist residents to make informed decisions. Information can be found on the [OHA COVID-19 website](#).

Q11. How will we be notified about the process and timeline for when we will receive the vaccine?

A11. The OHA Health Systems Division (HSD) has contacted behavioral health providers to obtain information about vaccine status. The information will be used to inform HSD about the ongoing needs of providers and how to better support vaccine distribution. As the vaccine work continues, providers may be contacted directly by OHA, the LPHA, pharmacy or OHA contractor.

Q12. Can I be assigned as the primary contact for this information?

A12. Yes, if you would like to designate a primary contact for your agency or specific program, please contact Cissie Bollinger, Licensing, Certification and Technical Assistance Manager, at Cissie.m.bollinger@dhsoha.state.or.us.

Q13. What if our site wants to be added as an administration site for the vaccine?

A13. Phased enrollment of health care providers who wish to administer COVID-19 vaccine has begun for the following provider types: hospitals, LPHAs and federally recognized Tribes that are not enrolled with the federal government to receive COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 [Healthcare Partner Resources page](#) has information about enrolling with the Immunization Program. Click on the “Vaccine Planning” box under the orange line for more details.

Q14. Is there anything we should do to prepare for an outside pharmacy coming into our facility?

A14. If your facility is scheduled to receive vaccinations from an outside pharmacy that will vaccinate onsite, OHA recommends taking the standard precautions to prevent possible spread of COVID-19, including wearing masks, sanitizing surfaces and maintaining six feet of distance from others. You should discuss the visit with residents and staff ahead of time to prepare them for the process and answer any questions.

Q15. We heard that other health care facilities stagger their staff vaccination schedules in case staff have a reaction to the vaccine and miss work. Should we do that?

A15. OHA recommends that you consider your individual staffing needs and your agency policies when adjusting your regular staff schedules. For questions pertaining to employee policies and legal implications of scheduling, organizations should contact their legal counsel. If you have questions about allergic reactions, please discuss directly with the pharmacy or contractor when making plans for the vaccination event.

Q16. Does OHA require that we mandate vaccinations for our staff? What if they elect not to receive it?

A16. A16: No, OHA does not require that you mandate vaccines for your staff and leaves that decision to facilities. If your facility mandates the vaccine, you can read about your legal protections [here](#).

If your staff have concerns due to health reasons, such as history of allergic reactions or because they've heard the vaccine isn't safe, please share [this FAQ](#).

If a staff member does not want to get the vaccine due to a religious reason or a disability, see [this document](#).

Q17. Can I require my staff to get a vaccination?

A17. At this time, OHA does not require COVID-19 vaccinations for any group of people or in any workplace setting. Employment requirements fall under the Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) oversight. For questions related to COVID-19 visit the BOLI [website](#).

Questions:

If you have questions related to COVID-19 vaccines, please send your questions to one of the following so OHA can assist.

COVID-19 vaccine general: COVID19.Vaccine@dhsoha.state.or.us

COVID-19 vaccine provider enrollment: Vaccine.ProviderEnroll@dhsoha.state.or.us

COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee: Covid.vaccineadvisory@dhsoha.state.or.us

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the Health Information Center at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsoha.state.or.us.