



THE COVID-19

VACCINE

Updated Guidance to Enrolled COVID-19 Vaccine Providers

January 17, 2021

To All Enrolled Vaccine Providers:

As the state of South Carolina continues to administer vaccines to its residents in Phase 1a, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is updating its guidance to reemphasize critical information for enrolled vaccine providers about the vaccine roll out.

Currently, South Carolina receives approximately 63,000 first doses of vaccine each week. Roughly half of these doses are Pfizer and half Moderna. For each first dose providers receive, they must order a second dose. Because of the ultra-cold (<70°C) storage requirements of the Pfizer vaccine, most Pfizer doses have been allocated to hospitals. Most Moderna doses, which can be stored in a standard vaccine freezer, have been allocated to providers other than hospitals.

Until this past week, the weekly allocation of Pfizer first doses the state received from the federal government was sufficient to meet most of the vaccine orders placed by hospitals. However, hospital orders for this coming week totaled more than four times the amount previously allocated to the state. As a result, DHEC could only fulfill 20-25% of each hospital's first-dose order of Pfizer vaccine. All orders for second doses were able to be fulfilled because the state has a separate federal allocation of second doses that equals the number of first doses allocated.

Because vaccine demand has now far exceeded supply, DHEC is finalizing an equitable model for vaccine allocations. As a result, allocations for the following week (January 25) may be higher or lower than past allocations.

Providers should review and adhere to the following:

1. Providers should review [Phase 1a Guidance](#) and must administer vaccine to eligible persons **only**. Phase 1a now includes citizens and residents seventy (70) years of age and older.
2. DHEC does not expect the state's weekly allocation to increase any time soon. Should the federal allocation to South Carolina increase (or decrease), adjustments to a provider's first dose allocation may also change.

3. DHEC continues its efforts to ensure vaccines are available in all areas of the state, especially rural and underserved communities. To meet this goal, DHEC will be adding providers to better enable residents in underserved communities to receive a vaccine.
4. Until South Carolina's vaccine allocation from the federal government increases, providers must understand their weekly first dose allocations could be reduced as additional providers are added to the distribution network.
5. After the week of January 25, DHEC does not intend to significantly change the number of vaccines allocated to a provider from week to week without reasonable notice.
6. DHEC will notify providers by Thursday (Moderna) and Friday (Pfizer) of their first dose allocation for the following week. Delivery will occur either Friday (Moderna) or Monday (Pfizer) for use during the following week. It should be the goal of every provider to administer all first doses of vaccine received by the end of each week, and providers should ensure they have capacity in place to meet that goal.
7. Because vaccine supplies in South Carolina are currently limited by the number of vaccines allocated from the federal government to the state, providers should order only what they have the capacity to administer in the coming week.
8. While providers should prepare for increased capacity, no large-scale vaccination events should be held that would exceed a provider's baseline allocation (established the week of January 25) without first consulting with DHEC to ensure sufficient doses would be available. It is unlikely providers could hold large-scale events until the state's weekly allocations from the federal government increase.
9. Until vaccine is more widely available, clinics and events should be by appointment only to avoid lines and unmet expectations by the public.
10. Providers should order second doses separately from first doses by using the "Notes" box in VAMS. Providers will be allocated second doses up to the number of first doses they have administered. It is important to remember that providers must order both their first and second doses by noon on Tuesdays. Additionally, providers must manage inventory and administration of second doses separately from first doses.
11. Providers must not use their second dose allocation to administer first doses unless a reasonable time has passed (15 days or more) after an individual should have returned for their second dose.¹ If a provider needs assistance with storage, please contact DHEC.
12. First and second doses must be recorded in VAMS within 24 hours of administration.
13. Providers must ensure individuals who received a Pfizer vaccine for their first dose receive a Pfizer vaccine for their second dose and those who received a Moderna vaccine for their first dose receive a Moderna vaccine for their second dose. Providers may review a person's first dose information in South Carolina's Statewide Immunization Online Network (SIMON).
14. Providers must notify their patients that both shots need to be of the same brand of vaccine for the vaccine to be effective. Providers must schedule second dose appointments no later than when the first dose is administered. Providers should notify patients if no appointment for administration of the second dose, e.g., walk-ups, is allowed.

¹ If a provider has used a first dose allocation to fulfill a second dose administration, a future second dose allocation may be used to replenish the first dose inventory if second dose inventory allows.

15. DHEC has received reports from individuals having difficulty scheduling second dose appointments with the same provider at the appropriate time. DHEC recommends that providers include information on their website to provide patients instructions on scheduling second dose appointments. When contacted by individuals having trouble scheduling second dose appointments, DHEC is recommending they contact the provider from whom they received their first dose.
16. DHEC acknowledges individuals have the option in VAMS to schedule their second dose appointment at a provider other than the provider where the individual received their first dose. This may cause second dose inventory shortages when providers administer more second doses than first. Individuals are strongly encouraged to use the same provider for the first and second dose except in extenuating circumstances. Providers must closely monitor second dose inventory and implement necessary controls to ensure sufficient supply is available for second dose administration. DHEC will monitor second dose inventory and consider additional measures that might be taken to help providers manage second dose inventory.

On January 12, members of Operation Warp Speed recommended states expand access to COVID-19 vaccines to everyone 65 and older, as well as to any adult with an underlying health condition that increases the risk for complications of COVID-19. Since South Carolina opened vaccinations to those 70 and older, the demand for appointments has drastically increased. At this time, South Carolina is not expanding the groups of people included in Phase 1a to include the January 12 recommendations because current demand for vaccine significantly exceeds supply.

Once South Carolina receives more doses from the federal government, DHEC will increase the number of doses each enrolled provider receives, and the agency will also activate additional enrolled providers. Until such time, providers should abide by the above guidelines.

We value and appreciate your partnership and thank you for the tireless work you're doing to provide much-needed vaccinations to South Carolinians. Should you have any questions, please contact the DHEC Immunization Team. DHEC will collect provider questions and post a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) page on the DHEC website.