



January 13, 2021

Dear Provider of Licensed and Unlicensed Mental Health Congregate Residential Services,

Thank you for your continued service to your residents and staff during the COVID-19 public health emergency. We are excited to reach out regarding a vaccine distribution plan for residents and staff of your congregate residential programs.

New York State (NYS) recently added staff and residents of unlicensed congregate supportive housing to the eligibility list for COVID-19 vaccine. This means that both Office of Mental Health (OMH)-licensed and unlicensed congregate supportive housing staff and residents are eligible to receive the vaccine. Please closely review the [current NYS guidance](#) for details about who is eligible.

As many providers have both OMH-licensed and unlicensed residential programs, we are sharing the below guidance for all mental health congregate residential settings.

After you have reviewed this guidance and develop a plan for your staff and residents, please complete [this survey](#). If you have started vaccinating people in your OMH-licensed settings, please include that in your survey response. If you are unable to make a vaccination plan with a vaccine provider within the next two weeks, please contact Rebecca Sievers at rsievers@health.nyc.gov.

This survey is for licensed and unlicensed congregate supportive housing providers only. If you also run residential programs licensed by Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) or the Office of People with Development Disabilities (OPWDD) the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) has already been in touch regarding vaccination plans for these sites. Please do not include information on these programs in your survey response.

- If you have questions about your OASAS residential settings, please email Mindy Nass at mnass1@health.nyc.gov.
- If you have questions about your OPWDD residential settings, please email Brittany Sigler at bsigler@health.nyc.gov.

Registering with the NYC COVID-19 Vaccination Program

Agencies that plan to order and store COVID-19 vaccine to vaccinate staff and residents must enroll in the NYC COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

- First, agencies must register with the online [Citywide Immunization Registry](#) (CIR). Agencies that are not already registered with the CIR or have not reported to the CIR in

over a year should register now by visiting the NYC Health Department's [Online Service Registration page](#) and selecting "Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR)" and clicking "Continue."

- After registering, you will receive a CIR facility code needed to set up a CIR account.
- You must then enroll in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program by completing the Provider Agreement. For detailed instructions on enrolling and the Provider Agreement, see [Instructions for Enrolling in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program](#).
- Once agencies have registered with the CIR and completed the Provider Agreement, they must pre-order (reserve a supply) of COVID-19 vaccine in the CIR and then email Rebecca Sievers (rsievers@health.nyc.gov) to request a supply of the vaccine.

Partnering with Clinical Providers

Agencies that plan to partner with a clinical provider such as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), hospital, urgent care provider or pharmacy, Agencies operating mental health congregate supportive housing should contact one or more COVID-19 vaccine providers to confirm their ability to vaccinate staff and residents. A list of vaccine providers willing to work with partners and currently taking appointments can be found [here](#). CityMDs are an additional option for congregate residential settings. Please indicate in the survey linked above if you would like to be connected to a CityMD location.

Once an agency partners with a clinical provider that needs additional vaccines to cover the agency's staff and resident population, the clinical provider should reach out to their NYC Health Department vaccine contacts and the agency should email Rebecca Sievers rsievers@health.nyc.gov.

Preparing for the COVID-19 Vaccine Event

Agencies should prepare staff and residents to receive the COVID-19 vaccine even if they have not yet secured a vaccine provider or scheduled a vaccine event. Agencies should take the following steps to prepare:

- **Talk to staff and residents about the COVID-19 vaccine.** Share educational materials with staff to help them talk to residents and COVID-19 vaccines (see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Making a Strong Recommendation for COVID-19 Vaccination](#) (more materials can be found [here](#) under patient communication), hold question and answer sessions, and ask staff or residents who may have received the vaccine to share their experience if they feel comfortable. Direct people to the NYC Health Department's vaccine webpage at nyc.gov/covidvaccine for more information.
- **Begin gathering consent forms.** Vaccine appointments and events can happen with little notice. Make sure staff and residents have completed the required [NYS consent form](#) in advance of vaccination.
- **Review the NYS COVID-19 Vaccine Form.** The [NYS COVID-19 Vaccine Form](#) must be completed the same day staff or residents are receiving the vaccine. OMH-licensed programs can submit the form on behalf of residents unable to do so themselves. All

other residents must complete the form themselves, which includes attesting to living in a congregate setting.

- **Prepare to provide proof of employment for staff seeking the vaccine.** The vaccine provider may require proof from staff that they are employed at a congregate care facility. This may include an employee ID, pay stub or letter from their employer.

Reporting COVID-19 Vaccines to NYC Health Department

The vaccinating provider must report all vaccines administered in the CIR. The NYC Health Department is not requiring individual-level reporting from facilities at this time. **However, please track in aggregate the number of staff and residents who receive vaccines and the number who decline as this information may be required in the future.**

Sincerely,

William A. Fisher, M.D.

Deputy Director for Vaccine Coordination, Mental Hygiene Emergency Response Group
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene