

Massachusetts Vaccination FAQ For Employers

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What is this document?

There are a lot of unknowns for employers, as we await further information and guidance from the state and federal public health officials. As we learn more from state officials, we will use this document to provide the most recent information and lessons-learned regarding what employers can do to prepare for and help with the vaccination process.

What information is currently available?

- For a weekly COVID-19 [interactive data dashboard](#).
- Massachusetts vaccine allocation and distribution [dashboard](#)
- State Vaccine FAQ – [See here](#) for recently updated FAQ document.
- Vaccination location [find a location](#)
- COVID-19 vaccine distribution [eligibility](#) timeline
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health [FAQs](#)
- [List](#) of who can administer the vaccine in Massachusetts

How can an employer determine where their employees are in the distribution plan?

Members of [certain industries](#) are eligible to receive the vaccine during each phase. The Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group has incorporated recommendations from the federal CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) to guide prioritization in our state and continues to clarify prioritization guidelines for those at higher risk, especially essential employees.

DPH has asked that questions about and/or information to help inform distribution guidelines be emailed to COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov. The Advisory Group and DPH will use review this information and provide updates the vaccine [site](#) every 2 weeks

How should Massachusetts employers approach vaccination issues?

Employers can start by keeping employees, customers, and the general public at the center of every conversation as employers determine next steps.

State health officials are still in the process of developing plans for vaccine distribution beyond Phase one, which first prioritizes COVID-19-facing health care workers. Now is the time for employers to prepare and think about the various issues regarding vaccination and maintaining a safe workplace for workers, customers, and the public. Communication and decision making around vaccinations in a way that develops trust is critical to achieving the long-term goal of widescale vaccination.

Employers should be aware of issues related to personal choice, legal implications of policy decisions related to vaccinees, and impacts to company culture. Legal, public health, and other experts in the field

of vaccinations are encouraging education to encourage voluntary vaccinations. AIM has a webinar regarding the legal implications regarding employer policies, which can be [obtained here](#).

What is the role of employers?

1. **What we know now:**
 - a. Massachusetts public health officials are still working on what distribution plans for Phase 2 and 3 will look like and we do not yet know the details
 - b. Hospitals that can properly store vaccines are the primary locations for administration to healthcare workers.
 - c. Long-term care facilities are currently receiving vaccines in Phase 1 through retail drug pharmacies that have partnered with the federal government, like AIM member CVS.
2. **Distribution plan:** It is important to understand the current Massachusetts distribution plan or plans of the state(s) in which you operate. We know at this time that each state has made different decisions regarding distribution. You can read the Massachusetts distribution plan [here](#). You can see other states' distribution plans here.
3. **Timing:** There is an evolving time frame based on the availability of vaccines and distribution to Massachusetts or other states. This is regularly changing, and you can track the latest allocation of vaccines [here](#). As of January 3rd, 287,000 doses of vaccine that have been shipped to providers in Massachusetts, and 116,071 doses of administered vaccines administered to the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS).
4. **Communicating:** Employers can play an important role in the communication of public health information about the vaccines with a focus on preservation of life and healthcare equity. This is an opportunity to evaluate and ensure that corporate values and culture remains consistent while ensuring that workers and customers are safe and individual considerations are considered.
5. **Learn from Experts:** Below are two key webinars. One from [AIM](#) and one from [NAM](#). Directly listed are key data along with links to the recorded webinars.

What can employers do now to prepare for vaccinations?

1. Keep employees and customers at the center of the conversation.
2. Evaluate the company strategy based on company culture, what are the principles and values of the company.
3. Consider and develop an education and communications plan that focuses on developing trust, ensuring safety, understanding healthcare equity that bolsters a culture of trust, open communication and conveying of information.
4. Be aware of and understand the various reasons why people may not choose to be vaccinated and what laws protect those choices. For instances, religious exemptions, disability exemptions through the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) in addition to pregnant workers and nursing mothers. Current law, regulations through the Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and recent court decisions regarding specific issues need to be understood and considered as part of any company policy.
5. Be aware that one or several people that say "no" to getting a vaccine may be considered "protected concerted activity" for purposes of protections under the National Labor Relations

Board and associated laws. Employees that say no initially may want to simply wait and received the vaccination the next time it is offered.

6. Identify ways to cover any costs that might be associated with getting the vaccine. Provide paid time off for employees to get vaccinated and recover from any potential side effects. Be aware of what wage and hour issues may be impacted related to an employee's time getting the vaccine.
7. Be aware of privacy concerns and related healthcare laws protecting employee privacy.
8. Stay connected to state(s) plans for distributions and what the role of employers may be. Currently hospitals, clinics, community health and other private organizations are taking the lead role with receiving and administering vaccine.
9. Be aware of special healthcare needs in the vaccination process as people with comorbidities such as diabetes among other chronic and health related conditions are considered. ([Additional information from the American Diabetes Association](#) and [see more about the impact of diabetes](#) and CDC guidance [here](#) and [here](#))



[Click here for the Recorded AIM Webinar](#)

What can employers learn from AIM Webinar with Public Health, Medical and Legal Experts?

- The state distribution plan is now in effect as **the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted emergency authorization** to both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.
- Massachusetts residents will get the vaccine in phases, with a timeline that reflects several priorities: protecting the most vulnerable, maintaining health care system capacity, and addressing inequities in health care access and COVID-19 burden.
 - **Phase 1: Dec 2020-Feb 2021:** clinical and nonclinical COVID-facing healthcare workers; long term care, assisted living, and rest home facilities; police, fire and emergency medical services personnel; home-based healthcare workers and finally non COVID-facing healthcare workers.
 - **Phase 2: Feb-April 2021:** those with 2+ health comorbidities; those aged 75+, early education, K-12, transit, grocery, agriculture, sanitation, public works and public health workers; adults 65 and over; and finally, those with at least 1 existing comorbidity.
 - **Phase 3: April-May 2021:** general public
- The vaccine has been purchased by the federal government and allocated to states to be distributed at no cost to the public.
- Timing and phases are subject to change depending on federal guidance and/or vaccine availability. The Massachusetts vaccine rollout will continue to be updated and refined based on federal plans and projections.
- Larger Massachusetts hospitals with access to storage and the ability to store the Pfizer vaccine at adequate temperatures (-70 degrees Celsius) will receive allotted dosages directly from Pfizer.

- Smaller hospitals will receive their dosages either through their connections with these larger hospitals or from the state DPH.
- 4 hospital facilities with the ability to store Pfizer vaccine in -70C in MA have received the first doses
- Now that the Moderna vaccine is approved, it can be available to smaller hospitals, ambulatory services etc. because it requires more traditional freezing/storage.
- 74 out of 77 hospitals have already begun vaccinating COVID-facing staff, with the other 3 opting out of self-administration
- Beginning December 28th, under the CDC's Long-Term Care Pharmacy Partnership Program CVS and Walgreens will help provide 40-60,000 vaccines to residents and staff of the state's 379 long-term care/assisted living facilities.

What have we learned from initial employers (hospitals especially) from administering the vaccine?

- [CBS](#) ("Lumpy and Bumpy – But it's moving forward"- Governor Baker)
- [CBS Interview](#) (First come, first serve approach was a mistake, IT system crashed, supply of vaccine has and will be issue)
- [CBS Interview](#) (Each hospital has a different plan for distribution) (15% of employees may have reaction to vaccine, so a staggered approach may be advisable because some % of HC workers may need to be out after taking vaccine)
- [Enterprise report](#) (CVS among others will help with distribution to long-term care facilities starting Dec 8)

Additional Resources:

- NAM Webinar: [Watch Recording](#)
- [Here](#) for current EEOC COVID-19 Guidance
- [Here](#) for COVID-19 Vaccine(s) information
- [Here](#) for COVID-19 Vaccine Initial Allocations
- [Here](#) for Federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

Who can I call at AIM if I have additional questions?

For public policy questions regarding Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccination, AIM members may contact Brad MacDougall, SVP for Government Affairs at 617-262-1180 or bmacdougall@aimnet.org. You can contact Beth Yohai, SVP Programs, Events and Communities at 617-262-1180 or byohai@aimnet.org.

Beth and Brad lead AIM's COVID-19 Task Force. To learn more about the task force or to learn more about membership with AIM please contact membership@aimnet.org or 617-262-1180. You can also learn more about AIM [here](#).