



City of New Orleans
COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

December 2020

Introduction

From early in the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that one important way to limit severe disease, control the spread of COVID-19 and end social distancing measures was through the use of a vaccine. Many companies have been working to develop a COVID-19 vaccine through a rapid process where multiple clinical trial phases took place at the same time and manufacturing of vaccines began prior to approval. All vaccines that will be distributed in the city of New Orleans will be approved by the FDA through an emergency-use-authorization which allows these vaccines to be used during the pandemic.

The City of New Orleans COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan provides a framework for the distribution of FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines within New Orleans. This plan is based and built upon existing emergency operation plans of the New Orleans Health Department and the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. These well-established plans and past experiences with mass vaccination events were used to develop this COVID-19 specific plan.

The City of New Orleans will distribute COVID-19 vaccines within the framework outlined by the CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Program Interim Playbook for Jurisdiction Operations and the State of Louisiana COVID-19 Vaccination Playbook. This plan is a living document that will evolve as the situation changes and should be used as a strategy guide that outlines the overall mission of the City of New Orleans in vaccine distribution. The plan includes potential actions that may be taken, but implementation of specific measures will be dependent on the current situation and additional measures not outlined in this plan may be implemented at the direction of City leadership.

COVID-19 Vaccine Planning

Beginning in the Fall of 2020, representatives from the New Orleans Health Department and New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness joined the State of Louisiana Vaccine Action Collaborative. In addition to the State working group, the City of New Orleans established a COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy working group as a part of the Mayor's COVID-19 Advisory Panel. The objective of this working group is to develop local strategy, communications, and logistics for roll out of future COVID vaccine(s) for the general public within New Orleans.

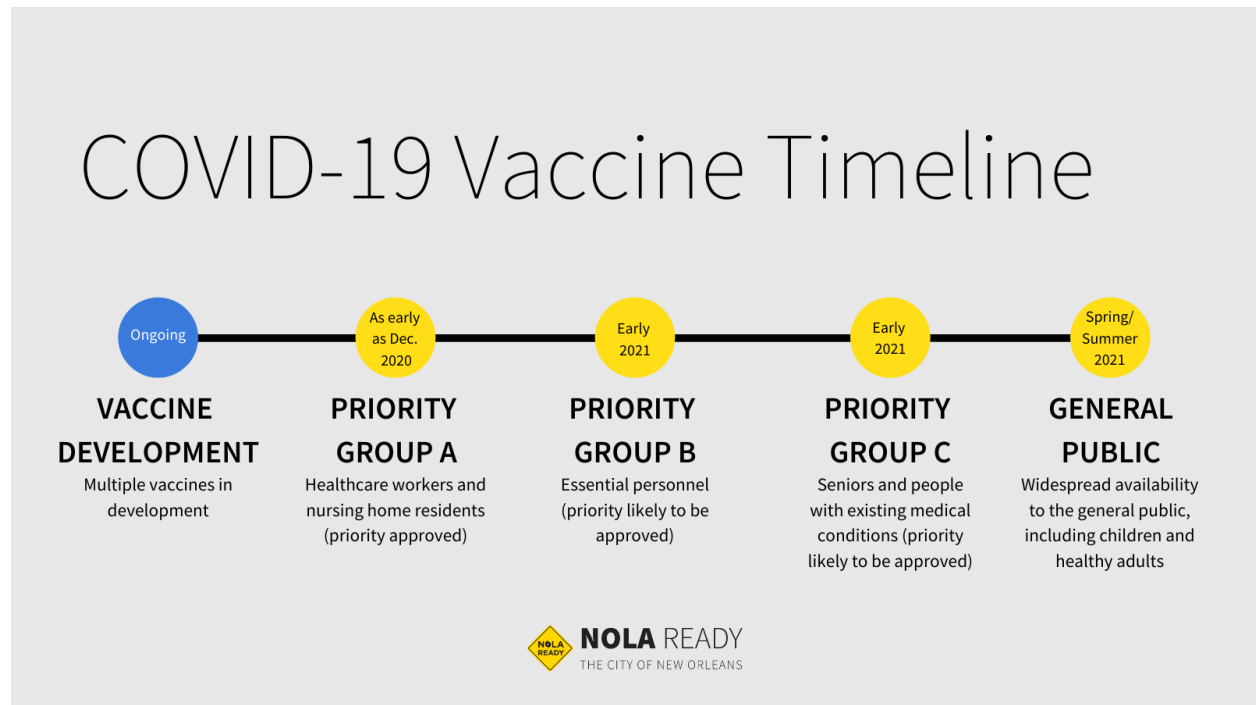
This working group has six subgroups that meet regularly to plan for specific areas of vaccine distribution. These groups are made up of representatives from City departments, local healthcare partners, universities, medial/public health experts, community partners, and the Louisiana Department of Health. The subgroups include:

1. Logistics: identify logistical needs for vaccines distribution and develop strategies to address shortfalls
2. Closed Point of Distribution (POD) Planning: recruit businesses and community partners to be closed POD sites for vaccination distribution. Closed PODs are locations where are vaccines are being distributed to representatives of an organization and not available to the general public.
3. Open Point of Distribution (POD) Planning: develop plans to roll out community-based vaccinations sites for the general public. Open PODs are locations where vaccines can be provided to the community and will be readily advertised.
4. Equity & Community Engagement: develop strategy to ensure vaccination roll out is equitable and engages the community to address vaccine hesitancy
5. Staffing: identify groups and individuals that can administer vaccines
6. Healthcare Distribution: develop strategy to ensure vaccines are rolled out to healthcare providers and the general public through traditional healthcare mechanisms

Critical Populations

When COVID-19 vaccines become available to the public, there will be a shortage in the number of vaccines available compared to the number of residents that needs those vaccines. Therefore, the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will issue recommendations for prioritization of residents receiving the COVID-19 vaccine first based on their level of exposure to the virus and risk of severe illness. The State of Louisiana will take the ACIP’s recommendations and determine how to implement that information. The City of New Orleans will follow the phased prioritization of critical populations set forth by the State of Louisiana. The Louisiana Department of Health is responsible for determining which providers receive vaccine; however, the City of New Orleans will assist local providers to enroll and develop plans for quick and efficient distribution.

It will take many months for the vaccine manufacturers to make enough vaccine to meet the needs of all residents. Below is an estimate timeline as of December 2020 for when vaccines will be made available to groups of residents. These categories should be expected to change as the CDC makes incremental priority decisions.



COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution Methods

Due to the initial spike of COVID-19 cases in New Orleans during the early phases of the pandemic and the high risk of severe disease within our community, the City has maintained strict reopening policies limiting activities known to spread the virus. In addition, our community was an early adopter of universal mask wearing which has allowed the City to be one of the best performing jurisdictions in the state in terms of case counts, transmission rate, and positivity rate. Due to our tourism-based economy, the City of New Orleans has been hit hard economically and the fastest way to reopen our community and improve our economy is to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine as quickly and safely as possible.

There will be a variety of ways that New Orleanians will likely be able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, including:

- Healthcare providers/pharmacies
- Place of employment
- Place of residence
- Community-based vaccination distribution sites

Healthcare Provider Vaccine Distribution

A common way for residents to receive vaccines is through existing healthcare providers. This will not change with the COVID-19 vaccine. When general public vaccination is available, residents will be able to get vaccines from their local pharmacy, primary care doctor, community health clinic, dialysis clinic, home health nurse, etc. This will allow residents to get it from a trusted source and healthcare providers to continue vaccination operations as usual. However, we know that not all residents are connected to healthcare providers and there may be faster, more equitable methods of distribution. This option will be best for the elderly, high risk individuals, and the general public that are already connected to a healthcare system.

Place of Employment Vaccine Distribution

Many New Orleanians will be able to access the COVID-19 vaccine at their place of employment. This includes healthcare providers, essential workers, and people employed at large businesses with many employees. These closed points of distribution will not be open to the public and will be available only to employees. The New Orleans Health Department and Louisiana Department of Health work with these organizations to ensure that they have everything they need to administer the vaccines or will coordinate with a healthcare provider to assist with the vaccine administration.

Place of Resident Vaccine Distribution

New Orleanians that live in congregate settings will be able to get vaccinated at their place of residence, including long-term care facilities, homeless shelters, elderly apartment buildings, universities, and prisons/detention centers. These closed points of distribution will not be open to the public but will be available to all employees and residents. Long-term care facilities will have vaccines provided by local pharmacies through federal contracts. Other congregate settings will either be vaccinated by on-site medical staff or in coordination with a local healthcare provider, the Louisiana Department of Health, or the New Orleans Health Department.

Community-based Vaccine Distribution

The City of New Orleans plans to establish community-based vaccination distribution sites that are easy for all residents to access. These open points of distribution would be open to any elderly or high-risk individual during Phase 1c and then to the general public in later phases. These sites can be staffed through a variety of local healthcare providers, Louisiana National Guard, City employees, and the Medical Reserve Corps/NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps. These sites will be a mixture of drive-through and walk-up locations around the city that allow us to best address the access needs of all New Orleanians. The City of New Orleans will only collect the minimum personal information necessary to complete the vaccination process and ensure that the individual will be able to receive the correct second dose if necessary¹. Health insurance may be collected to cover administrative fees, but at no time should those costs be transferred to the resident. Health insurance and photo identification will not be required at any vaccination distribution site run by the City of New Orleans.

¹ Some COVID-19 vaccines will require 1 dose, while others will require a 2nd dose

Vaccine Equity & Community Engagement

Vaccine Equity

The City of New Orleans acknowledges the long history of abuse and mistreatment of people of color by government, research institutions, and healthcare providers in the name of science. We recognize that this history, along with other inequities in healthcare provision, have led to a long-standing mistrust of health officials within multiple communities, and that these new vaccines may raise concern among significant portions of our residents. It is our intention to be truthful and give our residents a clear picture of the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines. The City of New Orleans will not promote vaccines that did not go through the full clinical trials, FDA Emergency Use Authorization process, and ACIP review process. Vaccinations will not be made mandatory by the City of New Orleans.

It is our goal to provide equitable access during the vaccine distribution process in order to reduce the disproportionate effects of the virus for vulnerable populations, people of color and those with access and functional needs. Priority will be given to those a high risk for severe disease including the elderly and residents with chronic diseases. To further promote equity, New Orleanians should have easy, direct access to vaccines at a variety of locations. We will use well known and trusted community partners to find locations that will be easy for residents to access, ensure that information is translated into multiple languages, and design sites so that residents feel comfortable.

Community Engagement

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has lacked a unified national strategy, which has contributed to pervasive misinformation regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. The speed of vaccine development has also raised many concerns about the safety of these vaccines. The New Orleans Health Department is prepared to address concerns about vaccine safety. Our communication strategy includes ways to share information to a variety of critical audiences about the process, science and benefits related to COVID-19 vaccine. We will work with trusted community partners to share information and address concerns through, a series of town hall events and other outreach events, as well as, and use traditional media and social media channels.

Media inquiries should be directed to the Mayor's Office of Communications at communications@nola.gov or by calling (504) 658-4945.