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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND THE CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
ANNOUNCE PLANS TO DISTRIBUTE COVID-19 VACCINE WITH FOCUS ON
SAFETY AND EQUITY**

CHICAGO – Mayor Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced distribution plans for the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available with a commitment to allocate initial doses to all 34 hospitals in the city and to ensure the individuals and communities most impacted by the pandemic are prioritized in the weeks and months to come. The first vaccines could be allocated the week of December 14 in Chicago, pending final approval from federal regulators; and based on guidance from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), healthcare workers who treat COVID patients or conduct procedures that put them at high risk for COVID-19 spread will be the first to receive it.

“The vaccine development represents a long-awaited milestone in Chicago’s – and the nation’s – fight against COVID-19, and we look forward to working with our citywide partners to ensure the distribution process is executed as efficiently and safely as possible through an equity lens,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “However, as encouraged as we are by the COVID-19 vaccine, widespread community distribution is still months away, and we must remain diligent in adhering to the public health guidelines as we continue to move forward toward a brighter and more resilient future for all of us.”

Pfizer and Moderna have now submitted data for an emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). FDA’s independent advisory committee, the Vaccine and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, is set to meet on December 10 to discuss Pfizer’s request for emergency use authorization and December 17 to discuss Moderna’s request.

Following frontline healthcare workers, priority will be given to residents and staff at long-term care facilities, workers in essential and critical industries including emergency services personnel, people at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness due to underlying medical conditions, and people ages 65 years and older. CDPH expects



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to receive 23,000 doses in the initial batch and additional doses of the vaccine every subsequent week.

“The situation is very fluid as we don’t know how many we’ll be getting from week to week, and that will require us to be nimble in how we respond. But I have complete confidence in the team we have assembled to handle this,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “Since the beginning of the pandemic we have been working with healthcare and community partners on plans to quickly distribute a large amount of the vaccine. This will allow Chicago to start with as much vaccine as possible and continually increase the supply in the weeks and months to follow.”

The goal is for all Chicago adults to be able to get vaccinated in 2021 at no cost to any individual. As more vaccine is available, several thousand vaccination providers will be ready, including doctors’ offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers. CDPH has regular meetings with healthcare providers, community-based organizations and other partners, and has increased vaccine storage capacity and acquired vaccine supplies. The department has identified vaccine clinic locations and leveraged its flu campaign this year to test this out.

“Importantly, we also have plans to ensure equal vaccine access throughout the city. In this first phase all hospitals in Chicago will receive doses, including smaller ones, and going forward we’ll be using large centralized sites such as City Colleges. We’ll also have mobile sites which can be deployed in communities most impacted by the virus,” said Dr. Arwady. “We know that some communities, particularly the Black community, are less likely to get the flu vaccine, and we need to be honest about historic harm and structural racism that has created this mistrust. That’s why we’re working so closely with community partners and the mayor’s Racial Equity Rapid Response Team.”

CDPH is prioritizing long-term care facilities for these reasons. They have been severely impacted by the pandemic, particularly during the first wave, and many residents and staff are Black Chicagoans.

Within the first few weeks following the receipt of the vaccine, CDPH plans to open vaccination clinics for other healthcare workers, which will be by appointment only. There are about 400,000 health workers in Chicago, including doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff.

While vaccine development has been fast, no steps have been skipped during the clinical trial process and safety is and will remain a top priority. CDPH is assembling



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its own scientific advisory committee of local experts to review the FDA process and provide guidance throughout the process in the coming year.

The first COVID-19 vaccines will require two shots – the first shot starts building protection, but everyone will have to receive the second shot to receive maximum protection from the vaccine. mRNA vaccines will be some of the first COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use. mRNA vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19, so they cannot give someone COVID-19.

Preliminary reports from Pfizer and Moderna indicate their vaccines are highly effective. Federal officials still need to review drug company data in order to make their own assessment of vaccine efficacy. Overall, the vaccines have been well tolerated in clinical trials. Some bothersome side effects such as fatigue and muscle aches lasting 1-2 days occur in up to 10% of vaccine recipients, and high fevers occur occasionally. These side effects are not dangerous. They indicate the vaccine is activating the body's immune response against the virus that causes COVID-19 illness.

“The risk of side effects for 1-2 days after vaccination is far outweighed by the risk of severe illness and loss of life caused by COVID-19 infection,” said Dr. Arwady. “We also need to remain focused on the fact that we’re still in the midst of this pandemic. COVID-19 cases are surging around the country and the risk of becoming ill is significant. People need to continue to follow the public health guidance. Chicago remains under a Stay-at-Home Advisory and we have to continue to focus on bending the curve even as the vaccine becomes more and more available.”

Timeline estimates will change as more safety and effectiveness data from clinical trials is available and other types of vaccine are made available. Each COVID-19 vaccine that the FDA authorizes will have different instructions for shipping and storage. The City of Chicago will share updates on vaccine availability within Chicago at <http://ww.chicago.gov/COVIDvax>. Also, the [VaccineFinder website](#) will be updated to help Chicagoans find the COVID vaccine. Vaccine information from the CDC can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>.

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