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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 25, 2021

**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
ANNOUNCE NEW PLAN TO ENSURE EQUITY IN VACCINE DISTRIBUTION**

*City implements Protect Chicago Plus as Chicago officially enters next phase of vaccine roll-out*

**CHICAGO** - Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), alongside elected officials and community partners, announced new initiatives today to address racial equity in the COVID-19 response and vaccine distribution, with early data estimates demonstrating low vaccination rates among Black and Latinx Chicagoans. As Chicago moves into Phase 1b of the vaccination effort, City leaders outlined further efforts to bolster the equity plan to ensure that vaccine reaches the individuals and communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As I’ve said often during the pandemic, equity is not only part of our COVID-19 strategy, equity *is* our strategy,” said Mayor Lightfoot, who was joined by community partners at St. Bernard Hospital in announcing the initiative. “All of us, city government and our many important community partners, need to work every day to ensure the vaccine is getting to those who need it most, and that when it’s available people take it.”

Protect Chicago has been the guiding plan in the City’s response to the pandemic, including vaccine distribution. Today, the City launched a new Protect Chicago Plus program that includes three main strategies:

- One, it targets 15 high-need communities based on the City’s COVID vulnerability index, to ensure that a significant part of the City’s vaccine supply goes to these communities.
- Two, it pushes vaccine and City resources directly to these communities, partnering with community stakeholders to develop tailored engagement strategies, vaccine clinics and strike teams to reach deep into the communities and touch those who may be disconnected from more traditional vaccine administration channels.



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- Three, it works with community stakeholders to identify settings and groups where vaccine access will most quickly decrease COVID transmission risk and removes barriers to vaccinating these individuals as quickly as possible.

Protect Chicago Plus builds on the work of Mayor Lightfoot's Racial Equity Rapid Response Team, an initiative that was integral to the city in deploying resources to the communities most in need throughout the pandemic. The program includes partnerships with community-based organizations and social service agencies, faith communities, and City Council members to host vaccination events. The City also plans to expand a program that deploys outreach teams and community health workers to go door-to-door and be present in grocery stores, laundromats, and other high-traffic areas to share information and assist with appointment scheduling.

"We've made equity the central focus of our work from the beginning of this pandemic, and Protect Chicago Plus is designed to reach even deeper into these communities that have been so impacted," said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. "And by accelerating vaccination in the highest-risk communities we also reduce the risk of spread across all of Chicago."

The neighborhoods initially targeted in Protect Chicago Plus are West Englewood, New City, Gage Park, North Lawndale, South Lawndale, Chicago Lawn, Englewood, Roseland, Archer Heights, Washington Heights, Austin, Montclare, South Deering, Belmont Cragin and Humboldt Park.

Many of the healthcare partners who are vaccinating people throughout Chicago often don't collect race/ethnicity data when doing so, and in response Dr. Arwady has signed a health order requiring them to do so and to report that data in to CDPH. In order to better understand these important measures, CDPH has performed statistical modeling, or data imputation, that creates estimates for the missing data. These estimates of the race/ethnicity of individuals who have received a first dose of the vaccine are as follows: Latinx 17%; Black, non-Latinx 15%; White, non-Latinx 53%; Asian, non-Latinx 14%; Other, non-Latinx 0.4%; Unknown 7%.

Geographic data on who is receiving the vaccine, which CDPH has been posting publicly since vaccine distribution began, also shows the most impacted communities lag far behind those in and around downtown and on the Near North Side. This is in part due to the fact that frontline healthcare workers have been the focus of early vaccine efforts and many of them live in the communities, but it also further highlights the need to focus on equity.



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“It is critical that for a disease that is disproportionately impacting communities of color, and Black and Latinx communities in particular, that we make information available so that people can trust the science, can trust the process, and can feel confident taking a vaccine that can save their lives and their communities,” said Dr. Helene Gayle, president and CEO of The Chicago Community Trust. “As we move into the next phase of the pandemic, it is important that equity centers our efforts so that our health and economic recovery is in fact fair and just.”

Today, the City and State of Illinois moved into the next portion of the vaccine rollout plan, Phase 1b. All frontline essential workers, Chicagoans age 65 and older, as well as those living in non-healthcare residential settings, such as homeless shelters and correctional facilities, are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccine supply, however, remains a significant concern, as the city isn’t receiving nearly enough doses from the federal government to vaccinate all of those in Phases 1a and 1b.

“I’m asking for patience as this roll-out continues in the coming weeks and months. You may not get the vaccine today or this week or this month, but you will get it,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “In the last year, frontline workers have made tremendous sacrifices for our city. Thank you to our first responders, our grocery store workers, our education and daycare workers. Thank you to those working in our correctional facilities, and in our public transit, manufacturing and agriculture industries. Our city relies on you all.”

“I want you to hear it from me: the COVID-19 vaccine is safe. Period,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “I’m excited to get it to protect myself and my loved ones from this terrible virus. I know there is some hesitancy out in the community to get it, especially among our Black and Latinx Chicagoans, that’s based on the real history of mistreatment in our country. But as a Black woman I’m stepping up and getting it, and we need everyone to do the same.”

Additional information can be found at [Chicago.gov/covidvax](https://chicago.gov/covidvax).

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