

**The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)
Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT)
Health Alert Network (HAN)
December 31, 2020**

Obtaining COVID-19 Vaccinations

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has received numerous calls and emails from physicians, other healthcare workers, and from the general public concerning COVID-19 vaccines and how to obtain them. As the supply of COVID-19 vaccine is limited at the moment, ADPH is following the guidance of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for prioritization of risk groups. Alabama received COVID-19 vaccine in our state on December 14, 2020. We are currently in Phase 1a, consisting of healthcare workers and residents in long-term care facilities. ADPH has been working with several external groups including but not limited to the Medical Association of State of Alabama (MASA), the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners (ALBME), and the Alabama Hospital Association (AlaHA), the Alabama Nursing Home Association, (ANHA), the Alabama Dental Association (ALDA), the Alabama Pharmacy Association (APA), the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AL-AAP), and the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) to develop and disseminate information on how to access the COVID-19 vaccines.

Beginning the week of December 28, residents and employees of Long-Term Care facilities began receiving vaccination through the federal Pharmacy Partnership. Once persons in Phase 1a have been offered the vaccine, Alabama will move into Phase 1b. ADPH does not currently have a timeline as to when we will be able to move to the next Phase since this is dependent on vaccine supply. To access the Alabama COVID-19 Allocation Plan please go at <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/assets/adph-covid19-vaccination-allocation-plan.pdf>

ADPH will continue to work with others to distribute information on phases, vaccine uptake, using multiple outlets including news releases, provider notices, social media, press conferences and other coverage. The ADPH website will contain weekly updates on vaccinations given. Any news releases and notices distributed by ADPH can be accessed via Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) at <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/index.html>

ADPH would like to remind providers that ACIP recommendations include vaccinating persons with a history of COVID-19 infection since there continues to remain concerns as to the extent and length of immunity after disease. Performing antibody testing to determine “immunity” is not recommended and should not be performed to decide whether a person should or should not receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Persons with recent infection can wait to receive the vaccine for up to 90 days post symptom onset or

post first positive COVID-19 results. Waiting is not mandatory but in light of limited vaccine supply will allow persons most at risk of infection to receive vaccinations first.

We continue to see increasing COVID-19 numbers statewide. State and local public health continues to reach out to providers for information on test results but have experienced some delays and resistance in the requested information being provided. If you or your staff, receive a request for test results, medical records, from public health employees including contract employees, please comply. The current HIPAA regulations and state law citations allow for the release of this information to public health without patient consent:

Under 45 CFR 164.512(b)(1)(i) a health care provider may share a patient's PHI without the patient's consent to public health authorities that are legally authorized to receive reports for the purpose of controlling or preventing diseases.

Under 45 CFR 164.512(c)(2) a health care provider may use or disclose a patient's PHI for treatment purposes without the patient's consent.

Under Section 22-11A-2 of the Code of Alabama, certain individuals are required to report cases or suspected cases of notifiable diseases and health conditions to the Alabama Department of Public Health. These individuals include: physicians, dentists, nurses, medical examiners, hospital administrators, nursing home administrators, laboratory directors, school principals, and day care center directors.

Finally, while a number of sites are posting information on how to access vaccines, physicians and other healthcare workers included in Phase 1a can obtain COVID-19 vaccines by visiting the following link at MASA:

<https://alabamamedicine.org/coronavirus/physician-resources/>

This information has been sent out several times previously by MASA and ALBME so if this is the first time you are receiving this, please reach out to them to correct your contact information.