COVID-19 Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I am eligible for vaccination during Phase 1A because I have a qualifying pre-existing condition. Do I need to provide proof of my condition in order to schedule an appointment?
A: No. To our knowledge, there is no requirement to "prove" your eligibility if you have a qualifying pre-existing condition. You can check to see if you are eligible at [this website](https://www.DisabilityRightsPA.org).

Q: I am eligible for vaccination during Phase 1A, B, or C on the basis of my employment. Do I need to provide proof of where I work?
A: Maybe. From the information issued by the Department of Health (DOH), it is not clear whether you will need to establish your eligibility in order to get vaccinated, but individual vaccination providers appear to be asking for proof of eligibility, such as a work ID or paystub. Thus, we suggest planning ahead and being prepared to "prove" your eligibility, either when you schedule your appointment or at the time of vaccination.

Q: I am eligible for vaccination during Phase 1A because I am an unpaid caregiver. How can I prove my eligibility in order to get vaccinated?
A: DOH and the Department of Human Services (DHS) has stated that unpaid caregivers of a person with a disability qualify for vaccination during Phase 1A. They suggest such caregivers print out a copy of a letter, found on [DHS’s website](https://www.DisabilityRightsPA.org), and provide it to vaccine providers to establish their eligibility. It can be found on the bottom of this page, by checking the box indicating that someone is an unpaid caregiver.
Q: I am currently eligible for vaccination, but I cannot find anywhere that has available appointments. What can I do?

A: Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to this problem; demand for the vaccine currently outpaces supply. Until that changes, your best option is to be persistent: contact vaccine providers every day, either through email, online scheduling portals, or over the phone, and inquire about available appointments.

DOH updates its interactive provider map every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, so you should plan to check the map for updates on those days, and see if there are new providers to add to your list of places to contact.

Q: I believe I should qualify for a vaccine now, because I have a medical condition that puts me at risk if I contract COVID-19. However, my condition is not one of those listed as being eligible for Phase 1A vaccination. Can I still get vaccinated now?

A: Probably not. As of right now, Pennsylvania is following the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control to prioritize those most at risk for COVID infections. People with increased risk of severe illness between the ages of 16 and 64 can be vaccinated in Phase 1A. Those conditions are limited to:

- Persons ages 16-64 with high-risk conditions:
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - COPD
  - Down Syndrome
  - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
  - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant or from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines
  - Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m2 or higher but < 40 kg/m2)
  - Severe Obesity (BMI $\geq 40$ kg/m2)
  - Pregnancy
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Smoking
  - Type 2 diabetes mellitus

However, the CDC has stated that “[a]s COVID-19 vaccines become more widely available in providers’ offices and pharmacies, healthcare providers may use clinical judgement to determine an individual patient's priority for vaccination.”
Thus, it is possible that someone with a combination of risk factors for moderate disease might be deemed to qualify for vaccination during Phase 1A, if there are sufficient doses available. Therefore, when access to the vaccine increases, we advise speaking to your doctor to determine your eligibility.

**Q: I qualify for vaccination now, but I do not have reliable access to the internet. How can I secure an appointment without it?**

**A:** While it is more difficult to search for and schedule a vaccination appointment without internet access, it is not impossible. DOH has stated that people without internet access can call their hotline, 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) to speak with someone who can help them locate vaccine providers.

We would also suggest people in this position reach out to their doctors to see whether a health system with which they are affiliated has available doses (DOH has instructed medical providers to target populations without internet access for priority scheduling).

However, many vaccine providers appear to only offer online scheduling. For this reason, we would suggest asking a trusted friend or family member with internet access to assist you in securing an appointment.

**Q: I was able to schedule an appointment, but the location is not accessible to me. What can I do?**

**A:** First, DO NOT cancel your appointment. Given the scarcity of appointments, it is possible you may find yourself with an appointment at a location that you cannot physically access. However, if you elect to cancel, you may not be able to get another appointment. Thus, we suggest advocating for yourself.

Vaccination providers are required to make reasonable accommodations to their established practices and procedures in order to provide people with disabilities with the vaccine. Such an accommodation might include offering you a curbside shot, meaning someone would meet you outside and vaccinate you, or meeting you in an alternate area of the building.

We suggest contacting the provider ahead of time, explaining your need for accommodation, and asking how they can accommodate you. If you run into problems getting a needed accommodation, call our intake line for assistance at 1-800-692-7443 x 400.
Q: I cannot leave my home but would like to get vaccinated. What are my options?

A: As of this time, we do not know of any mobile vaccination clinics that are up and running. However, we know that DOH recognizes the need for such clinics, and has included them as part of its vaccination plan. Therefore, we would suggest regularly checking DOH’s website and interactive provider map for updates.

Q: In order to get vaccinated, I need transportation, and I do not have access to public transportation or do not feel safe using it during the pandemic. What can I do?

A: At this time, we do not know of any established program to address this need. However, both Uber and Lyft are advocating for government funded rides to vaccination appointments, and the Biden administration is said to be interested in creating such a program. We would suggest regularly checking the Uber and Lyft websites and apps to see when/if these “free” ride share programs become active.

Pennsylvania also operates a Persons with Disabilities program, where people with disabilities who are 18 through 64 may receive reduced rates on shared-ride, curb-to-curb, advance reservation transportation services. For people who are 65 and older, the Pennsylvania Department of Aging offers alternative transportation options. If you are having trouble organizing transportation to a vaccination appointment, please contact our intake line for assistance.

Q: Can I get vaccinated in a different county than where I live?

A: Yes. There is no requirement that you get vaccinated in the same county in which you live. However, individual vaccine providers may have different eligibility requirements (e.g. a vaccine clinic sponsored by an individual county might limit their doses to county residents). Thus, it is important to check with vaccine providers to ensure your eligibility before scheduling an appointment.

Q: Is there any cost associated with the vaccine? Can I get vaccinated if I do not have health insurance?

A: The vaccine is being offered to all Americans free of charge, and you do not need to be insured in order to get vaccinated. However, vaccine providers may ask for your health insurance information when you register for an appointment, but you should still be able to schedule the appointment if you are uninsured.
If you need more information or need help, please contact Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP) at 800-692-7443 (voice) or 877-375-7139 (TTY), or email us at intake@disabilityrightspa.org.

The mission of Disability Rights Pennsylvania is to advance, protect, and advocate for the human, civil, and legal rights of Pennsylvanians with disabilities. Due to our limited resources, Disability Rights Pennsylvania cannot provide individual services to every person with advocacy and legal issues. Disability Rights Pennsylvania prioritizes cases that have the potential to result in widespread, systemic changes to benefit persons with disabilities. While we cannot provide assistance to everyone, we do seek to provide every individual with information and referral options.

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PLEASE NOTE: For information in alternative formats or a language other than English, contact Disability Rights Pennsylvania at: 800-692-7443, Ext. 400; TTY: 877-375-7139; or intake@disabilityrightspa.org.