

# ***ID/A COALITION***

*THE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM SERVICES COALITION OF PENNSYLVANIA*

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## **VIA EMAIL**

March 12, 2021

The Honorable Tom Wolf  
Office of the Governor  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Secretary Alison Beam  
Department of Health  
625 Forster Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor West  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Secretary Teresa D. Miller  
Department of Human Services  
333 Health and Welfare Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Senator Ryan Aument  
Senate Box 203036  
Room 9, East Wing  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Senator Art Haywood  
Senate Box 203004  
Room 10, East Wing  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Representative Bridget Kosierowski  
P.O. Box 202114  
104 Irvis Office Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Representative Timothy O'Neal  
P.O. Box 202048  
52B East Wing  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

## **RE: Request for Prioritization of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Accessing the COVID-19 Vaccination**

Dear Governor Wolf, Secretary Beam, Secretary Miller, and Joint Task Force Members:

As members of the Intellectual Disability and Autism (ID/A) Services Coalition in Pennsylvania, we wanted to share our concerns for people with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism in regard to the accessibility and prioritization for COVID-19 vaccines.

As you are aware, on March 5, 2021, Jefferson Health released an [analysis](#) from a national study confirming that those with intellectual disabilities (ID) are at greatest risk of death from COVID-19 after those of older age/elderly. This comprehensive study conducted by Jefferson Health demonstrates how people with IDD are at significantly higher risk of hospitalization and death when compared to the general population. "The results showed that those with intellectual disabilities were 2.5 times more likely to contract COVID-19, were about 2.7 times more likely to be admitted to the hospital and 5.9 times more likely to die from the infection than the general population."

The study examined over 64 million medical records across the nation to better understand how COVID-19 impacts the ID community. The findings of this study illustrate the clear need for the Pennsylvania Interim Vaccination Plan to be re-evaluated and to prioritize the health and safety of all individuals with IDD through prioritization in Phase 1A of the PA Vaccination Rollout Plan and/or with a designated allocation of vaccines.

Currently, the PA Interim Vaccination Plan prioritizes some individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) in Phase 1A, but the majority remain in Phase 1B. This decision is life threatening, as all individuals with IDD are at risk of death from COVID-19 six times higher than the general population. A limited number of individuals living in congregate settings, including state centers and group homes for people with IDD, have received the vaccine. However, the majority of people with IDD live in their communities with their families and relatives. Action must be taken to protect this population and ensure prioritization and access, not only for those who live in congregate settings, but for those in the community and cared for by their families. Pennsylvania must prioritize all individuals with IDD in Phase 1A and/or allocate vaccines specifically for the IDD community, similar to the initiative in vaccinating teachers and school workers.

The members of the ID/A Services Coalition continue to advocate to policy makers and legislators on addressing the critical need for the IDD community to be prioritized in Phase 1A of the PA Vaccination Rollout Plan or specifically allocating vaccines to our population. We look forward to partnering with you to ensure the PA COVID-19 Vaccination Plan is accessible and prioritizes the essential needs of the IDD community.

**Article Reference:** Jonathan Gleason, Wendy Ross, Alexander Fossi, Heather Blonsky, Jane Tobias, Mary Stephens, "The Devastating Impact of COVID-19 on individuals with intellectual disabilities in the United States," *NEJM Catalyst*, DIO: TKTK, 2021.

Sincerely,



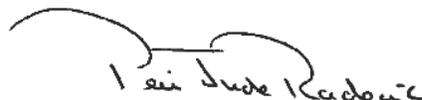
Mark Davis, President and CEO  
PAR (Pennsylvania Advocates and Resources for  
Autism and Intellectual Disabilities)



Sherri Landis, Executive Director  
The Arc of Pennsylvania



Richard Edley, Ph.D., President and CEO  
RCPA (Rehabilitation & Community Providers Assoc.)



Peri Jude Radecic, Esquire, CEO  
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