

COVID-19 Vaccine Plans for Pharmacies



To expand access to COVID-19 services, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has authorized state-licensed pharmacists to order and administer COVID-19 vaccinations, once they are made available, to patients aged three years and older.¹ The HHS and CDC have also indicated that they are making COVID-19 vaccines available to community pharmacies through independent network administrators and state health departments.

Many pharmacies are wondering how their pharmacy can get involved in securing and administering COVID-19 vaccines to their patients. According to AmerisourceBergen, who will be a network administrator for vaccine distribution, this effort will "help jurisdictions augment access to COVID-19 vaccine when supply increases. With more than 90 percent of people living within 5 miles of a community pharmacy, pharmacies have a unique reach and ability to provide access to the COVID-19 vaccine and support broad vaccination efforts. This program will provide critical vaccination services for the U.S. population, with the vaccine administered at community pharmacy locations at no cost to recipients. The program will be implemented in close coordination with jurisdictions to enable optimal COVID-19 vaccination coverage and vaccine access nationwide."²

If your pharmacy is interested in expanding vaccine access and administering COVID-19 vaccines, here are six tips you can utilize to prepare your pharmacy.

Tip 1: Obtain a CLIA Waiver and Complete Training

One of the first steps pharmacies should undertake is obtaining a CLIA waiver. To obtain a CLIA certificate of waiver, the pharmacy will need to complete an application for certification and file it with the Agency for Healthcare Administration. A copy of the application form can be found on our [website](#).³ NCPA has prepared a great [video](#)⁴ to assist pharmacies in completing the

application form. For further questions on how to obtain a CLIA Certificate of Waiver, please visit this [link](#).⁵

Recently, Pennsylvania signed PA 770 into law that amends the PA Lab act. The law states that if a pharmacy has a Certificate of Waiver from CMS (CMS 116), the pharmacy/pharmacist may order laboratory examinations and procedures (tests) for COVID-19, Influenza, and Streptococcal infections as approved by the FDA under the CLIA amendments. Pharmacies will still also need to submit this with a Pennsylvania application and get approved.

In addition to obtaining a CLIA waiver, all interested pharmacies must also complete a practical training program of at least 20 hours approved by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) and must complete a minimum of 2 hours of ACPE-approved, immunization-related continuing education during each state pharmacy period, in addition to usual requirements, such as appropriate record keeping and having a current CPR certificate.⁶

We also suggest that pharmacies contact their Department of Health Agencies and Board of Pharmacy to also identify any additional requirements needed.

Tip 2: Research the Vaccine Development & Sites Tracking Updates

The two major U.S. developers of the COVID-19 vaccines are Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna. A significant supply chain issue is the temperature required for these vaccines. The Pfizer vaccine needs to be stored at between minus 112 F (minus 80 C), and minus 94 F (minus 70 C), and the Moderna vaccine needs temperatures around minus 4 F (minus 20 C), which is close to the temperature of commercial-grade freezers. According to the company, Moderna's vaccine can remain at minus 4 F for up to six months, and then for a month in a refrigerator. Pfizer says its vaccine has a shorter shelf life of five days after being transferred from ultracold storage to a refrigerator, leaving a short window to administer the vaccines.⁷

A few sites that track vaccine development and are updated regularly include:

- The CDC provides [vaccine updates](#), travel guidance, and more.⁸
- The World Health Organization has a detailed, [downloadable spreadsheet](#) on each vaccine in development.⁹
- The *New York Times* tracks vaccines in [all stages of development](#).¹⁰
- HHS site goes into detail about [Operation Warp Speed](#).¹¹

Tip 3: Know the Network Administrators for Vaccine Distribution

HHS recently announced partnerships with several pharmacy networks to be network administrators for vaccine distribution. Currently, community pharmacies have five pathways to provide COVID-19 vaccines when available: CPESN® USA, AmerisourceBergen (Good Neighbor

Pharmacy/Elevate), LeaderNET, and Medicine Shoppe (Cardinal Health's PSAOs), Health Mart, or through your state health department.¹²

Your local pharmacy will need to research what network they can fall into to administer vaccines to their patients. Contact these networks to learn more.

Tip 4: Don't Forget to Register with VaccineFinder

The VaccineFinder website (www.vaccinefinder.org) helps patients find providers who offer seasonal, routine adult and child vaccinations. VaccineFinder is the only existing service that provides a comprehensive listing of current locations offering various vaccines in a community and includes providers in all 50 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. All information on VaccineFinder is updated by participating vaccine providers.

A few things to note:

- Providers enroll and report supply estimates for the vaccines they carry at each participating location. Reporting options include: (1) manually via a secure online portal (webform or data file upload); or (2) an automated, fast data transfer to report vaccine availability.
- During the 2020-2021 influenza season, providers are encouraged to update influenza vaccine availability.
- VaccineFinder will also help direct people to find the COVID-19 vaccine once widely available to the public.

To participate in VaccineFinder, register your pharmacy at <https://locating.health/register>.

Tip 5: Get Clarification on Your Billing Questions

NCPDP recently released [guidance](#)¹³ on COVID-19 vaccine billing. New information is available for pharmacies that plan to submit reimbursement claims for vaccine administration to PBMs. There's sufficient information in the guidance on paid and rejected claim responses. It may be helpful to reach out to your pharmacy management system vendor; they may have short tips for simplifying the use of these codes.

CMS has put out a [resource guide](#)¹⁴ that covers the reimbursement of COVID-19 vaccines, vaccine administration, and cost-sharing under Medicaid, CHIP, and Basic Health program. If you are planning to bill under Med Part B make sure to enroll as a Pharmacy Provider and fill out an [Online PECOS enrollment form](#)¹⁵ and [Hardcopy 855B application](#)¹⁶.

Tip 6: Follow Your State's Plan

Lastly, does your state have a plan? Contact your Board of Pharmacy or Department of Health to find out if they have put together a specific plan for how your state will handle vaccinations. For

example, here is the [Pennsylvania COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#)¹⁷ and their [COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ](#)¹⁸, courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Closing Thoughts

As Coronavirus's global effect continues to grow, Keystone is committed to keeping our pharmacy customers informed with ways they can better serve their patients and communities. It is important to note that each state has different requirements for vaccinating, so please check with your state's pharmacy association, the pharmacy board, and the department of health for more detailed information.

If you have any questions, please connect with your Keystone Business Consultant via email at info@kpparx.com. For more Coronavirus pharmacy and patient resources, please visit our COVID-19 toolkit at <https://www.kpparx.com/covid-19-resources/>.

Sources

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