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County education, public health officials unveil plan for equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccine to school employees

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (Feb. 24, 2021) — The Los Angeles County Office of Education and Department of Public Health today announced a strategy aimed at ensuring equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine to school employees as a step in supporting the safe return to in-person instruction in communities hit hardest by the pandemic.

Currently, schools may open grades TK-6 for in-person instruction and provide on-site services to small groups of students with special needs in all grades. Vaccinating school staff is not a state or local public health requirement for reopening school campuses.

Education staff throughout Los Angeles County's 80 K-12 districts, as well as in charter and private schools, are eligible for vaccinations on March 1 when a percentage of the county's doses will be set aside for the education sector each week.

Ninety-one percent of available doses will be allocated to public school districts weekly using a formula that considers percent of students eligible for free/reduced lunch, COVID case rate in the community and whether in-person instruction, small group specialized services and/or distance learning is being offered.

The remaining 9 percent will be provided to private school teachers and staff, reflecting the estimated percent of K-12 students served by these schools.

"I am grateful that LACOE, the Department of Public Health and medical providers across the county have collaborated to develop a plan for distributing vaccines to educators and school staff with equity at the forefront," said Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda L. Solis, Supervisor to the First District. "These essential workers serve our low-income communities and working families who have been devastated by the pandemic and truly make a difference in their lives. With this plan not only will the vaccine be available to teachers and school staff but it will be delivered directly into their arms — allowing students to return to the classroom sooner."

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“My priority is to ensure that resources are directed through an equity lens to support student and staff safety on campus so that we can focus on recovering from the academic and social-emotional challenges created by COVID-19,” said Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo, MSW, EdD. “Working with our Public Health partners, I believe we have come up with a vaccine distribution plan that supports all our districts as they work with their labor partners to safely reopen campuses.”

“Our equity-focused vaccine strategy is the latest effort in our partnership with LACOE to help schools successfully navigate this crisis,” said Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd. “As part of this work, we are encouraging districts to prioritize staff who are already serving students at school sites in an effort to reduce the possibility of serious illness for those highest at risk. This is a remarkable effort by a number of partners, and we thank LACOE for their commitment to equity as we look to protect educators and staff in our communities.”

Following the strategy developed by LACOE and Public Health, public school districts (excluding Long Beach and Pasadena USD, which receive vaccines through their cities’ health departments) will be organized into five groups that will allow for the equitable allocation of doses.

Each of the five groups represents approximately 20 percent of LA County public school students. The five groups of districts are allocated percentages of available vaccine doses based on student enrollment as well as factors related to equity and risk of exposure. This plan ensures that each school district receives a weekly allocation of doses.

For example, one group includes districts that serve about 20 percent of county students but is allocated 30 percent of weekly vaccines because they have been identified as high-need and high-risk. Within each group, doses are split proportionately by district size. Due to its size, Los Angeles USD comprises two of the groups and is slated to receive 40 percent of the weekly dose allocation.

Most school districts have created partnerships with certified providers that will receive and administer vaccines to school staff. Three school districts (Culver City, Glendora and Los Angeles USD) have created vaccine Points of Dispensing (POD) and will hold vaccine clinics independent of health care facilities.

Districts will receive a weekly allocation of doses via their confirmed vaccination partner or directly to their POD. Vaccination allocations for districts include allotment for charter schools authorized by the district. Each district will determine how to prioritize staff for vaccination based on their weekly allocation with the recommendation that this be conducted through an equitable process.

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Private schools will receive allocations through restricted educator appointments. Private school contacts will be provided weekly instructions for appointment scheduling that they will share with staff to access these appointments.

School staff also will have the option of making vaccination appointments via the myturn.ca.gov website at sites across the county, through their health care providers or through their district.

The Los Angeles County Office of Education, based in Downey, is the nation's largest regional education agency, providing a range of services and programs to support the region's 80 school districts and some two million preschool and school-age children. To learn more about LACOE, please visit www.lacoe.edu, and follow LACOE on social media at twitter.com/losangelescoe, facebook.com/losangelescoe, instagram.com/losangelescoe and youtube.com/lacoeETN.

The Department of Public Health is committed to promoting health equity and ensuring optimal health and well-being for all 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health comprises nearly 4,500 employees and has an annual budget of \$1.2 billion. To learn more about Los Angeles County Public Health, please visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov, and follow LA County Public Health on social media at twitter.com/lacounty.gov, and follow LA County Public Health on social media at twitter.com/lapublichealth, facebook.com/lapublichealth, instagram.com/lapublichealth and youtube.com/lapublichealth.

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