



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

Governor Lamont Announces Connecticut Will Continue Age-Based Approach To COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility; Educators and Childcare Providers To Have Dedicated Clinics in March

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(HARTFORD, CT) – In an effort to ensure that Connecticut continues taking the most equitable and efficient approach to quickly administering the COVID-19 vaccine to as many people as possible, Governor Ned Lamont today announced that the state will continue with an age-based approach to expanding eligibility to the vaccine, explaining that other previously considered scenarios proved overly complex and confusing, would potentially exacerbate inequities in vaccine distribution, and slow down the process of providing it to Connecticut residents.

Age is one of the strongest factors contributing to COVID-19 deaths, with 96 percent of COVID-19 deaths in Connecticut occurring in people over the age of 55.

To provide clarity and predictability, the governor today announced a schedule for age-based eligibility for the next several months. By laying out a clear timeline for eligibility for the vaccine, the strategy allows everyone in the state, including essential workers and those with chronic conditions, to know when they will be able to schedule an appointment. The planned schedule is as follows:

- **March 1, 2021:** Expands to age group 55 to 64
- **March 22, 2021:** Expands to age group 45 to 54
- **April 12, 2021:** Expands to age group 35 to 44
- **May 3, 2021:** Expands to age group 16 to 34

To further ensure equitable allocation of the vaccine, Governor Lamont also announced that he is directing the Connecticut Department of Public Health to set numerical targets and work with vaccine providers to ensure that vaccines are administered to people living in the highest-risk communities in proportion to their population. These targets and the associated strategies will be announced in the coming days.

In addition to the age-based eligibility, preK-12 school staff and teachers, and professional childcare providers will be eligible to receive the vaccine in March at dedicated clinics that will be set up specifically for those sectors. Educators and childcare professionals will soon receive information from their school administrators and employers on when their dedicated clinics will be provided.

Connecticut has been using a phased approach to its COVID-19 vaccine program because of the very limited supply of the vaccine that it has been receiving from the federal government. The

program initially began in December with healthcare providers and medical first responders, and then expanded in January to include all individuals over the age of 75 and certain congregate settings, followed by those over the age of 65 in mid-February. All previously eligible individuals and settings will continue to be eligible after March 1.

“In a perfect world, we would have enough doses of the vaccine to get it to all 3.6 million people in Connecticut right now, however each state is being given a very limited supply, which is why we must take this phased approach,” **Governor Lamont said**. “Connecticut’s healthcare providers have been doing an amazing job getting the vaccine to people as quickly as they can, and using age as the only qualifying factor is one of the reasons why they’ve had success so far. The last thing we want to do is complicate the process for them and cause delays that slow things down and exacerbate issues regarding equitable access. A vaccination program of this magnitude is unprecedented in recent times, and I appreciate everyone’s understanding of the fluid nature of this situation. My goal is to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible, and I believe this is the best path to meeting that challenge.”

“We have been in the COVID-19 marathon for approaching a year and now our race becomes a sprint to beat the variants of COVID-19 that are now circulating in the state and elsewhere and to return to a sense of normalcy for ourselves, our families and our communities,” **Connecticut Acting Public Health Commissioner Dr. Deidre Gifford, who also serves as co-chair of the Governor’s COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, said**. “The Department of Public Health is committed to an equitable vaccination program. Sticking with an age-based vaccine rollout allows our vaccine providers to get as many shots as possible as quickly and equitably as possible into the arms of Connecticut residents, and vaccinating our education and childcare workforce will get our children back in the classroom this school year.”

“Ensuring communities of color have access to vaccines is one of the most important and impactful ways we will get this pandemic behind us,” **Dr. Reginald Eadie, president & CEO of Trinity Health New England and co-chair of the Governor’s COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, said**. “Using age as an eligibility criterion makes it clear to all of our residents, especially those who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, that the vaccine is here, it’s available, and provides for an easier registration process to actually receive the vaccine. Education is important when it comes to addressing vaccine hesitancy, but we must also have a simple process to make sure those who need the vaccine receive the vaccine. This new timeline not only informs residents of when they can anticipate they will be eligible to be vaccinated, but it also provides vaccinators direction on when and where to target their own outreach and education efforts.”

“Equitable access to vaccine for our communities that have been hardest hit by COVID-19 has always been the priority of the allocation subcommittee,” **Nichelle Mullins, president and CEO of Charter Oak Health Center, and Zita Lazzarini, associate professor of public health sciences at UConn Health, both of whom serve as the co-chairs of the allocation subcommittee of the Governor’s COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, said in a joint statement**. “We agree with the governor’s approach and, while not ideal, we understand that a continuation of the age-based system simplifies the requirements for vaccination. We also applaud the state’s commitment to set tangible benchmarks for providers to vaccinate residents living in Connecticut’s cities and municipalities with large underserved and high-risk populations. These benchmarks are intended as affirmative steps to increase equity in access to vaccines and to remediate inequities that have accrued so far.”

Connecticut Business and Industry Association president and CEO Chris DiPentima said that while essential employers had spent time and resources preparing for the vaccine rollout based on the initial guidance, he understood the need to pivot. “We cannot rebuild our economy and recover from the pandemic without first addressing the public health crisis,” he said. “This new approach allows for more workers across Connecticut to get vaccinated in a short period of time, and it

eliminates potentially complicated rules, making it easier and more equitable for everyone to receive their vaccination. It is critical that we vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible.”

All eligible individuals in Connecticut are required to make an appointment in advance of receiving the vaccine. Residents aged 55 to 64 should not attempt to make an appointment now – they will not be able to schedule one until the program expands to their age group on March 1.

To locate vaccination clinics, individuals should visit ct.gov/covidvaccine and enter their zip code. From there, users will be shown the nearest available clinics and provided with specific directions on how to make an appointment at each one, including over the internet and over the telephone.

Those who do not have access to the internet can call Connecticut's Vaccine Appointment Assist Line at **877-918-2224**. The line is open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

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