

**DELIBERATIVE, PRE-DECISIONAL, FOR INTERNAL COORDINATION ONLY**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
COVID-19 Vaccines  
Feb 18, 2021**

*The following are answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) from pandemic coordinators regarding COVID-19 vaccines. This document will be updated as new information is received. In addition to the FAQs below, please also check the FAQs from the [Safer Federal Workforce](#) which includes information about vaccines and other topics.*

**1. How is the first round of COVID-19 vaccines being dispensed?**

Because of the limited supply of COVID-19 vaccines, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided recommendations about who should be vaccinated first to federal, state, and local governments.

[CDC's recommendations](#) are based on guidance from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices—an independent panel of medical and public health experts.

FEMA is coordinating with CDC and supporting the [White House COVID-19 Response Plan](#) by working with federal, state, local, tribal and territorial partners to assist with expediting vaccinations in the United States.

For more details about specific actions please see [this news release](#).

**2. How do Federal Employees fit into this prioritization?**

Vaccine priority is determined at the state level by State Health Departments and include how federal workers are prioritized.

Certain federal agencies, including the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Homeland Security will receive vaccines directly for their internal use.

**3. Did USDA request that certain positions receive priority consideration for the COVID-19 vaccine?**

States are responsible for determining their own vaccine prioritization. USDA is encouraging the State Health Departments to include certain USDA employees in their vaccination plans. These include employees whose mission critical activities cannot be done remotely at:

- Forest Service
- Food Safety and Inspection Service
- Office of Inspector General

- Marketing and Regulatory Programs

USDA has provided the number of employees by county for states to consider in their vaccine distribution.

**4. Which positions were identified by Mission Areas to receive priority consideration?**

No USDA Mission Area or Agency has been given a direct vaccine allotment. States are responsible for determining their own vaccine prioritization. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices continues to provide recommendations to states.

While USDA has thousands of employees in its workforce, states will make the final determination of how vaccine distribution is prioritized. USDA requested that states prioritize certain positions that perform mission critical activities that cannot be performed remotely.

Mission Areas will notify employees if their position was identified for the state to consider in their vaccine allotment.

**5. Are the COVID-19 vaccines mandatory?**

At this time, there is no USDA requirement that the COVID-19 vaccine is mandatory.

USDA continues to monitor guidance from other federal agencies, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the CDC, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on this question.

**6. How do laws related to Equal Employment, such as the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 inform decisions around COVID-19 vaccinations?**

The EEOC provides comprehensive information addressing this question in this publication: [“What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws.”](#)

The EEOC recently updated this document, including a new section with information for employers and employees about how a COVID-19 vaccination interacts with the legal requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA).

**7. Can Mission Areas provide facilities or resources for vaccine distribution?**

Yes, Mission Areas can provide personnel, facilities, or other resources to aid in distribution as available and at the request of local health officials or agencies such as FEMA.

Authorized officials are encouraged to support county efforts in dispensing vaccines, and in some cases have already made their visitor centers available for vaccine delivery. Any

requests for local support should be coordinated with your Pandemic Coordinator so that USDA can determine whether it can comply with the state and CDC requirements before entering into an agreement to distribute the vaccine.

**8. Can I use administrative leave to get my vaccine?**

To support employees in getting vaccinated when it is their turn, managers may authorize up to 4 hours of administrative leave/excused absence for each vaccination appointment, which includes travel time to and from the vaccination site. A manager may increase the amount of administrative leave/excused absence authorized above the 4 hours per appointment for compelling reasons, such as distance to vaccination site or length of lines. The use of administrative leave/excused absence for a COVID-19 vaccination is authorized regardless of whether an employee is performing work on-site or in a telework status.

**9. Will employees who are vaccinated be treated differently from those who have not been?**

At this time, there is no USDA requirement that a COVID-19 vaccine is mandatory. Supervisors should not consider whether an employee has received a COVID-19 vaccination when making any work-related decisions, including scheduling or assignments.

USDA continues to monitor guidance from other federal agencies, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the CDC, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on this question.