



Public Health
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Henderson County Department of Public Health

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Henderson County COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

(January 5, 2021) – The Henderson County Department of Public Health and community partners have received numerous inquiries from the public regarding COVID-19 vaccinations. We would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on Henderson County’s vaccination plan.

At the end of December, the [N.C. Department of Health and Human Services \(NCDHHS\) updated its priority groups](#) for vaccine providers to follow. **Henderson County is currently in Phase 1a.**



The revised order now includes all individuals 75 and older as well as frontline essential workers into Phase 1b. Most recently, NCDHHS issued guidance on vaccine administration that will allow communities to move into Phase 1b and Phase 2.

While we are encouraged by the expansion in priority groups, for now, Henderson County remains focused on completing Phase 1a. As soon as we near completion of Phase 1a, we will begin to move into Phase 1b. Entities such as the Health Department and Pardee UNC Health Care that are deemed open sites by the CDC will be first to move into Phase 1b.

Please note that until we as a community are ready to move into Phase 1b, there is no specific action the public needs to take. As we begin to enter Phase 1b, the Health Department will publicly announce the transition and specific steps and instructions to make a vaccination appointment. Whether a vaccine is administered through a hospital, or by the Health Department, a scheduled appointment will be required to avoid long lines and unnecessary delays with vaccine supply.

Current Phase 1a: Healthcare workers fighting COVID-19 and long-term care staff/residents

Henderson County is currently vaccinating healthcare workers fighting COVID-19 and long-term care facility residents and staff. While the state plans to allow Phase 1b vaccinations to proceed, many communities, including Henderson County, will not start vaccinating individuals in Phase 1b until Phase 1a is complete.

It’s difficult to predict when Phase 1a will end. It is likely most of January will be focused on completing Phase 1a vaccinations.

Individuals in Phase 1a are being solicited and rostered by us within the North Carolina COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS). That process is required by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services to maintain inventory control for vaccine.

Phase 1b – Adults 75 years or older and frontline essential workers, specified by groups

Because there will not be enough vaccine for everyone in Phase 1b to be vaccinated at the same time, this phase is divided into three groups:

- **Group 1:** Anyone 75 years or older, regardless of health status or living situation.
- **Group 2:** Healthcare workers and frontline essential workers 50 years and older.
- **Group 3:** Healthcare workers and frontline essential workers of any age.

Essential workers are defined by the CDC as first responders, food and agricultural workers, grocery store workers, the education sector and childcare staff among others.

It is estimated there are at least 6,000 people in Henderson County in the 75+ age group who don't reside in a long-term care facility. Until more information is gathered on Groups 2 and 3, it will difficult to estimate a timeline for completing Phase 1b.

Phase 2: Adults at high risk for exposure and at increased risk of illness

Phase 2 will likely unfold in the spring and early summer and, by that time, it is likely vaccine supply will be more plentiful and commercial options for vaccinations in grocery stores and pharmacies will be available.

Vaccine enrollment

Again, the general public does not need to take any specific action at this point. It is not clear at this time if individuals in Phase 1b and Phase 2 will be enrolled within the CVMS system as those in Phase 1a have. The state has not yet defined an alternate process. Our community has planned several practical workarounds in order to be prepared for this stage.

When we get to Phase 1b, we will publicly announce that transition and will provide further instructions at that time to make a vaccination appointment. An appointment-based system will be necessary in order to avoid long lines and unnecessary delays with limited vaccine supply.

Key points to remember:

- This whole campaign will take months, not weeks. Everyone will eventually have access to a tested, safe and effective vaccine, but that will take months to achieve. We ask for patience as we navigate this process.
- Public Health will depend on the public's ability to access and review written information about the vaccine plan. All public health partners are busy both caring for COVID-19 patients and vaccinating those in approved priority groups, leaving them with very little time to respond to each individual question or concern.
- Many concerned individuals such as seniors don't frequently use or have access to the internet or social media for information. We ask community and faith-based organizations to assist with education of their staff and membership.
- Variables that will impact our vaccination plan include vaccine supply, ongoing demands with COVID-19 case surges and the availability of personnel and resources to administer vaccines.
- Despite the current surge with cases, practicing the 3 W's has proven to be incredibly effective at protecting people. Almost all of Henderson County's cases are associated with settings where people dropped their guard with family members not in their household, co-workers, neighbors and friends.

It is a difficult and stressful time for everyone, but this is the top public health priority for our community. The entire public health system including our hospitals, community health center, emergency services and medical community are dedicated to making this happen as quickly as possible. We ask for your patience and understanding as this effort continues to unfold.

For questions, please visit the Health Department's vaccine website at www.hendersoncountync.gov/health/page/covid-19-vaccines and the NCDHHS vaccine site at www.YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov.