



January 15, 2021

Dear Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Colleagues,

The Health Resources and Services (HRSA) HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) appreciates the efforts and dedication of Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) recipients and subrecipients during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency. The next critical phase in the COVID-19 public health response is vaccination. In December 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave Emergency Use Authorization for two COVID-19 vaccines. Both vaccines are shown to be safe and at least 94 percent effective for the prevention of severe disease.

RWHAP recipients and subrecipients play an important role in COVID-19 vaccine administration when designated in their jurisdictions' plans as vaccinators. In addition, all RWHAP recipients and subrecipients have a critical role in addressing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and distributing information about local access to vaccines. Clients may be reluctant to receive the COVID-19 vaccine because they have questions about vaccine development and safety and appropriateness of receiving a vaccine given an HIV diagnosis. Clients turn to their RWHAP healthcare team as a trusted source of information. I ask RWHAP recipients and subrecipients to develop plans for addressing client needs related to health education about and access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Addressing vaccine hesitancy requires multiple approaches. Staff may require information, guidance, and talking points as well as support gathering educational materials for clients. To assist you, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a website dedicated to the [COVID-19 vaccines](#). The CDC website contains many resources addressing [staff training](#), [toolkits](#), [posters](#), and [fact sheets](#). The list below highlights some resources you may find helpful as you develop and disseminate COVID-19 vaccine information.

- [Vaccination Communication Toolkit: Building confidence about COVID-19 vaccination among your healthcare teams and other staff](#)
- [Recipient \(Client\) Education Toolkit: Educate vaccine recipients about the importance of COVID-19 vaccination](#)
- [Talking to patients about the COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Understanding and explaining the vaccine](#)
- [Plain language fact sheets in English and Spanish](#)
- [Answering Patients' Questions](#)
- [What to expect at your appointment](#)

Just as important as client education is supporting access to the vaccine. The COVID-19 distribution roll out continues to evolve. Some RWHAP recipients and subrecipients may receive COVID-19 vaccine for distribution to their clients, while others will need to direct clients to vaccination resources outside the RWHAP-funded organization. Please identify the following information specific to your organization and share the information with staff and clients.

1. If your organization will receive COVID-19 vaccines:
  - a. When will you receive the vaccines?
  - b. How many doses of the vaccines will you receive? What other COVID-19 vaccines resources are available if you do not receive enough for your clients?
  - c. What is your plan for disseminating the COVID-19 vaccine to clients consistent with state defined priority groups?
  - d. What and how will you communicate COVID-19 vaccination information to clients?
  - e. How will you support clients receiving the COVID-19 vaccination to ensure they return for their second vaccine dosage?
  
2. If your organization will not receive COVID-19 vaccines:
  - a. Where and when will COVID-19 vaccines be available in your community?
  - b. What will clients need to do to access the COVID-19 vaccines (e.g., register on a website)? How can you support clients in accessing the COVID-19 vaccines (e.g., case manager assist clients with registering and following up to get vaccine second dose, provide transportation to the vaccination site)?
  - c. What and how will you communicate COVID-19 vaccination information to clients, including timing of vaccination based on state defined priority groups?

I know of providers who are sending regular communications to their clients letting them know about the vaccination status of staff and local availability of the COVID-19 vaccine. This type of communication helps spread accurate information, demonstrates providers' confidence, and reinforces trust in the providers. Please consider communicating with your clients.

Lastly, I want to remind you that according to Operation Warp Speed and the Department of Health and Human Services, the COVID-19 vaccine itself will be provided at no cost. However, vaccination providers will be able to charge a fee for administering the vaccine. RWHAP providers can get this fee reimbursed from the patient's public or private health care coverage, or utilize their RWHAP or CARES Act funding to cover this fee. Other vaccination providers can get this fee reimbursed for uninsured or underinsured patients by the [Health Resources and Services Administration's COVID-19 Claims Reimbursement to Health Care Providers and Facilities for Testing, Treatment, and Vaccine Administration for the Uninsured Program](#). Please visit the HRSA HAB [COVID-19 Frequency Asked Questions](#) for more information about COVID-19 vaccination.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts and dedication to the health and safety of people with HIV in the RWHAP and the general public.

Sincerely,  
/Laura W. Cheever/  
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