

Tuesday, February 2, 2021 Covid-19 vaccine town hall FAQ

Below are a series of combined and edited questions received prior to, but answered during, the Tuesday, February 2, 2021 Covid-19 vaccine town hall.

Sign up

Why is it so difficult to sign up?

The lack of vaccines supplied by the federal government is the problem. Demand for the vaccine far outweighs the supply of vaccines. As such, the lack of vaccines makes it difficult to find appointments across the different websites due to so many people wanting the vaccine and vying for appointments. More appointments will become available as vaccines are received.

Can I sign up with more than one place?

Yes. Since vaccines are being delivered to different organizations, you should register with your pharmacy, your health care provider (i.e. Northshore) and your department of public health. Evanston, Skokie and Chicago residents should register with their respective department of public health. North suburban Cook County residents outside of Evanston and Skokie should register with the Cook County Department of Public Health.

I don't have/can't use a computer. How do I sign up?

If you do not live in Evanston, Skokie or Chicago, please call the Cook County hotline at 833-308-1988. It is open Monday-Friday 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

Can your offices help me sign up?

Sure, please call one of our offices and we will help you register. However, we cannot promise getting you an appointment.

How does the Cook County website work? Is there a queue or is it first come first serve?

Cook County is only registering people in 1a or 1b, and the process is currently first come, first serve within those categories. Once you are registered, you will receive a notification once more appointments become available.

Are there two Cook County websites to sign up?

There is an initial survey from Cook County to express interest. The only Cook County location to register is vaccine.cookcountyil.gov.

I am homebound. How do I get vaccinated?

Currently, the only homebound vaccinations being done are for those who live in long-term care facilities. However, local governments and providers have explored doing homebound visits as more supplies become available. Yet there are no concrete plans.

Why can't I reserve a vaccine appointment a month from now instead of having to keep checking the website?

Because of a lack of vaccines, Cook County can only open up appointments once they have confirmed vaccines. They do not want to have to cancel appointments if there are not sufficient vaccines.

Will Cook County prioritize people based on their health condition? How is priority being determined within 1b?

All individuals within 1a and 1b are treated equally. There is no ranking based on health condition.

Are the only people getting a vaccine “connected”?

Because of the lack of vaccines, this is a common misperception. The first people to receive the vaccines in 1a were medical professionals and seniors in long-term care facilities. While there are some individual rumors, a significant portion of which are false or misconstrued, “who you know” is not a factor in receiving the vaccine.

I received my first vaccine dose, but can’t schedule the second dose. What do I do?

Continue to check for an appointment with the location that provided you the first dose.

Are all Cook County health centers offering the Pfizer vaccine?

Cook County has received both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. You will be informed of which vaccine you are receiving.

Can I get a vaccine in a different county?

Please check with the other county to review your eligibility.

Is it possible to receive a leftover vaccine that would otherwise be discarded?

There are a lot of stories about people receiving such vaccines. We encourage everyone to follow the directions of the various “sign up” websites.

Why don’t we have one centralized sign up system?

There are multiple pharmacies, health care organizations and public health departments involved with providing the vaccine. Each has different procedures.

Why have some teachers/schools already been vaccinated?

Educators are in 1b. However, due to the size of the 1b group (650,000 in suburban Cook County) not all educators will be vaccinated at the same time.

Distribution

Why is there only one Cook County vaccine location in the northern suburbs?

Because of the lack of vaccines, Cook County locations have been set up in high-population areas. As time goes forward there will be more distribution channels in northern Cook County.

Why do Evanston and Skokie get to distribute the vaccine?

Evanston and Skokie have their own department of public health. As such, they qualify to provide their populations the vaccine. However, Evanston and Skokie receive an allotment based on population and so do not receive extra vaccines as a result.

Can my school/church/community center serve as a distribution center?

No. The vaccine handling requirements are very complex and require specific equipment and expertise.

Can health care providers ignore the state's 1b guidelines and vaccinate someone outside of 1b with a very serious medical condition?

Providers must only vaccinate those who are eligible.

Why don't the pharmacies in the suburbs have any vaccines to distribute?

Vaccine distribution has been limited in pharmacies and health care groups. Demand for the vaccine far outweighs supply. As such, it is difficult to find appointments.

What are the authorization codes at Walgreens and CVS?

People signing up on the Walgreens/CVS sites can bypass the field that asks for an authorization code.

Big picture

Why are there so few vaccines? Who decides how many Illinois gets?

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created recommendations for the order in which states and other jurisdictions receive vaccines. Currently, there is an extremely limited number of doses available. As global manufacturing capacity increases, we will see more available doses in Illinois and across the country.

What are the barriers to speeding up distribution?

The biggest problem is simply supply. We do not yet have nearly enough vaccines. I believe that the current administration will take this crisis more seriously than the last and that we'll see availability increase in the near term. Our priority must be distributing what vaccines are available as quickly and as fairly as possible.

Where is Illinois in relation to other states?

As of February 1, Illinois distributed over 1.6M doses, which ranks Illinois at #6 out of 50 states according to the [New York Times](#).

What steps are being taken to improve the process?

Distribution

At the state level, the Illinois Department of Public Health is building a provider network of several statewide pharmacy chains, hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers, industry/business workplace clinics, etc. to better manage this complex process.

Tracking

Currently, vaccine registration is through the individual provider/pharmacy scheduling system, local health department registration, workplace vaccine clinic registration. The state is working to aggregate this data to display it on <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-location> and link back to those individual providers and/or local health departments.

Informing the Public

In addition to state press conferences, press releases, and a public website (coronavirus.illinois.gov), IDPH is working with other state agencies, business networks, associations, advocacy organizations to inform the public.

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Signing up everywhere sounds like a bad idea. Doesn't this bog down the system?

The most significant problem right now is the lack of vaccines, which is leading systems to be overwhelmed. We encourage people to sign up only where they are eligible.

Is there a system for verifying eligibility, age and identity?

Each vaccine distributor is in charge of this. Please bring whatever verification is required by the vaccine provider to the appointment. Follow any instructions given by the distributor.

Should I sign up at a place that requires a credit card to reserve a spot?

No. Please do not pay money to reserve a spot. The vaccine is free.

Is it against the law to jump the line, or to help others jump the line?

It is against the law. Don't do it.

What do we do when we can't get through on the phones?

Keep trying. Or call our offices to help you register via computer.

Appointments are going so quickly. I am not that fast with technology. This is super tiring. How will I get an appointment?

Due to the lack of vaccines, there are many eligible people competing for a few spots, so even those people who are good with technology are getting locked out. We recognize that this process is tiring and stressful. We ask you continue to be patient and vigilant as Cook County makes its way through the rest of 1b.

How can you sign up if you cannot even reach the sources you mention?

You can register on the Cook County website (vaccine.cookcountyil.gov). This will allow you to receive an email/text with a link that allows you to return to the website with all your information already uploaded.

Are college professors included in the "educators" definition?

Currently, "educators" only include those who work in congregate child care and pre-K through 12th grade.

How will 1c work? Will 1c start with subgroups? Can I make a reservation now?

We know who is included in 1c: Persons aged 16 to 64 with high-risk medical conditions and other essential workers, including: transportation, food service, housing, finance, information

technology, energy, media and legal. 1c will proceed after 1b is completed. Currently, only people in 1a and 1b can make appointments.

What are the residency requirements for receiving a vaccine in Cook County?

The residency requirements are living or working in suburban Cook County or the City of Chicago, but not in Evanston, Skokie, Oak Park or Stickney Township, as these jurisdictions have their own departments of public health.

Why isn't Northshore doing vaccinations?

According to NorthShore, "NorthShore is only preparing to vaccinate individuals 65 and older along with those in the existing 1a group (health care workers and residents and staff of long-term care facilities.)" Once Northshore receives vaccines, they will communicate with their patients.

I received my first dose from Cook County. Do they contact me to set up the second dose?

No. You need to make an appointment.

If I get the first dose with Cook County can I get the second dose in another county or state?

No.

I got my first vaccine at Walgreens. I have my appointment and confirmation letter for my second vaccine. Am I absolutely guaranteed to get the second vaccine on that assigned day?

Nothing is guaranteed due to vaccine supply. However, Walgreens is responsible to get you the second shot.

If I get an appointment at Walgreens, for example, how can you guarantee that I can get the second shot there? Are the places giving the shots providing you a second appointment date at the time of the first shot?

Each pharmacy has a different process. You should check with the pharmacy on what you should do as to how to schedule the second shot.

I went onto the Cook County system and was able to find a second dose appointment, but not a first. Can I just sign up for a second dose as my first?

No. We are working to correct this glitch.

So wait, you are telling us there are not enough vaccines, but not all vaccines have been used?

Many of those vaccines are preserved as second doses. Others are from the federal long-term care program with CVS and Walgreens which is still ongoing and has experienced reporting delays. Today, we are trying to use all vaccines rather than hold some back.

What group oversees vaccine ordering and distribution amongst counties?

The Illinois Department of Public Health.

I am attempting to register for a vaccine through the Vaccine.CookCountyil.gov portal, but my computer times out or I see a spinning cursor. How will I know when I am registered?

To ensure registration, a registrant must receive a confirmation email or text message inclusive of a QR code. Without this confirmation, individuals will need to try again to register. If you are unsure if your registration went through, please call one of our offices and we can assist.

I have contacted my doctor's office seeking assistance in registering for a vaccine, but they have no information to help. How do I get registered with my health care provider?

Health systems including Advocate, Amita, Northshore, Northwestern, and Rush will be communicating directly with their patient populations on when a patient is eligible to receive a vaccine. It is important to register through your health care provider's patient portal to receive these updates. See slide 16 of the attached presentation for more information on how to connect with your health care provider.