

Pennsylvania's COVID-19 Vaccination Program for School Staff Frequently Asked Questions

Updated March 5, 2021

Q: What vaccine is being offered, when, and why?

A: School staff in Pennsylvania will be offered the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine over the next several weeks. The governor, Legislature, your union, school board directors, and administrators are committed to protecting you while getting kids back into classrooms safely and as soon as possible.

Q: How is this plan different than President Biden's?

A: PSEA has been pushing policymakers to enact this program since January, and this has been our top priority. President Biden is taking a key step toward making vaccination of educators, support professionals, and school administrators a priority. Pennsylvania's program is focused on the same goal. But Pennsylvania's plan, which PSEA has helped to create, is designed to achieve this goal even more quickly, by organizing vaccinations through 28 intermediate units across the state in a program that is exclusively for school staff members.

Q: Can I invite other people I know to participate in this program?

A: No. This program is only for school staff members.

Q: What is the purpose of the email with the vaccine survey that I received from my employer?

A: The email with the link to the survey will be used to determine vaccine supply needed at each IU vaccine administration site and will be used by the employer to schedule individual employees for vaccine appointments.

Q: Am I required to complete the vaccine screening survey?

A: Yes. Employers will direct school staff to complete the survey by Friday, March 5 at 5:00 p.m.

Q: What are the potential consequences if I refuse (or fail) to complete the employer vaccine screening survey?

A: School staff who do not complete the survey as directed by their employers could be considered insubordinate and subject to discipline. School staff who wish to receive the vaccine but fail to complete the survey may not have another opportunity to sign up for one through this program.

Q: I don't have access to a computer or the internet at home. How will I complete the email with the link to the vaccine survey?

A: We anticipate that these tools will be accessible via a smartphone, tablet, or computer. However, employers will also be advised by PDE to provide computer access and time during the workday to complete the survey for school staff without computer or internet access at home. If that is not the case for you, contact your local association president or PSEA UniServ representative.

Q: Where can I find information about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

A: Johnson & Johnson's release on their vaccine: <https://www.jnj.com/johnson-johnson-announces-single-shot-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-candidate-met-primary-endpoints-in-interim-analysis-of-its-phase-3-ensemble-trial>

Also visit the CDC's frequently asked questions page to learn more about COVID-19 vaccination: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

Here is a recent news article on COVID-19 vaccines:

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/how-does-the-johnson-johnson-vaccine-compare-to-other-coronavirus-vaccines>

Q: What if I wish to wait for a different type of vaccine?

A: You are under no obligation to take the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. School staff members are being offered the opportunity to voluntarily receive the vaccine through this program. If you determine that you do not wish to participate in this program, you will need to make an appointment on your own with an outside entity for a vaccine.

Q: What if I'm on a list to receive a vaccine through another source, but do not yet have an appointment?

A: If you would like to be vaccinated through this program, we encourage you to do so. Vaccine supply is still very limited, and many people in the 1A group have experienced challenges in scheduling appointments. This program is unique in that doses have been set aside specifically

for school staff members, but even with that set aside, there won't be enough for everyone in the first delivery wave.

You should consult a health care professional as needed with questions and make an informed decision as to whether to schedule an appointment through this program or to remain on a previous vaccine list.

Q: Am I taking vaccine doses away from other front-line workers?

A: No. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine allocation is in addition to all the vaccines prioritized for Phase 1A recipients, including long-term care and health care workers. And as a school staff member, YOU are an essential employee, too, serving a critical role for the health and safety of our students and communities. We all must do our part to make sure all Pennsylvania schools can reopen safely and stay open.

Q: What if I want a vaccine but there are not enough doses available in my area?

A: Rest assured, more vaccines are coming. State agencies are working with IUs and school districts to carefully collect data and monitor the need to make sure every school staff member has the opportunity be vaccinated through this program. It may take multiple shipments over a series of weeks to have enough doses for everyone.

Q: If I currently have a COVID-19 accommodation, how will my decision about getting vaccinated impact my accommodation?

A: Whether any particular school staff member's accommodation (for example, an accommodation to work remotely) will be affected depends on the facts and circumstances specific to that situation. Members who have accommodations and are concerned about the impact of vaccinations on those accommodations should speak to their local association and PSEA UniServ representative.

Q: Are charter schools, cyber charter schools, and private schools included in this program?

A: Yes.

Q: Are private sector employees working in public schools as subcontractors in pre-K to grade 12 settings included in this program?

A: Yes.

Q: Why does the survey request information about whether I've already been vaccinated? Is this a HIPAA violation?

A: The survey does not violate HIPAA and was closely reviewed by legal counsel. Employers are within their rights to ask school staff members about their vaccination status. The federal EEOC has explained that employers may ask if an employee has received the vaccine or require employees to show proof of a COVID-19 vaccine, although follow-up questions related to why an individual did or did not receive a vaccine are not likely to be permitted.

The key reason why the survey includes this question is to determine how many doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine schools need to vaccinate everyone who has not yet received a vaccine. In addition, the state has had some concerns that school staff may "double up" on vaccines and receive more than the recommended dosage. School staff who have already received one or both doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines should not receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Q: Who will see my survey information?

A: School employers will see the survey information for the purpose of organizing vaccination appointments and determining the amount of Johnson & Johnson vaccine they need. School employers will not see any information related to a school staff members' medical information or history.

Q: How will education employees be prioritized for vaccine scheduling?

A: The state will establish a priority order for school staff members to be scheduled for the vaccine. That priority order will be communicated to LEAs and private schools who will be responsible for scheduling school staff for vaccine appointments.

Q: How will school staff members be contacted regarding vaccine scheduling?

A: School staff who will be prioritized for the first distribution will receive direction from their employers about completion of the email survey and should continue to monitor emails for communications regarding this program. Following registration, members will receive a confirmation email with instructions on what to bring with them when they arrive for their vaccinations.

Q: Will school staff members be able to choose a specific vaccine appointment date or time or reschedule if the scheduled appointment time is inconvenient?

A: School staff are being offered the opportunity to voluntarily receive the vaccine through this program. They will receive an email from their school administration allowing them to schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine at locations within their intermediate unit. Vaccination appointments will likely be scheduled between 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays and between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekends. School staff are encouraged to consider travel time to the appointments they schedule, allowing times later in the day to be used for staff members who will need to travel longer distances to the vaccine locations.

Q: What should I bring with me to my vaccine appointment?

A: Make sure to bring your photo ID, insurance cards, and anything else you're instructed to bring by your employer.

Q: Will there be a cost or copay associated with getting the vaccine?

A: No. The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States.

Q: After I'm vaccinated, can I stop wearing a mask and social distancing?

A: The short answer is No. Check out the CDC's website for frequently asked questions about vaccination. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>