



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**SAN FRANCISCO TO EXPAND COVID-19 VACCINATIONS TO  
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND SEVERE UNDERLYING  
CONDITIONS AND THOSE IN HIGH-RISK CONGREGATE  
SETTINGS ON MARCH 15**

*This expansion of eligibility in accordance with the State's prioritization plan comes as 27% of San Franciscans have received at least one dose of vaccine—a number that exceeds the state and federal percentages—demonstrating that, despite supply constraints, the City is reaching eligible populations*

**San Francisco, CA** — Starting on Monday, March 15, 2021, in accordance with the State's prioritization plan, San Francisco will begin vaccinating people ages 16-64 with disabilities or with qualifying health conditions considered to put them at high risk for contracting or dying from COVID-19. Additionally, under the State guidance, the City will vaccinate individuals who live or work in a high-risk congregate care facility including correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and other congregate residential care and treatment facilities. This will include all people experiencing homelessness, who could transition into congregate settings at a short notice.

Despite this expanded eligibility, vaccine doses remain in short supply, and healthcare providers have been advised to prioritize second doses in the coming weeks. As such, appointments for first vaccine doses are limited, and people who are eligible may not be able to get appointments right away.

“Getting vaccinations to people with disabilities and who have severe underlying conditions, and people who are in congregate settings, is an important part of our efforts to save lives and protect our most vulnerable residents,” said Mayor Breed. “Next week, we'll be moving forward with expanding vaccine access in San Francisco and we'll continue working with accessibility advocates and community members to make sure we are doing our best to reach everyone who is eligible. Although supply is still not at the level we need it to be, we're continuing to make good progress and we'll keep doing our best to get vaccines to people as quickly and conveniently as we can.”

Recognizing that defining eligibility based on specific qualifying health conditions may exclude individuals who are not currently receiving medical care or may create burdensome documentation requirements that would impact under-resourced clinics and communities, San Francisco is adopting eligibility criteria that expand on the California Department of Public Health's listed conditions and ensure low-barrier access to vaccines. Whereas the State more narrowly defines qualifying conditions, San Francisco will broaden the categories for cancer,



chronic kidney disease, chronic pulmonary disease, obesity, and diabetes. Additionally, San Francisco will augment the conditions under the immunocompromised category, so that people living with HIV are included. Other eligible underlying health conditions include Down syndrome, pregnancy, and sickle cell disease.

Roughly 10% of San Francisco's population identifies as Deaf or disabled, and in order to better serve this diverse population, the City will expand the State's category for disabilities to include developmental, medical, physical, sensory, or behavioral health disabilities, including severe mental health and/or substance use disorders. To ensure low-barrier access to vaccines, San Francisco will not require vaccination sites that do not have access to patients' medical records to require proof of diagnosis and/or disability. Instead, patients may be asked to provide a self-attestation of their qualifying condition.

"This is a great step in protecting members of our community who are at higher risk of contracting or dying from COVID-19," said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. "Many of those with underlying health conditions and disabilities or who are in congregate living settings have had to endure greater isolation this past year for fear of becoming gravely ill from COVID-19 and vaccinating this population is a critical step in protecting our city. With our robust ecosystem of high-volume sites, neighborhood sites, pharmacies, and mobile vaccination teams, we can ensure that there is an accessible option for every person eligible to receive the vaccine. And with the addition of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to the City's supply, people can get protection from severe illness and death from COVID-19 after just one dose and without needing to worry about the logistics of making and keeping a second-dose appointment."

Congregate settings such as jails, homeless shelters, and behavioral health facilities, which house large concentrations of individuals with chronic health conditions, are considered high-risk for COVID-19 outbreaks. In anticipation of the State's authorization to proceed with vaccinating people living in congregate settings and who are not able to easily access vaccination sites, the COVID Command Center and Department of Public Health coordinated a series of mobile vaccination pilot programs to test strategies for reaching this population, as well as to begin vaccinating these communities. These pilots will help the City scale up its efforts to reach eligible people when increased vaccine supply allows. The Department of Public Health will also work closely with organizations serving people experiencing homelessness and with disabilities to reach these communities.

People eligible to receive the vaccine on March 15 have multiple options for accessing the vaccine. They can ask their normal healthcare provider or book an appointment at one of the City's public sites listed at [SF.gov/getvaccinated](https://sf.gov/getvaccinated). Most walk-thru sites have drop-off zones and have wheelchair accommodations available onsite. Our City-operated high volume sites (Moscone Center, SF Market, City College) have video remote ASL interpreting capacity as well. Individuals are encouraged to visit [SF.gov/getvaccinated](https://sf.gov/getvaccinated) prior to their appointment for the most current accessibility and transportation information.

Muni and Paratransit are free for anyone traveling to and from COVID-19 vaccine appointments. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency is also providing additional access to taxi



service for those using the Essential Trip Card. Information can be found at [sfmta.com/COVID](https://sfmta.com/COVID) and [sfmta.com/Paratransit](https://sfmta.com/Paratransit). In order to assist individuals with accessing appointments, the City has set up a call center to help people who are 65 and older and those with disabilities who are unable to easily access the internet or schedule an appointment through their provider. Individuals may call to learn about vaccine options and receive assistance in booking an appointment to some locations. The number is (628) 652-2700.

“I am proud to be working in partnership with my Covid Command Center colleagues as we strive for the most barrier-free and accessible vaccination process possible,” said Nicole Bohn, Director of the Mayor’s Office on Disability. “We will continue working together until all San Franciscans with disabilities have had the opportunity to receive the vaccine, and can feel safe participating in our community again.”

In addition to expanding vaccine eligibility to people with disabilities and severe underlying conditions, San Francisco healthcare providers and the Department of Public Health continue to vaccinate people in Phase 1B, people 65 and older, and healthcare workers. To date, San Francisco has made the vaccine available to all healthcare workers in Phase 1A and 70% percent of San Franciscans 65 and older have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

In partnership with the healthcare providers in San Francisco, which are receiving the majority of the vaccine doses from the State, the City is facilitating the quick and efficient delivery of vaccines through high-volume vaccine sites, neighborhood vaccine access sites, community clinics, pharmacy partnerships, and mobile vaccination teams. This week, the high-volume site at Moscone Center reached a milestone of 100,000 doses administered. This network of COVID-19 vaccination sites in San Francisco provides the capacity to vaccinate at least 10,000 people per day, pending supply.

“In our planning for San Francisco’s vaccination sites, accessibility is a top priority. In addition to ensuring a concentration of locations within our most heavily impacted communities, we are also working to make sure sites are accessible to people with disabilities or mobility challenges. Designated pickup and drop off zones, accessible vaccination bays, sign language and interpretation capability, and clinical staff that assess a patient’s needs as they arrive are part of our plan to meet the needs of our diverse communities,” said Mary Ellen Carroll, Executive Director, San Francisco Department of Emergency Management. “As we build on our experience in serving people with disabilities during the initial phases of vaccine roll out, the City will make this life saving measure more accessible to San Franciscans.”

The insufficient and inconsistent supply of COVID-19 vaccine continues to be the biggest barrier for vaccinating people quickly in San Francisco. The increase in second-dose appointments puts additional strain on San Francisco’s COVID-19 vaccination network. As more people become eligible for their second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and supply does not increase significantly, healthcare providers are unable to offer as many first-dose appointments.

Over the last week, an average of more than 5,000 vaccine doses a day has been administered in San Francisco. Although this rate of vaccinations is lower than what San Francisco is capable of,



healthcare providers and DPH are still making good progress, with 27% of San Franciscans 16 and older having received their first dose, and are ready to ramp up vaccinations as supply increases and becomes more predictable.

San Francisco also remains committed to an equitable vaccination strategy, with a specific focus on reaching populations that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. To that end, the San Francisco Department of Public Health has been focused on reaching communities that have been hard-hit by the pandemic, including the Latino community and neighborhoods in the Southeast of the city. San Francisco has located high-volume sites and neighborhood vaccine access sites in areas that have carried the burden of the virus, and is implementing other strategies to reach the most vulnerable populations where they are, including mobile vaccination teams.

The vaccine dashboard shows DPH-controlled vaccine distribution, including by age and race/ethnicity and by neighborhood. The dashboard shows that DPH's focus on racial equity in vaccine distribution has been successful. A higher proportion of the DPH-administered vaccinations have gone to people of color than the total citywide vaccinations. For example, the Latino population represents 14% of the City's overall population and has received more than 20% of DPH's vaccinations compared with 10% citywide. The dashboard also shows that the top three neighborhoods receiving the largest amount of DPH-controlled vaccines are the Bayview, Mission and Excelsior.

Anyone who works or lives in San Francisco can sign up for a notification when they are eligible for vaccination at [SF.gov/vaccinenotify](https://sf.gov/vaccinenotify). The City will continue to provide regular updates to the public about the vaccine in San Francisco at: [SF.gov/covidvaccine](https://sf.gov/covidvaccine).

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