DHCS COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Provider FAQs
March 29, 2021

With the federal approval of COVID-19 vaccines, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is seeking federal approval to help support delivery of the vaccine to all Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The vaccine will be provided at no cost to all Californians.

DHCS will follow California's COVID-19 vaccination plan, which was approved by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). It calls for implementation in several phases: Pre-vaccine; limited doses available; larger number of doses available; and sufficient supply of doses available for the entire population. For further information on the state’s vaccination planning efforts please visit https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/.

California is leveraging its existing immunization framework and emergency response infrastructure to coordinate efforts among state, local, and territorial authorities to administer the vaccine. Throughout this effort, DHCS will share appropriate information with you and our providers, health plan partners, counties, other key stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

Consistent with the approach being taken by Medicare through Medicare Advantage Plans, DHCS will carve out the COVID-19 vaccine from Medi-Cal managed care health plans and will reimburse providers under the Fee-for-Service (FFS) delivery system for both medical and pharmacy claims. This approach will ease program administration, eliminate challenges with out-of-network provider reimbursements, and keep vaccine administration fee rates consistent for providers regardless of delivery system.

Medi-Cal proposes to reimburse the associated COVID-19 vaccine administration fee at the allowable Medicare rate for all claims (medical, outpatient, and pharmacy), based on the number of required doses. As the federal government will pay for the initial vaccines, there is no Medi-Cal provider reimbursement for the COVID-19 vaccine itself. Providers will bill for administration of the COVID-19 vaccine on medical, outpatient, or pharmacy claims, based on current policy. The Medicare administration rate DHCS is seeking differs from the current Medi-Cal pharmacy administration fee today. DHCS is also seeking federal approval to cover the cost of the vaccine administration for Medi-Cal beneficiaries who are in restricted scope coverage, the COVID-19 Uninsured population and enrollees of the Family Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment (Family PACT) program.

Additionally, DHCS is seeking federal approval to pay Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Centers, and Tribal 638 clinics for the vaccine administration fee outside of their current Prospective Payment System or All Inclusive Rate.

DHCS submitted all federal waiver requests on December 18, 2020 to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and has issued initial policy guidance on COVID-19 vaccine administration and our reimbursement policy. Policy and reimbursement guidance will be updated upon additional CMS guidance and/or approvals of requested waivers.

To address provider inquiries regarding the plan, these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been developed.
For further information on the state’s vaccination planning efforts please visit
https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/.

1. Who can healthcare providers give the vaccinations to?
   A. All providers must vaccinate individuals regardless of existing health coverage or the type of
      coverage. Providers are prohibited from balance billing or otherwise charging vaccine recipients.

2. What individuals are covered by Medi-Cal to get the vaccine?
   A. All full-scope Medi-Cal beneficiaries are covered and will receive the vaccine at no cost.
      DHCS is seeking federal approval to cover the cost of administering the vaccine to people
      enrolled in restricted-scope Medi-Cal; the COVID-19 Uninsured Group Program; and the Family
      Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment (FPACT) program.
3. **Who will be covering the vaccine immunization cost?**

   A. The initial supply of COVID-19 immunizations will be federally purchased, meaning DHCS will not provide Medi-Cal reimbursement for the vaccine itself. Please refer to the question below for information on the vaccine administration fee.

4. **Where can individuals get the vaccine?**

   A. Pharmacies, retail clinics, providers (including those enrolled in managed care plans), and any other sites of care receiving and administering COVID-19 vaccinations. Due to supply constraints, the vaccine will initially be rolled out in phases that include certain defined populations.

   Additional information can be found on the CDPH website: [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/COVID-19Vaccine.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/COVID-19Vaccine.aspx)

   The “My Turn” website tells Californians if they qualify to get the COVID vaccine and can be used to schedule appointments. Users submit information about their age and COVID-related risk factors and can sign up to be notified over text or email when it’s their turn to get vaccinated and then schedule appointments. Appointment scheduling is currently available in select counties and a statewide roll-out is planned.

   Additional information can be found at: [https://myturn.ca.gov/](https://myturn.ca.gov/)

5. **When can individuals get the vaccine?**

   A. California’s plan for administering the vaccine is split into phases. Moving forward, there will be a single statewide standard and movement through the tiers. The state will continue through 65+, health care workers, and prioritize emergency services, food and agriculture workers, teachers and school staff. Beginning March 15, healthcare providers may use their clinical judgement to vaccinate individuals aged 16-64 who are deemed to be at the very highest risk to get very sick from COVID-19 because they have certain medical conditions or disabilities. Beginning April 1, individuals aged 50+ will be eligible to make an appointment, and individuals aged 16+ will be eligible to make an appointment to be vaccinated starting on April 15. More details on the phases, including who is covered in each one, and on the vaccination roll-out in general are available on the vaccination section of the California for All COVID-19 website: [https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/](https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/).

   The “My Turn” website tells Californians if they qualify to get the COVID vaccine and schedule appointments. Users submit information about their age and COVID-related risk factors and can sign up to be notified over text or email when it’s their turn to get vaccinated and then schedule appointments. Appointment scheduling is currently available in select counties only and a statewide roll-out is planned.

6. **Is the vaccine safe?**

   A. COVID-19 vaccines were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. Many people were recruited to participate in these trials to see how the vaccines offer protection to people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions.
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reviewed the vaccines for their safety and effectiveness before granting Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for their use. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and its Advisory Committee for Immunizations (ACIP) has also reviewed the safety information of the approved vaccines.

In addition, California formed a Scientific Safety Review Work Group to independently review the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. Based on all these reviews, the vaccine is considered safe for use in Californians. Please refer to the CDPH COVID 19 Questions and Answers page for additional details.

FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to make sure even very rare side effects are identified. Health care providers are required to report certain adverse events following vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

CDC is also implementing a new smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check in on people’s health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. When you receive your vaccine, you should also receive a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll, you will receive regular text messages directing you to surveys where you can report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/

7. **What does Emergency Use Authorization mean for a vaccine?**

   A. In certain types of emergencies, such as with the current public health emergency, the FDA can issue an emergency use authorization, or EUA, to provide more timely access to critical medical products that may help during the emergency when there are no adequate, approved, and available alternative options.

   Under the EUA authority, the FDA evaluates requests for authorization very quickly using the evidence that is available, carefully balancing the risks and benefits of the product as we know them, in addition to evaluating other criteria. EUAs are in effect until the emergency declaration ends but can be revised or revoked as needs change during the emergency, or as products meet the criteria to become approved, cleared, or licensed by the FDA.

   Additional information can be found here: https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/ and CDPH COVID-19: Information for Laboratories

8. **How will safety be tracked?**

   A. After a vaccine is approved for use via Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), scientists and health professionals will continue to carefully monitor its use. The Vaccine Safety Datalink in the United States, which monitors many immunizations in California, is designed to report a safety problem in near real time so the public can be informed quickly of possible risks. Health care providers are required to report certain adverse events following vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

   When you receive your vaccine, you will also receive an information sheet telling you how to enroll in a program called v-safe that allows you to report problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Additionally, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC will continue to carefully monitor the safety of
COVID-19 vaccines to make sure that even very rare side effects are identified as early as possible. These are some of the ways that will help detect previously undetected issues related to the vaccines as early as possible.

9. How will it work if healthcare providers are not contracted/credentialed with DHCS?

A. The vaccine provider must be enrolled in Medi-Cal for purposes of obtaining reimbursement from DHCS for the vaccine administration fee. Medi-Cal providers who administer the vaccine to Medi-Cal beneficiaries will be reimbursed at the Medicare rate for the administration fee.

Additional information can be found here: [https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/PED.aspx](https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/PED.aspx)

10. What about Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Rural Health Clinics, (RHCs) and Tribal Clinics?

A. DHCS will pay the applicable Prospective Payment System (PPS)/All Inclusive Rate (AIR) if the vaccination is administered during an in-person visit that meets the requirements of a billable office visit in the clinic setting. If the vaccine administration does not meet all of the requirements of a billable visit (i.e. only vaccine administration), DHCS is seeking federal approval for the FQHC, RHC, and Tribal Clinic to bill Medi-Cal FFS for administering the COVID vaccine and be reimbursed the applicable dosage rate as noted above.

11. Will the vaccine administration fee be covered for all patients on Medi-Cal?

A. Yes. The vaccine administration fee will be covered for all Medi-Cal beneficiaries who have full-scope Medi-Cal. DHCS is seeking federal approval to cover the administration fee for Medi-Cal beneficiaries with restricted scope coverage, the COVID-19 Uninsured population and enrollees Family Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment (FPACT) program. Those who are dually eligible for both Medicare and Medi-Cal will generally be covered by Medicare.

Payment for the COVID-19 vaccine administration fee will be through the Medi-Cal Fee-for-Service delivery system for all covered populations, including those in Medi-Cal managed care plans.

Medi-Cal proposes to reimburse the associated COVID-19 vaccine administration fee at the allowable Medicare rate for all claims, medical and pharmacy, based on the number of required doses.

For vaccines administered on dates of service prior to and including March 14, 2021, Medi-Cal will reimburse the associated COVID-19 vaccine administration fee at the previously published maximum allowable reimbursement rate for providers based on the number of required doses: The maximum allowable rate for a single-dose vaccine is $28.39; the maximum for a double-dose vaccine is $16.94 for the initial dose and $28.39 for the final dose ($45.33 total).

For vaccines administered on or after March 15, 2021, Medi-Cal will set the maximum allowable reimbursement of the associated COVID-19 vaccine administration fee at $40.00 per dose, regardless of vaccine manufacturer.
12. Will immunization coverage apply to restricted scope group?

A. Yes. All vaccination providers must provide the vaccine regardless of coverage. DHCS is working on obtaining federal approval for immunization coverage for Medi-Cal beneficiaries in restricted scope coverage, individuals in the COVID-19 Uninsured program and individuals enrolled in the FPACT program.

13. What billing codes should be used?

A. DHCS will be using the American Medical Association Current Procedural Terminology or CPT® codes for reporting of immunizations for COVID-19. These CPT® codes are unique for each COVID-19 vaccine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine Name</th>
<th>Vaccine Code/Description</th>
<th>CPT® Vaccine Administration Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pfizer-BioNTech</td>
<td>91300</td>
<td>0001A (1st dose)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0002A (2nd dose)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderna</td>
<td>91301</td>
<td>0011A (1st dose)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Oxford–AstraZeneca</td>
<td>91302</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janssen</td>
<td>91303</td>
<td>0031A (Single Dose)</td>
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Additional information can be found here: [https://www.ama-assn.org/find-covid-19-vaccine-codes](https://www.ama-assn.org/find-covid-19-vaccine-codes)

14. How will vaccine information be disseminated?

A. DHCS will communicate updated immunization information to providers, stakeholders, health plans, county partners, and the community through strategies, such as:

- Developing written guidance for health plans, including All Plan Letters, as it relates to immunization distribution and reimbursement rates
- Provider notices/bulletins on the Medi-Cal website

General information can be found here: [covid19.ca.gov](https://covid19.ca.gov)

15. What is the best way to ensure that patients return for their second shot?

A. Providers are encouraged to explain the health benefits and outcomes associated with second shot administration. Before the patient leaves the office after their first dose, ensure they schedule an appointment for their second dose.

16. Where can healthcare providers enroll to become a vaccinator?

A. Pharmacies, retail clinics, providers, and any other sites of care must sign an agreement with the U.S. government to receive no-cost free supplies of the COVID-19 vaccine(s).
Under the agreement, all providers must vaccinate individuals regardless of existing health coverage or the type of coverage. Providers are prohibited from balance billing or otherwise charging vaccine recipients.

Providers interested in becoming part of the vaccine network may email CovidVaccineNetwork@BlueShieldca.com.

Once you have a signed contract with Blue Shield (the Third Party Administrator), a provider must enroll in Mycavax. Please visit https://mycavax.cdph.ca.gov to start the enrollment process to become a COVID 19 vaccine provider.

17. What information should be given to patients upon vaccination?

A. Before receiving the vaccine, patients must be provided with an Emergency Use Authorization fact sheet about the vaccine. After receiving the vaccine, patients must receive a vaccination card that identifies the brand of vaccine administered and the date their second vaccination (if applicable) is due.

For more information providers can email COVIDCallCenter@cdph.ca.gov or call (833) 502-1245, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

18. Where do I find general California guidance on COVID-19?

A. There are two California websites that offer general guidance on COVID-19. These are the California Coronavirus Response website and the California Department of Public Health website. Check both websites frequently, as resources are regularly updated and added. Below are the web addresses of each.
   - The California Coronavirus Response website is: covid19.ca.gov.
   - The California Department of Public Health website is: cdph.ca.gov/COVID19
   - The Centers for Disease Control website is: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/faq.html

19. Where do I find clinical information on the vaccines currently authorized in the United States?

A. Additional clinical information can be found at: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html

20. Should I bill for administration of the vaccine with both doses together, or separately for a 2-dose vaccine series?

A. Dose administrations may be billed separately, or together on the same claim, whichever fits the provider’s billing preferences and practices.

21. Will I be reimbursed for the administration of a single dose of a two-dose vaccine series (initial or final) if the Medi-Cal beneficiary I am administering to receives the other dose elsewhere?

A. There is no requirement for the same provider to administer both doses. Each dose is separately reimbursable. However, the manufacturer of the doses administered to a Medi-Cal beneficiary
must remain consistent between the first and second dose, regardless of the administering provider.

22. When billing for the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine for a Managed Care Plan enrollee, what ID should I list on the claim?

A. Because claims for the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine(s) are submitted to Medi-Cal fee-for-service fiscal intermediary for processing, providers must use the ID listed on a patient’s Beneficiary Identification Card (BIC). A Managed Care Plan ID is not recognized in the Medi-Cal fee-for-service system, so providers who bill using this ID may experience denials.

23. How do I verify a beneficiary’s Medi-Cal eligibility if they do not have their BIC card?

A. The patient should contact the county welfare office for BIC replacement. The county welfare office can also provide the beneficiary with their BIC, over the phone, to facilitate the immediate rendering of services, if needed.

24. What if a beneficiary’s BIC is lost or stolen?

A. The patient should contact their county welfare office for BIC replacement.

Additional Resources:

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/answering-questions.html
https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html
https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/COVID-19Vaccine.aspx
https://eziz.org/assets/docs/COVID19/CalVax-ProviderLogin.pdf
https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/faq.html
https://eziz.org/assets/other/IMM-1295.pdf