

COVID19 Vaccine Distribution and Essential Workers

Background

The **Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)** advises the Center for Disease Control on population groups and circumstances for vaccine use.

On December 1, ACIP recommended that 1) health care personnel and 2) residents of long-term care facilities be offered COVID-19 vaccination first, in Phase 1a of the vaccination program.

On December 20, 2020, ACIP recommended that in Phase 1b, vaccine should be offered to persons aged ≥ 75 years and frontline essential workers (non-health care workers), and that in Phase 1c, persons aged 65–74 years, persons aged 16–64 years with high-risk medical conditions, and essential workers not recommended for vaccination in Phase 1b should be offered vaccine.

These recommendations for phased allocation provide guidance for federal, state, and local jurisdictions while vaccine supply is limited. In its deliberations, ACIP considered scientific evidence regarding COVID-19 epidemiology, ethical principles, and vaccination program implementation considerations. ACIP's recommendations for COVID-19 vaccine allocation are interim and might be updated based on changes in conditions of FDA Emergency Use Authorization, FDA authorization for new COVID-19 vaccines, changes in vaccine supply, or changes in COVID-19 epidemiology.

Phase 1b

Essential workers perform duties across critical infrastructure sectors and maintain the services and functions that U.S. residents depend on daily. [The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency \(CISA\) of the US Department of Homeland Security](#) developed a list last year to guide jurisdictions in identifying essential workers who may be exempted during stay-at-home orders. ACIP used the CISA guidance to define frontline workers as a subset of essential workers likely at highest risk for work related COVID19 exposure because their work-related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in close proximity (< 6ft) to the public or to coworkers.

ACIP has classified the following non-healthcare essential workers as frontline workers: first responders (firefighters and police officers), correction officers, food and agriculture workers, U.S. Postal workers, manufacturing workers, grocery store workers, public transit workers, and those who work in the education sector (teachers and support staff members) as well as childcare workers.

Phase 1c

Essential worker sectors recommended for vaccination in this phase include those in transportation and logistics, water and wastewater, food service, shelter, and **housing** (e.g., construction), finance (e.g., bank tellers), information technology and communications, energy, legal, media, public safety (e.g., engineers) and public health workers.

Are Architects Covered?

It depends on your state vaccination distribution plans which can be found [here](#) or on your state's COVID19 vaccination webpage. **(Please check the state webpage for most up to date information.)** Since ACIP's recommendations are guidance, states can modify them as they see fit.

Architects do not need to be specifically named to fall under the definition of essential worker (which is defined as someone who performs duties across critical infrastructure sectors and maintain the services and functions that U.S. residents depend on daily). **Please focus on the activities.**

While architects are not specifically named in the [CISA guidance](#), they are covered on p. 23 under Residential/Shelter Facilities, Housing and Real Estate, and Related Services:

- *Workers performing housing and commercial construction related activities, including those supporting the sale, transportation, and installation of manufactured homes.*
- *Workers supporting government functions related to the building and development process, such as inspections, permitting, and plan review services that can be modified to protect the public health, but fundamentally should continue and enable the continuity of the construction industry (e.g., allow qualified private third-party inspections in case of federal government shutdown).*

If your state's vaccine priority list does not currently cover construction or construction related activities, there likely is an Advisory Council that can make recommendations to update the lists to the State's Department of Health or the State Public Health Officer.

If architects were covered under essential workers during the Stay-at-Home Orders issued in Spring of 2020, they should be covered in this instance as well. The state of California made updates to its vaccine priority lists on January 6th which have been changed on their website today and can be found [here](#). They added a tier to Phase 1b to include industrial, commercial, residential, and sheltering facilities and services which is further defined [here](#) thereby covering architects since they engage in the activities that fall under that description.

Sources

[The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Updated Interim Recommendation for Allocation of COVID19 Vaccine, United States, December 2020](#)

[The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Ethical Principles for Allocating Initial Supplies of COVID19 Vaccine, United States, December 2020](#)

ACIP's ethical principles for allocating initial supplies of COVID19 vaccines:

- Maximize benefits and minimize harms;
- Promote justice;
- Mitigate health inequalities; and
- Promote Transparency