



Interim Essential Industry Employer Guidance for Vaccinating North Carolinians (Posted February 4, Updated March 2, 2021)

This document provides guidance for employers of frontline essential workers on how to prepare for their staff being vaccinated in Group 3. **As North Carolina moves into future groups and additional vaccine becomes available, this guidance will be updated to add information.**

Overview of North Carolina's COVID-19 Vaccine Plan

A tested, safe and effective vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies are limited for now. To save lives and slow the spread of COVID-19, independent state and federal public health advisory committees made recommendations for who to vaccinate first based on limited supplies of vaccine being available.

Our goal is to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible. However, given the very limited supply of vaccines, many people who are eligible for vaccination may need to wait. North Carolina has prioritized vaccination in the following groups (see [infographic](#)).

On February 10th, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) announced plans for how the state will move to Group 3 for COVID-19 vaccines. Because supply is still very limited and the population of frontline essential workers is so large, we will begin with anyone working in child care or in PreK – 12 schools starting on February 24th. On March 3rd, eligibility was opened to all frontline essential workers.





Who is Eligible for Group 3?

Frontline essential workers will be eligible to be vaccinated as part of Group 3. Frontline Essential Workers are workers in 8 essential industry sectors (as recommended by a federal advisory committee), who are at substantially higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 because their work requires them to work indoors and/or in close contact with others. Specifically, the 8 essential sectors are Critical Manufacturing, Education, Essential Goods, Food & Agriculture, Government and Community Services, Health Care and Public Health, Public Safety, and Transportation.

Table 1

Critical Manufacturing	Education	Essential Goods	Food & Agriculture	Government and Community Services	Health Care and Public Health	Public Safety	Transportation
Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers manufacturing medical supplies, medical equipment or PPE Workers manufacturing products needed for food and agricultural supply chains 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care staff K-12 teachers and support staff College and university instructors and support staff 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers in stores that sell groceries and medicine 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meat packing workers Food processing workers Farmworkers Migrant farm/fishery workers Food distribution and supply chain workers Restaurant workers 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Postal Service Workers and other shipping workers Court workers Elected officials Clergy Homeless shelter staff 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public health workers Social workers 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Firefighters and EMS Law enforcement Corrections workers Security officers Public agency workers responding to abuse and neglect 	Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public transit workers Division of Motor Vehicles workers Transportation maintenance and repair technicians Workers supporting highway infrastructure

Employees that can answer **yes** to **both** questions below are considered frontline essential workers and will be eligible to receive their vaccination in Group 3.

- Is my place of employment one of the 8 essential sectors listed in Table 1 (critical manufacturing, education, essential goods, food & agriculture, government and community services, health care and public health, public safety and transportation)?
 - Please note if you think your job falls under one of the 8 essential industry sectors but do not see it listed above, you may still be eligible as a frontline essential worker. The list of professions in Table 1 are examples and is not the complete list of professions that may be considered frontline essential workers in [Group 3](#). For more information on the types of professions that are eligible in each of the 8 essential industry sectors, please reference the federal [CISA guidance](#).
 - Note: Employees in any sector in the CISA guidance that is not one of the 8 essential industry sectors listed in Table 1 (such as chemical and energy sectors) will be eligible for vaccination as part of [Group 4](#).
- Do I have to be in-person at my work site?

Very limited supply of vaccines will likely result in employers and employees needing to wait for their vaccine appointments, but everyone will have a chance to take their shot when their priority group is eligible.



Who is Eligible for Group 4?

The following groups of employees will be eligible for vaccination in Group 4:

- Employees who work in one of the 8 essential industry sectors listed above in Table 1, who **do not** have to be in-person at their work site are included in this group.
- Employees that work in additional sectors in the CISA guidance. Please review NCDHHS Deeper Dive for [Group 4](#), for a full list of essential worker sectors.

Note: Group 4 also includes individuals who are 16 to 64 years old with high-risk medical conditions that increase risk of severe disease from COVID-19 and individuals who are incarcerated or living in close group living settings (who are not already vaccinated due to age, medical condition, or job function). The state will be moving to Group 4 on March 24th, beginning with individuals with medical conditions and those living in certain congregate settings.

How Employers Can Help

- 1. Encourage your frontline employees to get vaccinated:** Identify the subset of your employees who must work onsite to do their job. Because of the high risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread of the illness among these frontline workers due to their constant close contact with others, it is extremely important to encourage frontline essential workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccination to protect their health. One of the key actions employers can take is to share information that the vaccine is safe and effective.

Additionally, employers can talk to their employees about the importance of the vaccine for their own health and the health of their families and communities. Frontline essential employees' work is critical to the infrastructure of our society and puts the employees at increased risk of exposure. Vaccine information should be given to employees in their [native languages](#), whenever possible, using clear language and trusted means of communication.

Leaders and employees in your company can attend a vaccine 101 presentation so that they can help direct employees to trusted sources of information. Please submit a request using [NCDHHS's form](#) if your company/organization is interested in helping to organize a vaccine 101 presentation led by NCDHHS presenters.

See **Appendix 1** for more examples and resources to share with employees.

- 2. Offer to work with your local vaccination providers.** While vaccine supply is limited, the number of providers that have vaccine will be limited and will primarily be the local health departments, hospital and health systems, and a smaller number of community providers, such as community health centers and federally qualified health centers. Local health departments (LHDs) may reach out to coordinate vaccinations across local enrolled vaccine providers (e.g., hospitals and health systems or community health centers). Our vaccine providers are working very hard to vaccinate as many North Carolinians as quickly as possible, so some vaccine providers may be ready to work with major employers in their jurisdiction to facilitate or host a



vaccination events for employees. However, some vaccine providers may ask employers to wait and may not be ready to open to Group 3 at the same time as other providers. Their readiness will depend on available vaccine supply, which can change each week as the state finds out how much vaccine is allocated statewide, and vaccine demand in Groups 1 and 2.

- 3. Consider what type of vaccination model would work best for the organization and the employees.** There are several ways that employers can help their employees who are frontline essential workers get vaccinated. Below are potential vaccination models that employers can discuss with their local vaccine provider(s) to determine what model will work best for their staff and local context. Many of our local vaccine providers have been vaccinating for many weeks and have developed processes that will look different across the state. The model that your local vaccine provider can implement will depend significantly on how much vaccine is available.

	← Employer most involved Employer least involved →				
	Occupational Health	Onsite Vaccine Event	Vaccine Event with Local Vaccine Provider	Employee Pre-Registration	Employee Independently Vaccinated
Vaccinator	Occupational health	Partnered local vaccine provider	Partnered local vaccine provider	Any enrolled vaccine provider	Any enrolled vaccine provider
Employer Role <i>Italics indicates optional employer role</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify employees Encourage vaccination & set expectations Register (org portal) Schedule Vaccinate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with local provider Identify employees Encourage vaccine & set expectations Supply event space & needs (e.g., WiFi) <i>Pre-register (org portal)</i> <i>Fill reserved appt slots</i> <i>Notify of appt time and instructions</i> <i>Support event staffing (e.g., traffic control, registration)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with local provider Identify employees Encourage vaccine & set expectations <i>Pre-register (org portal)</i> <i>Fill reserved appt slots</i> <i>Notify of appt time and instructions</i> <i>Help organize event (e.g., space, partners)</i> <i>Support event staffing (e.g., traffic control, registration)</i> <i>Connect employees to transportation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify employees Encourage vaccine & set expectations Pre-register (org portal) Share info about how to get vaccinated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Encourage vaccine & set expectations</i> <i>Share info about how to get vaccinated</i>

- 4. Offer reminders and assistance to your employees to get vaccinated.**
- a. **Reminders** - Employers can proactively identify their frontline essential workers and alert them that they will be eligible to be vaccinated, while also setting expectations that they may need to wait for an appointment because of limited vaccine supplies.
 - b. **Transportation** - If vaccinations are not available at the work site, providing transportation resources to employees can decrease barriers to accessing vaccines. Employers can assist with transportation for employees in the following ways:
 - i. Employers can offer employees transportation to and from vaccine sites.
 - ii. Employers can also share information about local transit authorities that can assist people needing transportation to a vaccination site. Local transit agencies are receiving \$2.5 million



in funds to help pay for rides for individuals who need transportation assistance to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. People who need transportation assistance to a COVID-19 vaccine should reach out to their local transit agency (a list of local transit agencies can be found at the [NC DOT website](#)).

- c. **Leave** - Offer paid time off or sick leave to allow employees to get vaccinated and if they have temporary reactions after the vaccine (e.g. fatigue, headache, fever) that makes it hard to work for 24-48 hours after a vaccination. Consider a staggered schedule to avoid multiple employees experiencing temporary reactions at the same time. (See **Appendix 2** for more information)
- d. **Assistance in scheduling** – Help with the registration process or on-line scheduling (access to Wi-Fi, assistance with translation) to help employees make appointments for vaccinations.

SUMMARY OF ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Employers**
 - Initiate employee outreach steps (see Appendix 1 for more examples)
 - Encourage your employees to take their shot when it is available to them
 - Share general information about where and how employees can get vaccinated
 - Set expectations that supplies are limited, so employees may have to wait
 - Identify and notify employees about their vaccine eligibility.
 - Take steps to coordinate with local vaccine providers (see details in **Appendix 3**) and consider what vaccination model would work best for your situation
 - Offer assistance and resources to help your employees get vaccinated
- **Employees**
 - Talk to your organization’s leadership about how they are planning to vaccinate staff
 - Use online tools to contact your local vaccine provider to get an appointment
 - NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center: 1-877-490-6642. It’s a free call.
 - [Find My Spot](#): Easy to use online tool to help individuals find their spot to get a vaccination in NC, including vaccine provider locations and contact information. North Carolinians enter their ZIP code or current location to find nearby vaccine providers. The Find a Vaccine Location tool will be updated regularly with the latest available data. Users should contact vaccine providers directly to confirm availability and schedule appointments.
- **Vaccine Providers**
 - Reach out to employers in your community to develop partnerships and identify which model would be to implement



Appendix 1. Informational Resources and Templates Employee Communication

Share information and resources with your employees on how they can find their spot to take their shot.

Employers should also encourage employees to be patient because there is not enough vaccine in North Carolina to vaccinate as many people that want a vaccine in the eligible groups at the beginning.

- [Find My Group](#): Easy to use online tool to help North Carolinians know when they will be eligible to get their vaccine. Find My Vaccine Group walks users through a series of questions to determine which vaccine group they are in. People can also sign up to be notified when their group is active.
- [Find My Spot](#): Easy to use online tool to help individuals find their spot to get a vaccination in NC, including vaccine provider locations and contact information. North Carolinians enter their ZIP code or current location to find nearby vaccine providers. The Find a Vaccine Location tool will be updated regularly with the latest available data. Users should contact vaccine providers directly to confirm availability and schedule appointments.
- NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center: 1-877-490-6642. It's a free call.

Potential ways to educate your employees about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Send employee letters, text messages or email blasts (see template responses at the end of the document below)
- Schedule meetings with team members that share a common native language to learn about the vaccine plan
- Display posters and other printed materials in places where most workers frequent
- Post vaccine information on your company's social media or worksite television monitors
- Partner with trusted community leaders to promote getting your vaccine when it's your turn

Additional resources to share with your employees about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- NCDHHS COVID-19 vaccination [Website](#)
- Flyers, fact sheets, social graphics from our Vaccine Communications Toolkit ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Frequently Asked Questions ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Presentation COVID-Vaccination 101 ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- PSA Videos on COVID-19 Vaccine ([YouTube](#))
- CDC's COVID-19 Vaccine [Website](#)

Template Email to Eligible Employees:

To be sent once North Carolina moves to Group 3

Dear <NAME>,

As you may know, the State of North Carolina's COVID-19 Vaccine plan now includes all Frontline Essential Workers in Group 3. Frontline Essential Workers are defined as individuals 1) who work in one of eight essential industry sectors and 2) whose job requires that they work on-site. In your current role at <COMPANY NAME>, we are reaching out to inform you that you qualify as a Frontline Essential Worker and, as such, you are eligible for



vaccination in Group 3. However, because vaccine supplies are very limited right now, there may be a wait to schedule your appointment to get your vaccine.

We strongly recommend that you get the vaccine when it is available to you. For your information, we have included some more information about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccinations that are currently available in the US:

- Scientists had a head start. The vaccines were built upon years of work to develop vaccines for similar viruses.
- The vaccines are tested, safe and effective. Vaccines were found to help prevent COVID-19 and are effective in preventing hospitalization and death, with no serious safety concerns noted in the clinical trials.
- You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. You may have temporary reactions like a sore arm, headache, or feeling tired and achy for a day or two after receiving the vaccine.
- Take your shot at no cost. The COVID-19 vaccine is available for free, whether or not you have insurance.

Template Email to Eligible Employees on how to get Vaccinated:

Vaccines are being offered at **<insert name of hospital/health system, local health department, community health center that is an enrolled vaccine provider>**. Here are your next steps for getting vaccinated:

[Work with your local vaccine provider to determine which of the following options are available to your employees]:

- Go to <insert website> and call one of the local vaccine providers on the list; OR
- Respond to this message indicating your interest in being vaccinated against COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccination team will contact you about when and where you can get vaccinated; OR
- Schedule a vaccination appointment by calling <insert phone number>; OR
- Schedule a vaccination appointment by taking the following steps in your electronic chart <insert instructions>; OR
- Attend walk-in hours at the following times and locations: <insert information>
 - *Note: Plan ahead and be careful when using this option due to the potential for crowded vaccination events or prolonged wait time for elderly patients*

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact <<insert contact person>> with questions or concerns.



Appendix 2. Information on Staggering Employees from CDC

Data from COVID-19 vaccine trials indicate that most side effects are mild. Most occur within the first 3 days of vaccination (the day of vaccination and the following 2 days, with most occurring the day after vaccination), resolve within 1–2 days, and are more frequent and severe following the second dose. At this time, we do not know how common these symptoms may be among employees. Nonetheless, we expect that most employees who experience symptoms following vaccination will not need to miss work.

However, some employees who get vaccinated may have side effects, like fever, and might need to miss work temporarily. CDC understands concerns about potential workforce shortages resulting from vaccine side effects. Workplaces may consider staggering schedules for employees who receive vaccination so that not all employees are vaccinated on the same day.

In addition, staggering may be more important for the second dose, after which side effects seem more frequent. To help ensure continuity of operations, facilities may consider staggering vaccination for employees in the same job category or who work in the same area of a facility. Staggering vaccination for employees may cause delays in vaccinating your staff, and the decision to stagger vaccination will need to be weighed against potential inconveniences that might reduce vaccine acceptance. Facilities should evaluate their specific situation when determining their best approach. Facilities that choose to stagger vaccine administration should also ensure all employees receive 2 doses as recommended.

Please see [CDC Guidance](#) for further information.



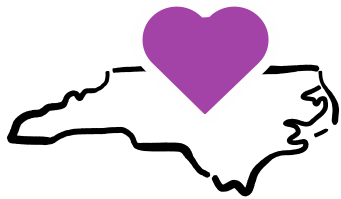
Appendix 3. Steps to Coordinate with Local Providers

Employers that are working with vaccine provider(s) in their area to implement models 1 or 2 may be able to take the following additional steps. **Before taking any of these steps below, talk to your vaccine provider(s) about what this will look like in your community.**

Coordinate with Vaccine Providers	
<p>Notify employees of reserved appointments and help schedule when possible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your local vaccine provider is able to set aside appointments specifically for your employees, work with them to fill those slots by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alerting employees of times/dates of appointments/events that are available to them and how they can sign up ○ Providing assistance for registration process or on-line scheduling (access to Wi-Fi, assistance with translation, email set-up) ○ Sending reminders to staff about upcoming vaccine events <p>NOTE: When helping to schedule appointments, consider that you may need to stagger employees on different days</p>
<p>Provide transportation for employees to vaccination events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer employees transportation to and from vaccine sites • Share information about local transit authorities that can assist people needing transportation to a vaccination site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People who need transportation assistance to a COVID- 19 vaccine should reach out to their local transit agency (a list of local transit agencies can be found at the NC DOT website).
<p>Organize vaccine event logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with your local vaccine provider to determine whether a vaccine event for your employees is the right model for vaccinating your staff. If so, you can help identify a facility that has basic amenities or features, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Running water, electricity, heat/air conditioning ○ Toilet and handwashing facilities ○ Reliable cell phone service ○ Wireless internet (this is particularly important for vaccine providers to be able to register people in CVMS and do data entry) ○ Tables and chairs ○ Basic beverage and food provision for vaccinators and volunteers ○ Heavy-duty tents for shelter (if outdoor) ○ ADA accessibility • Consider using your facilities or office spaces



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider partnering with organizations (e.g., faith organizations, community centers) that have available space for vaccine events
<p>Support vaccination event staffing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with your local vaccine provider to determine whether a vaccine event is the right model for your staff. If so, you can support vaccine events for your employees (e.g., offering volunteers who can support check-in and check-out, parking/traffic control). • Identify volunteers who can support with the following types of tasks at a vaccine event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scheduling vaccine appointments for your event ○ Calling and confirming appointments ○ Greeting, temperature checks, symptom screening ○ Parking and traffic control ○ Check-in table and confirmation of appointment ○ Check-out and second dose scheduling ○ Interpreters • <i>Please note: In most cases, vaccine providers (NOT community organizations) should plan to staff the following components of vaccine events: registration in CVMS, vaccine storage and handling, vaccine administration, post-vaccination monitoring, and data entry. Vaccine providers may also guide/support other activities as needed.</i>



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Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.

