

NEWS & INSIGHTS

Some mortuary workers are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine under Pennsylvania's distribution plan

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The below information is current as of the publication date listed. Because COVID-19 response measures on all fronts are continually evolving, clients should stay alert to new developments and consult with counsel on any critical questions.

On January 8, 2021, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) issued a [revised COVID-19 Interim Vaccination](#)

[Plan](#), which now includes “mortuary” workers among those currently eligible to receive the vaccine.

Under the DOH plan, COVID-19 vaccines will be distributed to Pennsylvanians in a phased approach. The state is currently in Phase 1A, during which only small initial allocations of vaccine are available. Initially, vaccination in this phase was limited to health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities. Prior versions of the plan included those providing “mortuary care for deceased COVID patients” in Phase 1B.

The revised plan expands the definition of health care personnel to include persons “not directly involved in patient care but potentially exposed to infectious material that can transmit disease among or from health care personnel and patients,” including those providing mortuary services in health care settings.

This definition would include in Phase 1A funeral directors and other staff who may perform removals from hospitals, nursing homes, long term-care facilities, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation facilities, and home healthcare settings. It is unclear whether other funeral home, cemetery, or crematory staff, who do not enter a health care facility are also included.

The inclusion of all death care personnel in Phase 1A would be consistent with the [Framework for Equitable Allocation of Vaccine for the Novel Coronavirus](#) developed by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine at the request of the Centers for Disease Control and National Institutions of Health. That consensus report of health authorities recommended that “morticians, funeral home workers, and other death care professionals involved in handling bodies” be included in Phase 1A of vaccine distribution.

The DOH has [compiled a spreadsheet](#) of health care facilities and pharmacies who have received doses of the vaccine. As of the date of this publication, the list was updated through January 8, 2021. Further updates may be posted on the DOH’s [COVID-19 Vaccine Providers](#) website under “COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution” at the bottom of the page or on the DOH’s [COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#) website.

The DOH’s revised vaccination plan supersedes the State Board of Funeral Directors [vaccine status update](#), which was also issued on January 8, 2021 and indicated that funeral directors were listed in Phase 1B based on a prior version of the plan.

Saxton & Stump attorney [Jason Benion](#) is available to assist death care businesses and professionals with these and other issues regarding operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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