

Philadelphia Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

UPDATE JULY 1, 2021

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Executive Summary:

As vaccine supply has remained steady and more Philadelphians have been vaccinated, the strategy has shifted from a mass vaccination approach to a localized, tailored approach that pairs vaccination services with outreach efforts to successfully engage persons who have not yet been vaccinated and makes vaccination convenient and accessible in low vaccination areas of the City. We have utilized a data-driven intentional strategy to address the initial disparities in vaccination rates seen among Black and Latino city residents. This strategy has helped to address these disparities, particularly among people 45 and over, but differences remain among younger city residents. The City is prioritizing the operation of clinics and availability of vaccine in areas with lower vaccination rates, which are predominantly Black and Brown communities, in partnership with trusted community-based organizations.

- As of July 1, 72% of adults in Philadelphia have had at least 1 dose of vaccine and 58% are fully vaccinated.
- Philly Counts has launched its Vaccine Information Champions program to recruit and train community members to promote vaccine education and access.
- Nine providers have been awarded funding and are holding vaccination events at community sites. A calendar of vaccination events is available [here](#).
- The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) and the Philadelphia Fire Department (PFD) continue to operate community vaccination clinics, as well as pop-up vaccination events, in areas of high need. The City is also implementing a microsite vaccination strategy, which aims to anchor small, recurring vaccination clinics in familiar, community-based settings in neighborhoods with lower vaccination rates and fewer vaccination providers.
- PDPH created a [registry](#) and referral program to schedule in-home vaccination services through a network of providers for people who are homebound and their caregivers and families. Over 500 referrals have been made since the program launched in May.
- To motivate more Philadelphians to get vaccinated, incentives are being offered at an increasing number of clinics and events. Most notably, the City announced the [Philly Vax Sweepstakes](#) in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania, where Philadelphians who have been vaccinated have the chance to win cash prizes totaling nearly \$400,000.
- In the last 15 months, we have learned to anticipate racial and ethnic disparities in every phase of the response, and more importantly, to put plans into place to prevent them, including partnering with trusted community leaders and organizations and regularly monitoring data to identify any areas of our response that need immediate adjustment. We are building that process not only into our pandemic response, but into our other public health and preparedness work.

Introduction

Fifteen months after the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Philadelphia, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Three highly effective COVID-19 vaccines have been approved for use and are being shipped in consistent quantities to the city. A growing number of providers are administering those doses to an increasing number of Philadelphians, through various mechanisms and channels. And all Philadelphians ages 12 and up now have the opportunity to be vaccinated. In the six months since vaccine first arrived in Philadelphia, the City has administered nearly 1.7 million doses of vaccine and achieved President Biden's goal to provide at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to 70% of adults by July 4.

On November 16, 2020, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) published a 130-page "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Vaccination Plan." Much of this plan was tentative, because so much was unknown at the time about which vaccines would be approved for use, what populations they would be approved for, and how many doses would be received by the City of Philadelphia. Then on January 19, 2021, after more was known about vaccine availability, PDPH published a ["Philadelphia COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan"](#) that offered more specificity on how the vaccine would be distributed in Phases 1a and 1b. Beginning March 3, PDPH has issued monthly updates on the earlier Vaccine Distribution Plan to articulate new strategies for increasing vaccination services throughout the city. Those documents have provided a further update on the plan through the end of May, as well as a progress report on vaccinations. On April 11, Philadelphia surpassed one million doses of COVID-19 vaccine administered in 17 weeks. In concert with President Biden's direction to open vaccination eligibility to all adults by April 19, Philadelphia entered Phase 2 on April 16.

As of July 1, 72% of Philadelphia residents 18 years of age and older have had at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 58% are fully vaccinated. While this demonstrates the great successes of the provider community, more people must be vaccinated to curb future waves of the pandemic. As vaccine shipments to the city have remained consistent and demand has decreased with the increasing number of vaccinated residents, vaccine availability is no longer the major barrier to vaccine access. With the goal of improving the equitable distribution of vaccine clinics, PDPH is using vaccination rates at the census tract level to better position vaccination events to reach people who are interested in being vaccinated closer to home. While ZIP code level data are helpful in detecting larger trends, this finer level data identifies pockets of communities with low vaccination rates in ZIP codes of higher rates. These data are also shared with community partners to guide their planning and activities.

Achieving equitable vaccine distribution requires intentional strategies to reach subpopulations in the city who face a higher risk of serious disease and death from COVID-19 and who are likely to face significant barriers to vaccination. This includes people living in congregate facilities, homebound seniors, people living with disabilities, immigrants/those with limited English proficiency, and Black and Brown people, who have experienced historic discrimination.

In recent weeks, PDPH has expanded and bolstered its outreach initiatives in collaboration with numerous community partners to further engage with populations that have had limited vaccination opportunities or may not be confident yet in the safety of the vaccine. These initiatives have included the launch of Philly Counts trainings of community leaders for citywide canvassing, the training of a team of youth ambassadors to educate and promote vaccinations among teenagers through Philly Teen Vaxx, and the PDPH mobile vaccination unit, which partners with community organizations to host clinics in areas of low vaccination rates. This plan provides an overview of vaccine distribution and outreach and engagement strategies in Philadelphia.

Progress to Date

PROVIDERS AND MECHANISMS FOR VACCINE ADMINISTRATION

To achieve sustainable and equitable COVID-19 vaccine access across the city, PDPH has built a broad vaccine administration network, largely comprised of healthcare providers, along with numerous community partners, including the Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium which has operated multiple large-scale clinics each week since January. To enroll as COVID-19 vaccination providers, organizations must meet requirements established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for vaccine handling and complete a CDC provider enrollment agreement. As part of this process, providers must meet rigorous vaccine storage and handling requirements, as well as document the ability to electronically report immunization data within 24 hours using systems approved by PDPH. As of June 28, 325 provider sites were enrolled to receive vaccines.

Philadelphia now has sufficient quantities of vaccine for residents interested in vaccination. While only limited vaccine and vaccination options were available in earlier months, many vaccination mechanisms have expanded and new mechanisms employed to increase accessibility, particularly to communities that previously have had limited vaccination opportunities and people who may not yet feel confident in the vaccine. Current vaccination mechanisms are as follows:

Hospitals/health systems

All acute care hospitals have vaccinated their own health care workers in their occupational health units. In addition, several hospitals are operating community-located mass vaccination clinics and pop-up events, often in partnership with faith-based organizations or other community-based partners. Many hospitals have also dedicated certain events to specific populations, such as the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) clinics for teachers, school support staff, and childcare workers, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital's specially designed clinic for persons with intellectual disabilities, and Temple University Hospital's clinics for Philadelphia Housing Authority frontline essential workers, among others.

Pharmacies

Independent and retail pharmacies account for a large proportion of vaccines administered to Philadelphians and allow for people to visit their own local pharmacy close to home. Through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program, eight large retail pharmacies, including Rite Aid, Walgreens, CVS, Acme, ShopRite, Giant, Sam's Club, and Walmart, are enrolled as providers and are offering vaccine at numerous locations across the city. An increasing number of independent pharmacies have also completed CDC provider agreements and have vaccine to offer in their stores, with 57 enrolled as of June 28. Both retail and independent pharmacies have partnered with facilities and community-based organizations to provide on-site vaccinations to high-risk and hard-to-reach populations. PDPH continues to work with pharmacies to improve the equity of their response by connecting them with community sites in low vaccination areas and promoting other strategies that improve access such as evening and weekend hours and walk-in vaccinations.

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other outpatient clinics

PDPH is providing vaccine to approximately 56 FQHC sites and other outpatient clinics, initially to vaccinate their own staff and unaffiliated healthcare workers, and now to vaccinate patients. Some clinics are also offering vaccination services to local community members, who may not be patients. Many of these clinics are located in areas with low vaccination rates and offer convenient options for people in trusted settings. Since April 21, four PDPH Health Centers have been holding “[Walk-up Wednesdays](#).” Beginning July 7, these same locations will offer walk-up vaccination on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:00am to 1:30pm:

- Health Center 3 Annex (4219 Chester Ave., 19104)
- Health Center 5 Berks Street Annex (2001 W. Berks St., 19121)
- Health Center 6 Annex (301 W. Girard Ave., 19123)
- Health Center 10, East Side Courtyard entrance (2230 Cottman Ave., 19149)

PDPH Health Centers are also offering vaccination to children ages 12 and older.

Community Providers

Vaccination events directed and operated by community providers have grown in recent months. Community-based vaccination opportunities provide convenient options in familiar locations with trusted messengers endorsing and supporting vaccination. Since January, the Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium (BDCC) has been operating regular community-based large vaccination clinics. This trusted and high-volume provider has prioritized offering vaccination services to Black and Brown individuals who have been the hardest hit by COVID-19, particularly in areas of the city that have had limited vaccination opportunities. To expand the number of community-based vaccination providers, the City partnered with the Philadelphia Mental Health Care Corporation (PMHCC) to offer funding for vaccination services through a COVID-19 Community Vaccination Program Request for Proposals (RFP). A total of nine organizations have been awarded funding:

- Albert Einstein Medical Center
- Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium
- CityLife Health
- Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Inc.
- Penn Medicine
- Puentes de Salud
- Temple University, Katz School of Medicine
- Temple College of Public Health
- Thomas Jefferson University Hospital

Recent highlights, among others, from some of the RFP-funded organizations include: Temple College of Public Health partnering with Prevention Point Philadelphia to host community clinics in Kensington; Temple University's Katz School of Medicine partnering with Bebashi and Miriam Medical Clinics to host a vaccination event to encourage more Black and Brown persons to be vaccinated; and incentivized clinics, such as Thomas Jefferson University Hospital's collaboration with South Philly Barbacoa where individuals receiving their first vaccination receive a free taco, Penn Medicine's collaboration with the Philadelphia Flyers to provide vouchers for two free tickets to a game next season for persons who were vaccinated at their clinic, and Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium's partnership with the 76ers to give away 500 free tickets to persons getting vaccinated at two of their clinics. Community providers will continue to adapt their approaches to vaccination as the response progresses.

PDPH mobile teams

PDPH has been deploying mobile teams to vaccinate healthcare staff on-site at large facilities that are not affiliated with a health system, such as inpatient behavioral health facilities. Operations continue to occur in other congregate settings, such as group homes, shelters, and recovery centers, where vaccination opportunities are offered to both staff and clients. PDPH has conducted outreach to all of these sites to determine the need for vaccination services and has operated over 100 vaccination clinics for persons living and working in congregate settings. As the need for vaccination in congregate settings has tapered off, the mobile team has been deploying to pop-up clinics and other community-based settings. In addition, PDPH has been deploying small strike teams to areas such as McPherson Square to offer vaccine to persons who may be experiencing homelessness.

Mass vaccination events

The City of Philadelphia continues to operate community mass vaccination events throughout the city on a rotating basis Monday-Saturday. As of May 25, daily operations at the Center City Vaccination Center (Convention Center) and Esperanza Community Vaccination Center have concluded, although Esperanza has been incorporated into the PDPH community site rotation. Clinics are currently being held at the following locations:

- Martin Luther King Older Adult Center in North Philadelphia (19121)
- Esperanza in Hunting Park (19140)
- Simon Gratz High School in Nicetown-Tioga (19140)
- University of the Sciences in West Philadelphia (19104)
- Grand Yesha Ballroom in South Philadelphia (19145)
- South Philadelphia High School (19148)
- A PFD facility at 7800 Ogontz Ave. in West Oak Lane/Mt. Airy (19150)

These locations were selected based on proximity to high priority zip codes that are under-vaccinated and have high vulnerability due to population demographics, as well as features of the individual host facilities, such as sufficient square footage and accessibility. Depending on its size, each clinic has a maximum throughput of 300-500 persons per day. Individuals may schedule an appointment for these clinics by visiting www.phila.gov/vaccine or calling the COVID-19 Call Center at (215) 685-5488. Walk-ups are also welcome at all clinics. PDPH community clinics offer both Pfizer and J&J vaccines. Other organizations have similarly operated community-based large clinics, including hospitals (see above) and the Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium.

Pop-up clinics

As overall volume has decreased at some of the mass vaccination sites, PDPH and PFD have begun to operate more pop-up clinics in communities that have low vaccination rates and high vulnerability. PDPH and PFD have also been offering pop-up clinics at events and have supported larger initiatives, such as the All Faiths Vaccination Campaign.

Vaccination Microsites

PDPH is also in the process of identifying locations with interest and capacity in hosting vaccination microsites, which are small, regularly occurring vaccination clinics that may be co-located with a partner organization or set up in a storefront property. The microsite concept is to make vaccine easily accessible and convenient in highly trafficked pedestrian areas that are in low vaccination neighborhoods with few vaccination providers. The concept has been successfully piloted with Neighborhoods United Against Drugs in Southwest Philadelphia and Action Wellness in North Philadelphia. PDPH is currently planning with other organizations to launch a group of microsites in mid-July.

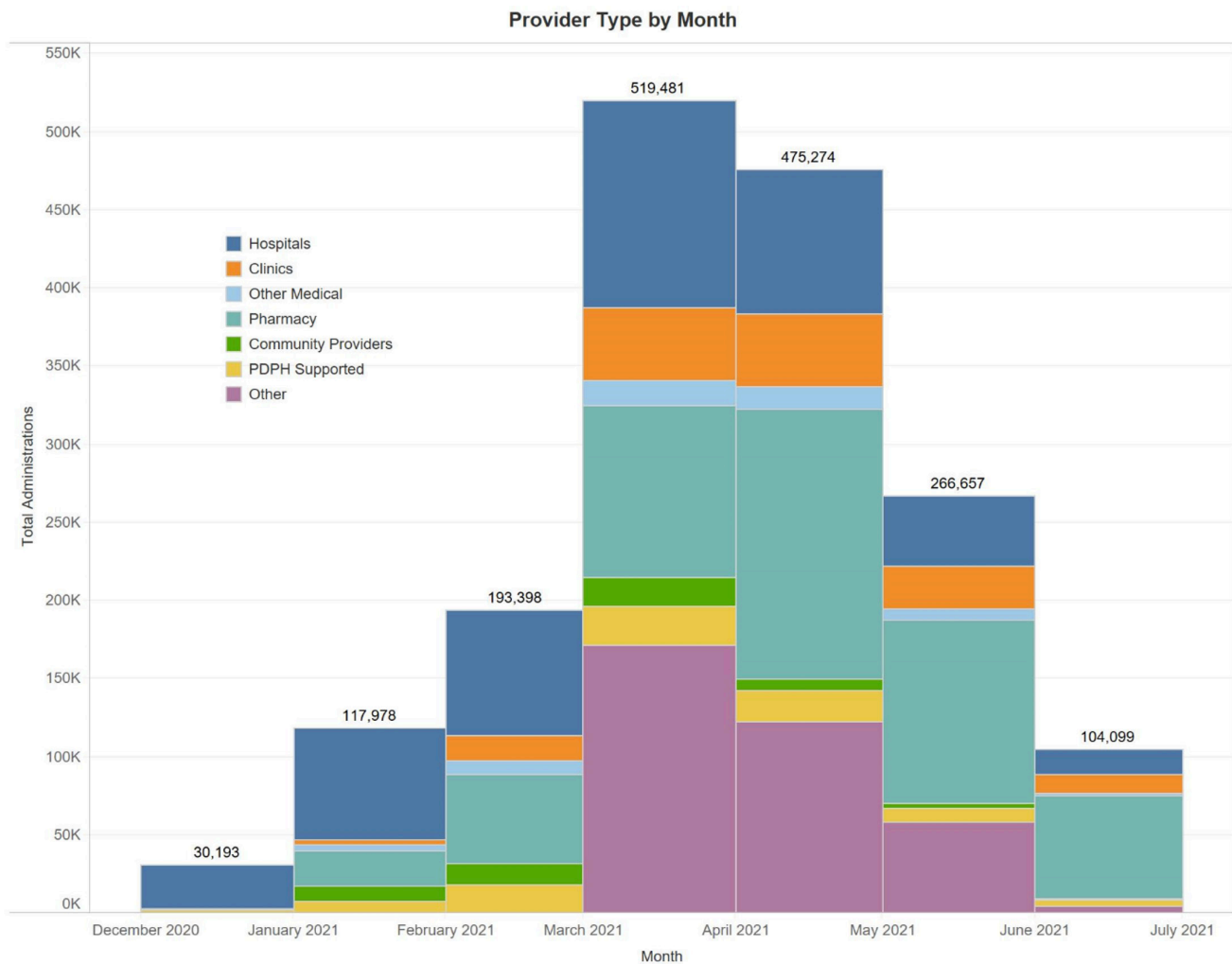
Mobile vaccination unit

Beginning April 20, PDPH has operated mobile vaccine clinics four days per week using a truck leased by Aardvark Mobile Health in areas of low vaccination rates and high COVID-19 risk. Locations are selected in partnership with community-based organizations, which may host the truck at their facility, presenting the opportunity for persons to be vaccinated at trusted community sites close to home. Appointments are made through the community host, but walk-ups are welcome, dependent upon vaccine availability. The mobile vaccination unit has the capacity to administer 50 vaccine doses per day.

Philadelphia Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

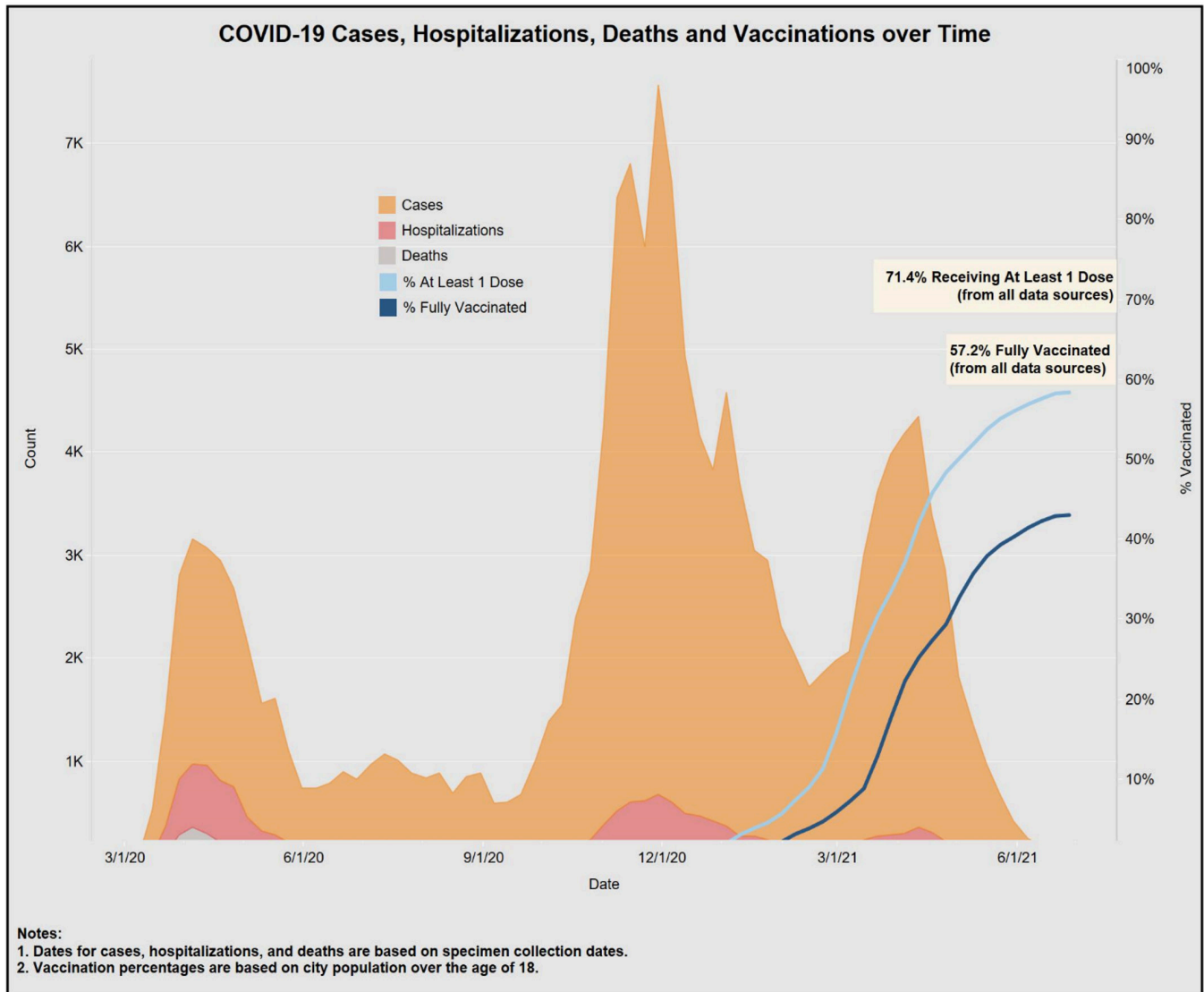
As of the week ending June 25, approximately 1,693,794 doses have been administered, with the most doses being administered by pharmacies (31%), hospitals (27%), and PDPH/FEMA (21%). The number of doses administered has been decreasing over the past few months, given the lesser overall demand, but with incentives and other outreach efforts seems to be stabilizing at 20,000-30,000 doses per week. The local decrease in overall vaccinations is consistent with regional and national trends. With the overall decrease in demand, PDPH and other providers must pivot vaccination strategies to incorporate smaller, more nimble, and localized vaccination opportunities that make vaccination easy and convenient in low vaccination neighborhoods and address barriers that some populations may experience in accessing vaccine.

Doses Administered by Provider Type



While also considering other control measures and factors, data suggest that vaccines are protecting people from contracting COVID-19. The graph below shows the number of COVID-19 cases and vaccination coverage by week. The two blue lines represent vaccination coverage (1 dose or fully vaccinated) over time. As vaccination coverage increased, the number of cases decreased. People who were hospitalized are displayed by the red line. Hospitalizations have decreased as vaccination coverage has increased. There have been a low number of instances of persons who were partially vaccinated (i.e., were not yet two weeks out from receiving their second dose) who contracted the virus and even fewer of those who were fully vaccinated. However, cases among fully vaccinated people remain very uncommon.

COVID-19 Cases by Vaccination Status



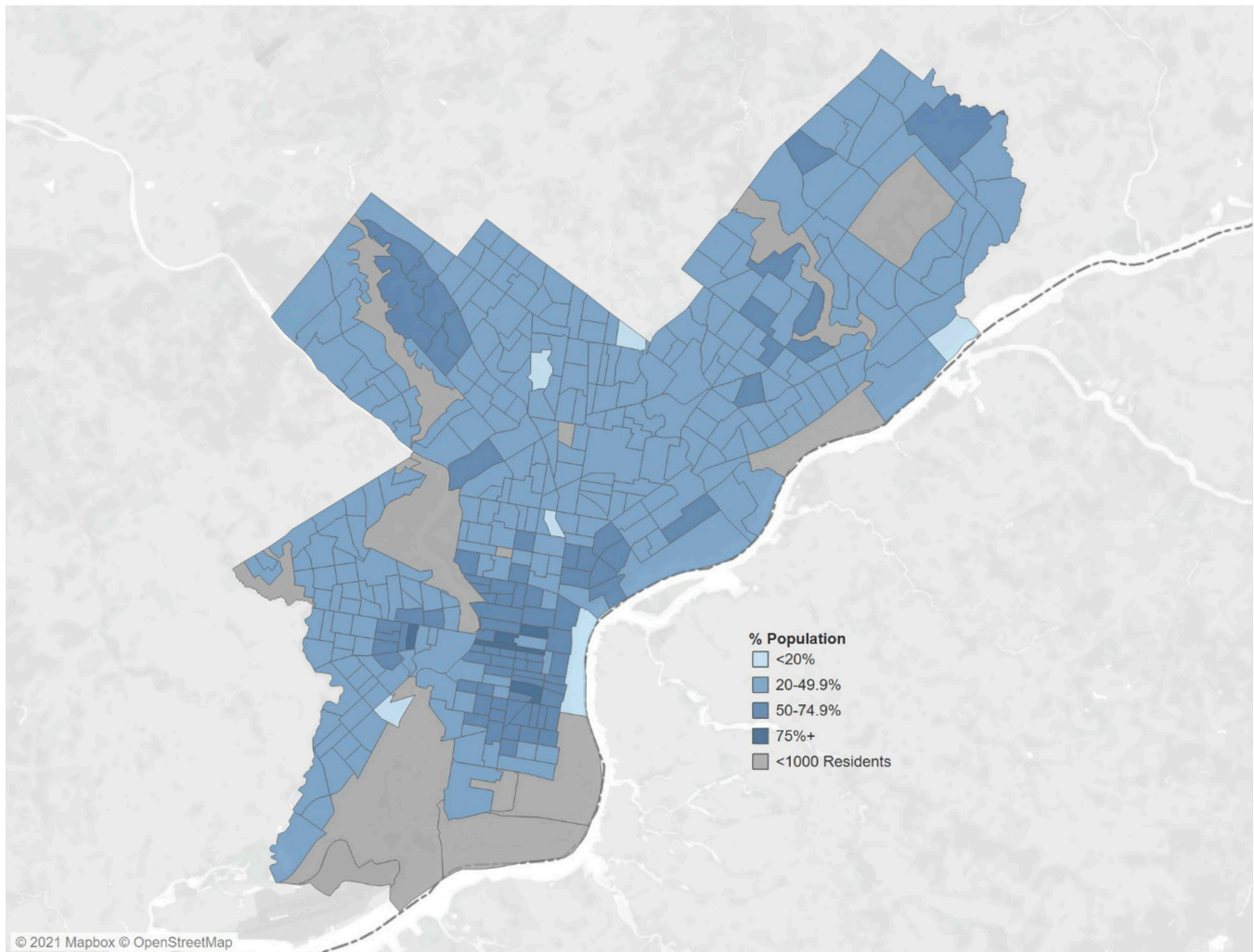
PROGRESS REACHING PRIORITY POPULATIONS

As vaccine availability has increased, the City has prioritized bringing vaccine to the community, rather than the community to the vaccine. Utilizing census tract level vaccination rate data (see below) to prioritize lower vaccination areas, which are predominantly Black and Brown communities. Vaccination clinic locations are selected in partnership with community-based organizations to offer trusted and convenient spaces in these areas.

Philadelphia Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

Percent of Residents Vaccinated by Census Tract as of June 30, 2021

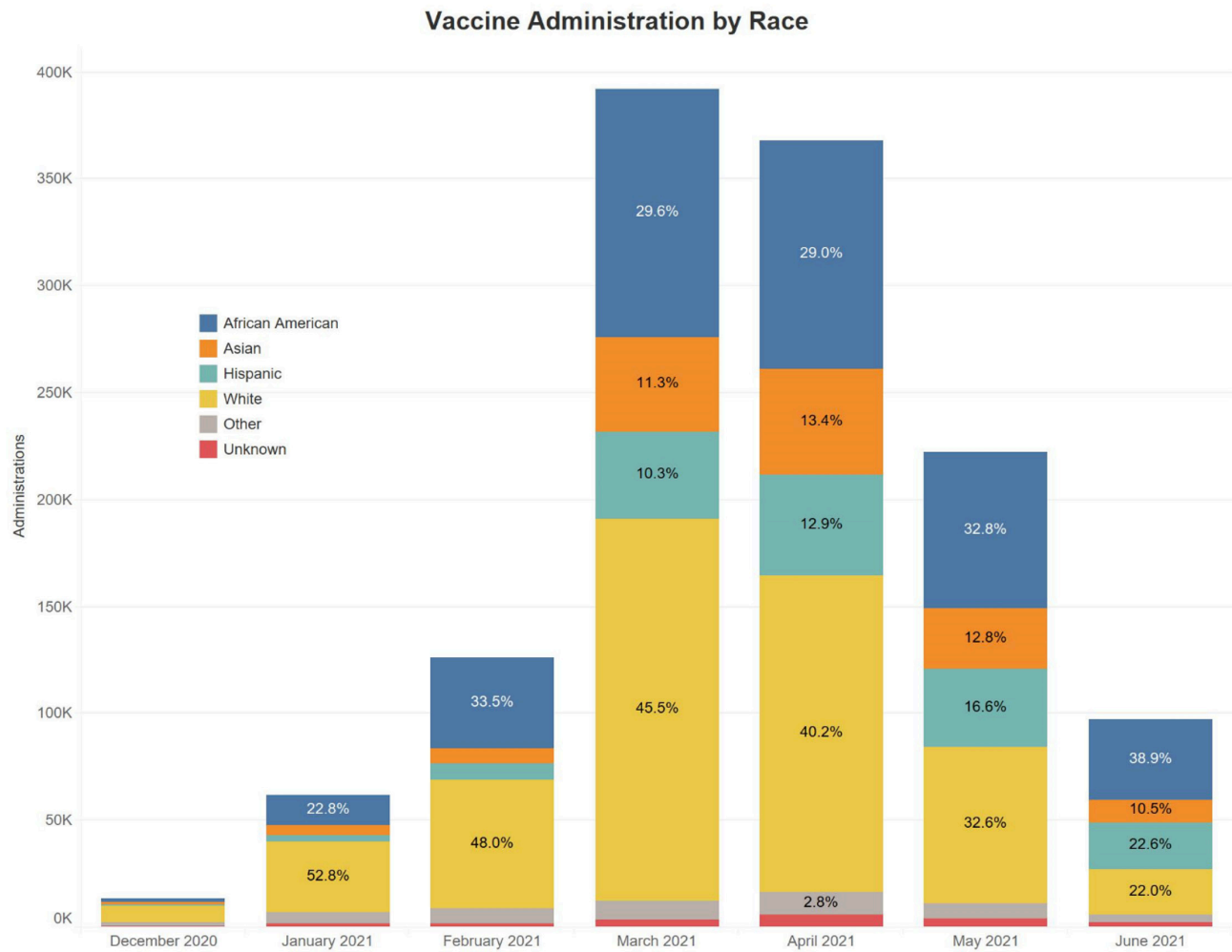
Percent of Population Receiving At Least 1 Dose by Census Tract



The percent of vaccine doses administered each month shown below indicates that efforts to distribute vaccine more equitably are working. Black and Hispanic persons comprised larger proportions of total vaccinations in May and June than in any previous month since the vaccine rollout began.

Philadelphia Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

Percent of Vaccine Doses Administered each Month by Race and Ethnicity



The City has also been increasing pop-up events, including operation of a mobile vaccination truck, that provide more targeted vaccination opportunities for priority populations. In recent weeks, the City and partner organizations have leveraged incentives, such as tickets to sporting events and Wawa gift cards, at vaccination events to increase interest. To motivate Philadelphians to get vaccinated, the City announced on June 7 the launch of [Philly Vax Sweepstakes](#) in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania. Philly Vax Sweepstakes is a series of three citywide drawings designed to incentivize Philadelphia residents to be vaccinated. Totalling nearly \$400,000 in giveaways, residents may win cash prizes up to \$50,000. All Philadelphians are eligible to win, and the sweepstakes will include special incentives to encourage vaccination in the city's least vaccinated communities. Other incentives are in the process of being planned and will be incorporated into other vaccination events in the coming months.

CONGREGATE FACILITIES

Congregate living facilities, such as prisons, shelters, and residential psychiatric and rehab facilities, pose a particularly high risk because they place a large number of people, often including many with risk factors for severe illness, together with staff members who come and go from the facility, potentially bringing asymptomatic COVID-19 infection. These sites are being prioritized based on the type of facility, size of the population, risk of exposure and/or severe disease for staff and/or residents, and its location (i.e., in a high, medium, or low-risk zip code). Eligible residents of settings that do not meet the Health Department's definition of a congregate setting (e.g., independent senior living facilities and apartment buildings), are referred to various partner agencies using geographic prioritization criteria. Onsite vaccinations at these facilities are complete, underway, or planned, as summarized below.

Site category	Vaccination Provider(s)	Status
Long-term care and assisted living facilities enrolled in the CDC Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program	CVS and Walgreens	All sites have been visited 1-3 times. Sites are working with various pharmacy providers to address ongoing need related to staff and resident turnover.
Inpatient behavioral health	PDPH mobile team; pharmacy providers	All sites have received at least one vaccine clinic for staff. Ongoing need will continue for residents due to turnover.
Personal Care Homes and Assisted Living Facilities not enrolled in the CDC Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program	PDPH mobile team; Rite Aid, Centennial and other pharmacy providers; Regional Congregate Care Assistance Teams (RCAT)	All sites have received at least one vaccine clinic or have been contacted to schedule a vaccine clinic.
Group Homes	Rite Aid and other pharmacy providers; PDPH mobile team	PDPH mobile teams and Rite Aid have conducted or scheduled clinics with identified partner agencies serving individuals living in group homes.
Senior Housing	Multiple pharmacies; Regional Congregate Care Assistance Teams (RCAT)	Senior housing sites have been referred to RCAT teams and pharmacy providers based on geographic location and HUD affiliation. Housing sites may continue to host smaller-scale pop-up or in-home vaccination opportunities.
Shelters	PDPH mobile team, other medical and pharmacy providers	Shelters were surveyed to determine populations served and vaccine need. Teams continue to provide onsite vaccination services. Some ongoing need will continue due to turnover.
Prisons	Prison Health Services	Vaccinations of staff and incarcerated persons are ongoing. Some ongoing need will continue due to turnover.
Other congregate settings	Pharmacies, PDPH mobile team	Prioritization depends on size and medical risk of residents.

HOMEBOUND PERSONS

PDPH is committed to making COVID-19 vaccine accessible, particularly for people who may have difficulty getting to a mass vaccination site, pharmacy, or other clinic due to various access issues. People who are homebound often have significant medical risk for severe COVID-19 infection and many have home healthcare workers and others who come and go in their homes, bringing risk of infection. To ensure that all residents have the opportunity to get vaccinated, PDPH created the Homebound Vaccination Referral Program to schedule in-home vaccination services through different vaccine providers for people who are homebound and their Personal Care Attendants and any other caregivers or residents of the household during the same visit. This program is intended for people who are homebound or for whom it would be difficult to be vaccinated at a clinic due to a disability. To enroll in the registry, homebound persons or their caretakers can call 311, the COVID-19 Call Center at (215) 685-5488 (dial 711 for TRS/TTY assistance), or fill out [this form](#).

A provider will follow up in the subsequent one to two weeks to schedule a date and time. The form is available online in Spanish, and both 311 and the COVID-19 Call Center have phone-based interpretation services for anyone wishing to make an appointment by phone in their native language.

PDPH worked with its Immunizations provider network to identify COVID-19 vaccine providers who are interested in administering COVID-19 vaccine in-home to persons who are homebound. PDPH will engage new providers on a routine basis to continuously build capacity for homebound vaccinations congruent with established need. Providers interested in working with PDPH to administer in-home vaccinations may contact covidvax@phila.gov to complete the capacity assessment and receive more information. As of June 2021, 29 providers have expressed interest in conducting in-home vaccinations in Philadelphia and receiving referrals from PDPH, and 14 providers have executed the necessary legal documentation and requirements to begin vaccinating. PDPH is engaging a wide range of providers in this effort, including independent pharmacies, hospitals, FQHCs, and community-based providers, including Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium. PDPH hosts a biweekly forum for providers administering in-home vaccinations to discuss best practices.

PFD also has capacity to administer in-home vaccinations and began providing this service in April. PFD uses a two-person EMS team model for conducting these in-home vaccinations. PFD initially used a list of homebound persons from the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging and is now engaged in PDPH's referral program.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Individuals with disabilities or other access and functional needs may need accommodations or modifications to afford them access to City vaccination sites. In support of ensuring that vaccination services are accessible to all, the City has taken the following steps:

- All City-run vaccination sites have been assessed for their accessibility. At locations where barriers have been identified, the City has worked to either remove the barrier or has implemented modifications to ensure access for all individuals.
 - The City is updating its website to include information about the accessible services available at each site: [Accessibility at Community Clinics](#)
- Mobility assistance devices, like wheelchairs, are made available for individuals to borrow while at any City site.
- OEM convened a working group on ADA accessibility to develop standards and policies that have been implemented at vaccine clinics.
- The City has identified individuals with intellectual disabilities living in small group homes as a priority to be vaccinated. PDPH, in partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) and The Alliance of Community Service Providers, has identified facilities to host vaccine clinics for this population (clients and paid staff). PDPH's mobile vaccine team and other providers have distributed vaccine at these sites across the City and remain in touch with partners if additional vaccination needs arise for new staff or residents.
 - Individuals with intellectual disabilities who live at home but can be brought to these organizations will also be included in these vaccination opportunities.
- For individuals who use sign language, video relay interpretation (VRI) services are available via tablet and mobile applications at all PDPH vaccination sites and for 311 calls.

- The City has deployed sensory toolkits to its vaccination clinics in partnerships with Temple TechOWL. These kits include noise-cancelling headphones, weighted lap pads, fidgets, and a wobble seat.
- PDPH has worked with service providers and disability advocacy organizations to disseminate information about the homebound referral program to eligible individuals.

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may use Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) through 311. To be connected with TRS, individuals may dial 7-1-1 and an assistant will place the call on behalf of the text telephone device (TTY or TDD). 7-1-1 can be used to access all telecommunication relay services in Pennsylvania. For more information, visit techowlpa.org or call 800-204-7428 (voice), 866-268-0579 (TTY).

IMMIGRANTS AND PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Language barriers and concerns about possible immigration enforcement may keep many immigrants and those who do not speak or read English fluently from obtaining vaccines. Adjusted for age, Latinos have suffered the highest rates of hospitalization and death during the pandemic. Data for many other immigrant groups is limited. To try to meet the needs of immigrant groups:

- PDPH will continue to supply COVID-19 vaccine to FQHCs. These sites are trusted healthcare institutions that provide care for many immigrants in Philadelphia.
- 311 and the PDPH COVID-19 Call Center have access to bilingual staff (Spanish) and an interpreter telephone line to assist with appointment scheduling and COVID-19 information.
- PDPH vaccination sites do not require photo ID, to avoid creating a barrier for undocumented people. Neither a social security number nor insurance is required for vaccination. PDPH is working with sites to ensure this information is disseminated and followed.
- Interpretation is provided at all PDPH vaccination sites. PDPH provides in-person interpreters for the most common languages, where possible, and offers telephone line interpretation for those languages for which we do not have an in-person interpreter. For those who use sign language, video relay interpretation (VRI) services are available via tablet and mobile application.
- Plain language, multi-lingual educational materials about the vaccine are available on the PDPH website.

Addressing Vaccine Barriers

PDPH established a vaccine barriers workgroup in early February to respond to the number of barriers cited by Philadelphians through the COVID-19 Call Center that hindered or prevented them from accessing vaccination services. This workgroup has been meeting regularly to strategize how to address each of these barriers and implement solutions. The following table summarizes some of the major barriers identified and the strategies the City has undertaken to address them.

Barrier	Strategies
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDPH set up two inbound call options to assist individuals with registering their information in the Vaccine Interest Form, and ultimately scheduling vaccinations. Additionally, outbound calling efforts were established through Contact Tracing, AmeriCorps, and Philly Counts staff, as well as through external partner organizations (PACE, CARIE) that specifically work with older adults, a demographic that exhibited the greatest challenges with technology. PDPH partnered with the Office of Innovation and Technology and Generations on Line to create online tutorials (for persons with access to internet/technology, but with low computer literacy) to assist older adults in registering for vaccine appointments. PDPH has tabled at dozens of events in communities where staff have provided information, assistance with scheduling appointments, and transportation resources. In collaboration with the Office of Homeless Services, Office of Children and Families, Philabundance, and Share Food Program, PDPH scheduled hundreds of individuals from the lowest-vaccinated communities in Philadelphia.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transit passes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35,000 transit passes have been distributed to 10,979 people at City-run and FEMA-supported sites 8,000 passes have been given to community partners for distribution 6,000 passes have been given to the health department and city agencies that are running pop-up events and canvassing efforts Customized Community Transportation (CCT): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For anyone who is 65 years of age or older, has a disability or access and functional need, or identifies a ride accommodation need, SEPTA CCT provides door-to-door service from the client's home, to the vaccination site, and back home after vaccination.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culturally competent promotional materials were created in plain language and translated into Spanish, Russian, Simplified Chinese, and Vietnamese, among others. PDPH collaborated with the Office for People with Disabilities to establish best practices for developing accessible and engaging digital presentations. Digital Information Sessions are held regularly and include ASL interpretation, closed captioning, and live translations into Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese. The City partnered with Pennsylvania School for the Deaf to assist with the vaccination clinic specially designed for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing at the Esperanza Community Vaccination Center. A series of "what to expect" videos were developed, a transportation shuttle was provided, and additional ASL interpreters were staffed onsite.
Mistrust & Vaccine Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These events occur bimonthly and are designed to be as accessible as possible. Attendees do not have to pre-register and may call in from their telephone, rather than join from a computer. As described above, all sessions offer closed captioning, ASL interpretation, and live translations in multiple languages. Presentation slides are formatted to be compatible with screen-readers and all content is written in plain language. Topics have included general vaccine information, accessing a vaccination appointment, and youth vaccinations, as well as general COVID-19 guidance, testing, and contact tracing. Newsletters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 newsletters are developed and distributed to City and community partners monthly. These newsletters highlight the latest COVID-19 response work of PDPH and partner organizations, share resources, and promote upcoming events and opportunities for engagement. In-person Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDPH continues to partner with community-based organizations to convene events to increase vaccine interest, access, and uptake. As described in the Community Engagement section, PDPH is collaborating with Philly Counts to lead a six-month residential canvassing initiative across the city, with particular concentration in the lowest vaccinated ZIP codes.

Patient Access

APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING

Individuals may schedule their own appointments for City-operated vaccine clinics online or by telephone. More information about how to get vaccinated is available [here](#). People may also call the COVID-19 Call Center (215-685-5488) or 311 for any assistance scheduling an appointment. Although appointments are not necessary for these clinics, they allow for people to plan their schedules accordingly and avoid wait times.

WALK-UP ACCESS

All City-operated community vaccination clinics accept walk-ups.

TRANSPORTATION

The City, in partnership with SEPTA, is coordinating several transportation options to help ensure that persons can travel to and from all City clinics. Transportation should not be a barrier to access. Options include:

- Door-to-door transportation service through SEPTA Customized Community Transportation (CCT) for individuals 65 years of age or older, with access and functional needs, or anyone who needs an individual ride accommodation
- Free roundtrip transit passes for both vaccination appointments

More information about transportation options can be found here:

<https://www.phila.gov/2021-05-01-accessibility-at-community-clinics-know-before-you-go/>

Individuals who need a ride to or from their vaccination appointment can call the City's transportation hotline at 215-589-3006 to request an on-demand ride or schedule a ride for an upcoming vaccination appointment. The hotline is open Monday through Friday from 8am – 6pm.

Communications and Education

The City is committed to consistently and transparently communicating with the public about vaccine distribution in a variety of formats. Since the spring of 2020, the City's website on the COVID-19 pandemic response at www.phila.gov/covid has included information on the coronavirus, the latest data on the pandemic and the City's response, including information on testing, cases, hospitalizations, and vaccination rates, as well as other City efforts like Access Centers and food distribution programs. The COVID-19 website has transitioned into a vaccine-first information hub. Currently, the Health Department's vaccine information includes a [dashboard on vaccine distribution](#) that is updated twice per week, [frequently asked questions](#) to be used to address rumors and misinformation, and information about [where to sign up for a COVID vaccine](#). In addition to the COVID-19 website, the City is publishing a [blog post every week](#) with the latest information on the breakdown of who is being vaccinated, where vaccines have been made available, and the latest updates on the distribution effort. The City's OpenDataPhilly platform is now serving vaccine distribution information in a variety of formats for analysis and review.

Recognizing that not everyone in Philadelphia has access to the internet or feels comfortable using the internet, the Health Department has integrated vaccine expertise into their already-existing COVID-19 Call Center (215-685-5488). Our dedicated call-takers can answer questions in English and Spanish about a variety of COVID-19 vaccine topics. The City has bolstered the capacity of the Call Center through a partnership with 311. Individuals can now call 311 to register for vaccine appointments at City vaccine clinics.

The City is now running a paid media campaign promoting vaccination called [Vax Up, Philly](#). This campaign is intended to provide facts on COVID-19 vaccine, allow regular Philadelphians to ask questions and have experts and trusted messengers reply, and make emotional calls for folks to get their vaccine.

Community Engagement

The most effective messengers are those that people already trust - people who have told them the truth in the past and people who look and sound like them. PDPH has partnered with Philly Counts and the Mayor's Office of Public Engagement to identify trusted messengers and support them in providing information on the vaccine and the City's effort to make vaccines available to their communities.

Originally established to support the 2020 Census, the Philly Counts community engagement model has focused on leveraging community networks to further key administration priorities and to increase overall civic engagement in communities to support a more equitable democracy in Philadelphia. In partnership with PDPH and other public and private partners, Philly Counts is leveraging its existing network of staff and volunteers to provide COVID-19 outreach, education, organizing, and canvassing efforts to ensure that every Philadelphia resident understands why they should consider being vaccinated and will help residents make plans to get vaccinated. This includes a COVID-19 Vaccine Information Champion training program, phone banking outreach, pop-up vaccine clinic coordination, and direct canvassing efforts. As of June 8, Philly Counts has:

- Hosted 10 Vaccine Information Champion training events in four languages, including ASL
- Trained over 600 residents to become Vaccine Information Champions
- Made 104,432 phone calls
- Sent 28,753 text messages
- Engaged 13,961 Philadelphians
- Knocked on 7,757 doors
- Recruited 186 volunteers

Philly Counts has also partnered with Philanthropy Network Greater Philadelphia to launch a community-led effort to invest in neighborhood-based solutions to urgent needs related to COVID-19. The fund supports community-based organizations that are deeply trusted in neighborhoods and seeks to increase vaccination rates throughout communities most disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

In addition to Philly Counts, the Health Department has been and will continue to participate in virtual town halls with trusted messengers and community leaders to provide them with opportunities to learn about the vaccine and distribution effort, ask questions, and hear directly from Health Department experts. These sessions end with a call-to-action to set up future town halls and one-on-one conversations to further the conversations in their communities.

Upon emergency use authorization of the Pfizer vaccine for children 12 years of age and older, PDPH launched the "Philly Teen Vaxx" initiative in partnership with the School District of Philadelphia and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Philly Teen Vaxx aims to educate Philadelphia teenagers on the importance and benefits of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and to address its myths and misinformation. A cadre of teenaged students have been trained on general COVID-19 information and vaccine facts to serve as role models for their peers and to spread this information to their families and communities. Special vaccination events with themes (e.g., prom, graduation, pep rally) and other attractions (music, dancing, giveaways) were held for teens and their families to increase interest and access.

VACCINE SAFETY

Several mechanisms are in place to monitor vaccine safety. Adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination can be reported to CDC's Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). VAERS may be contacted directly, or adverse event reports can be called in to PDPH staff, who will assist with filing the VAERS report. In addition, all persons who receive COVID-19 vaccine are being encouraged to enroll in CDC's V-safe program, a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after vaccination. [Early data](#) compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through these reporting mechanisms demonstrate the safety of the current vaccines.

COMPLAINT PROCESS

PDPH, in partnership with 311, Philadelphia Commission on Human Rights (PCHR), the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), and OEM, has developed a multi-tier customer service and complaint process that promotes the identification and resolution of individuals needing assistance, but recognizes the need to capture complaints and use them to improve vaccine clinic operations. Individuals are encouraged to seek out staff for assistance and, if necessary, file a complaint. Complaints may be presented in-person to the Vaccine Clinic Manager or communicated via telephone to 311. PDPH receives and tracks complaints from 311. Individuals that believe they have experienced discrimination should contact PCHR. Individuals with disabilities that believe they have been discriminated against may file a complaint with MOPD.

Conclusions

Through immense collaboration and coordination of the greater provider community, as well as the dedication of many Philadelphians to protect themselves and their neighbors, the COVID-19 vaccination response has made tremendous strides. As more residents have been vaccinated, the City has entered the next stage of delivering vaccine, shifting from mass vaccination events to more frequent, smaller, localized pop-up clinics that bring vaccine directly to communities. In collaboration with numerous community partners, most of these clinics are being stood up in neighborhoods that have the lowest vaccination rates and limited vaccine access. Additionally, to drive vaccine interest and combat misinformation, the City is scaling up community-based outreach initiatives within neighborhoods through canvassing, incentives, and in-person and virtual educational events, among others.

While Philadelphia has achieved the goal set by the Biden administration to provide at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to 70% of adults by July 4, additional work is needed to increase vaccination rates in low vaccination neighborhoods and among at-risk populations, and to increase the COVID-19 vaccination rate citywide to provide protection from the Delta and other variants. The City plans to address these ongoing needs by anchoring vaccination sites in low vaccination neighborhoods, conducting thoughtful outreach and education campaigns, offering incentives for vaccination as able, providing opportunities for vaccination to at-risk persons, and ensuring that diligent follow-up is conducted to encourage partially vaccinated persons to complete their vaccine series. As the response moves forward, the City will continue to evaluate its efforts and modify the vaccination program to align with the changing needs of the situation.