

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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March 9, 2021

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVE 01-030921: CONTACTING CONSUMERS AGES 16 THROUGH 64 REGARDING ELIGIBILITY FOR COVID-19 VACCINATION

Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code section 4639.6 authorizes the Director of the Department of Developmental Services (Department) to issue directives to regional centers as the Director deems necessary to protect consumer rights, health, safety, or welfare, or in accordance with W&I Code section 4434. Regional centers must comply with any directive issued by the Director pursuant to this section.

Outreach to Regional Center Consumers Ages 16 through 64

Public health guidance from the California Department of Public Health states that, effective March 15, 2021, the following persons will be eligible for vaccination:

- Individuals ages 16 through 64 who are deemed by the clinical judgment of their health care provider to be at the very highest risk for morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 as a direct result of one or more of the following severe health conditions:
 - **Cancer**, current with debilitated or immunocompromised state
 - **Chronic kidney disease**, stage 4 or above
 - **Chronic pulmonary disease**, oxygen dependent
 - **Down syndrome**
 - **Immunocompromised state** (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
 - **Pregnancy**
 - **Sickle cell disease**
 - **Heart conditions**, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies (excludes hypertension)
 - **Severe obesity** (Body Mass Index \geq 40 kg/m²)
 - **Type 2 diabetes mellitus** with hemoglobin A1c level greater than 7.5%

OR

If as a result of a developmental or other severe high-risk disability, one or more of the following applies:

- The individual is likely to develop severe life-threatening illness or death from COVID-19 infection
- Acquiring COVID-19 will limit the individual's ability to receive ongoing care or services vital to their well-being and survival
- Providing adequate and timely COVID-19 care will be particularly challenging as a result of the individual's disability

Please note that eligibility for vaccination does not guarantee access to the vaccine due to limited supply.

“Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices”

In order to provide verification of consumer eligibility for vaccination, by March 15, 2021 regional centers should begin providing personalized letters to each consumer described on page 1 of this Directive, who is not already known to be vaccinated. Regional centers must use the template letter enclosed with this Directive for this purpose.

Pursuant to W&I Code section 4639.6, to reduce risks associated with COVID-19, regional centers are directed to conduct outreach to, and make contact with, regional center consumers ages 16 through 64 who are not already known to be vaccinated, their family or conservator, or with the administrator of their licensed residential facility. Outreach to consumers most at-risk from COVID-19 complications should be prioritized.

Outreach and contact should be accomplished by telephone, in-person or via an online platform such as Zoom, WebEx, FaceTime, or Teams. Contact should be made in preferred languages, whenever possible. Emails, text, Everbridge messages or other written communications may be used when direct phone or in-person efforts are unsuccessful.

With this outreach, the regional center shall make every reasonable effort to provide the following information to consumers, families, conservators or home administrators:

- Information about where consumers can obtain a vaccine.
- Information about how to schedule an appointment to receive a vaccine.
- Options for assistance in accessing vaccines, including regional center or service provider assistance, making appointments, transportation, public telephone hotlines or websites and similar resources.
- When needed, provide information about the vaccines and their safety, such as from the Department's Frequently Asked Questions and other resources found here: <https://www.dds.ca.gov/corona-virus-information-and-resources/vaccine-testing/>
- Remind them to bring their personalized letter to the vaccination site to verify eligibility for vaccination.

The regional center shall make every reasonable effort to obtain and document the following information for each regional center consumer, if the consumer or conservator consents to provide it:

- Information necessary to populate all applicable vaccination fields required in SANDIS, including but not limited to:
 - Date(s) of vaccination
 - Brand of vaccine
 - Any significant adverse reaction, as specified in SANDIS
 - Whether the consumer or conservator declines vaccination
- Any request by a consumer for assistance in scheduling and accessing a vaccination, and the type of assistance requested.

In the interest of public health, time is of the essence. Therefore, the regional center may utilize its own employees to make these contacts, or may utilize the individual's existing service providers to do so, if necessary. Regional centers' communication efforts should include

Regional Center Executive Directors
March 9, 2021
Page three

notifying consumers and/or families that someone other than their individual service coordinator may be contacting them about vaccinations, if such a decision is made.

This Directive is necessary to protect the health of consumers from the risks associated with potential COVID-19 infection and is effective immediately.

The Department will make available on the Department's website de-identified data on vaccinations collected as a result of this Directive.

Regional Center Relief

The Department recognizes the extra effort required to contact each consumer, their family or conservator, or the administrator of their licensed residential home. The focus of available employee time should be on consumer health and obtaining available vaccination. Therefore, individual regional centers may make requests of the Department that would provide relief to that regional center to assist in increasing available resources to comply with this Directive. Proposals and requests should be submitted to DDSC19Directives@dds.ca.gov.

Consumers, family members or providers should contact their local regional center with any questions regarding this Directive. Questions from regional centers should be directed to DDSC19Directives@dds.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

NANCY BARGMANN
Director

Enclosure

cc: Regional Center Board Presidents
Regional Center Administrators
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services
Regional Center Community Services Directors
Association of Regional Center Agencies