

# Vaccine Distribution in Public and Private Low Income and Affordable Senior Housing

## Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated on February 26, 2021

All residents and staff of public and private low income and affordable senior housing are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. For all information about vaccine eligibility for this population visit the [Senior Affordable Housing vaccine webpage](#).

There currently are two options for residents and staff of senior affordable housing (as defined below) to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

- 1) Residents and staff of senior affordable housing may schedule individual appointments at public vaccination locations, including mass vaccination sites, pharmacies, community health centers and health care systems. To schedule an appointment visit [mass.gov/covidvaccine](https://mass.gov/covidvaccine) and select [“Find your appointment”](#). Please note, due to limited supply and high demand it may take several weeks to schedule an appointment.
- 2) Housing owners and operators may plan onsite or offsite vaccination clinics in partnership with a vaccination provider, such as the local Board of Health, an independent or retail pharmacy, a community health center, or a healthcare system. Please note, due to limited supply, clinics should not be publicized until the vaccine provider confirms allocation of doses. For more information how to plan and organize a vaccine clinic. download: [Massachusetts Senior Affordable Housing COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#) | [DOC](#)

### Senior Affordable Housing Eligibility Definition

Public and private low income and affordable senior housing is defined as any residential premises available for lease by older or disabled individuals which is financed or subsidized in whole or in part by state or federal housing programs established primarily to furnish housing rather than housing and personal services. Specifically, this includes the following types of age-restricted housing properties:

- Public housing properties designated primarily for older adults that are owned or operated by Local Housing Authorities. This includes those public housing properties owned by a Housing Authority but managed by a private company.
- Privately owned rental properties designated for older adults that are financed in whole or part through resources made available from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), MassHousing, USDA, or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and in which the majority of units are restricted to residents earning less than 80% of Area Median Income.

### Do residents or staff have to pay for the vaccine?

**No.** The vaccine is being provided free of charge to all individuals. Insurance companies are also committed to not charging any out-of-pocket fees or co-payments related to COVID-19 vaccine administration, and all health care provider sites that receive COVID-19 vaccine must agree to not charge patients any out-of-pocket fees or deny anyone vaccination services. Residents/staff will be asked to present their insurance card for the vaccine, but no one who lacks health insurance will be turned away.

### Can residents or staff who are undocumented immigrants receive the vaccine for free?

**Yes.** The vaccine itself is free for all Massachusetts residents. Health insurance (including Medicare and Medicaid) will cover the cost of administering the vaccine. For patients without health insurance, health care providers may request reimbursement from the federal government for the cost of administering vaccine to undocumented immigrants.

Getting the vaccine will not adversely impact a resident/staff member's immigration status. The federal government has confirmed that it will not consider COVID-19 treatment (including a vaccine) as part of a determination of whether someone is a "public charge" or as it relates to the public benefit condition for certain individuals seeking an extension of stay or change of status, even if the vaccine is paid for by Medicaid or other federal funds.

### There are some residents who don't have health insurance currently. Do you need to have health insurance in order to get vaccinated?

**No,** no one can be denied the vaccine regardless of current insurance status. Vaccination providers may, however, request insurance information from those who have it.

### Must residents and staff get vaccinated or is this optional?

**The COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary.** Staff and residents of public and private low income and affordable senior housing are not required to get vaccinated. However, for public health and safety, owners/managers should disseminate and display educational resources to encourage residents and staff to get vaccinated. We encourage you to review the [Commonwealth's COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions](#).

### Is this initiative limited to residents and staff of this housing who are age 65 and older or have two or more certain medical conditions?

People who are 65 and older, and people who are living with [two or more certain medical conditions](#) are also priority populations in phase two. **All residents and staff** of public and private low income and affordable senior housing, not only those who are age 65 and older or have two or more certain medical conditions, are also eligible at this time.

### For public and private low income and affordable senior housing, who can receive a Vaccination?

All residents of an eligible development (as described above) may receive the vaccine.

All staff, paid or unpaid, of an eligible development may receive the vaccine.

### Who is considered a “resident” of public or private low income and affordable senior housing?

“Residents” include those household members currently on the lease for a rental unit in public and private independent affordable senior housing, including any younger residents that live in a building that is predominantly senior housing

### What about residents that are younger and disabled (e.g., not over the age of 65). Are they considered a resident?

Yes. All residents of an eligible property would be able to receive a vaccine.

### Is a minor who is part of a household considered a resident?

Minor household members who are live in an eligible property are considered “residents” but must be eligible per the vaccine manufacturer guidelines. The Pfizer vaccine is currently approved for people 16 years of age and older. The Moderna vaccine is currently approved for people 18 years of age and older.

### Who are considered staff of public or private low income and affordable senior housing?

“Staff” includes all persons, paid or unpaid, working or volunteering at each of the qualified housing locations, who have the potential for exposure to residents or to infectious materials, contaminated environmental surfaces, or contaminated air.

### Are individuals that volunteer occasionally in the building, such as volunteers that staff the front desk, considered “staff”?

Yes, if they are regularly scheduled for shifts in the building, they are eligible for the vaccine.

### If a resident has a personal care aide that helps them on a regular basis, is that individual considered staff?

Yes. Please note that personal care aides and other home-based health care workers are already eligible to be vaccinated under [Phase 1](#).