

STRONGER TOGETHER

Vaccinating Missouri's Workforce against COVID-19

A Guide for Employers

Last updated: January 21, 2021



Acronyms

LPHA Local Public Health Agency

RITs Regional Implementation Teams

What is the purpose of this document?

This document provides Missouri's private and public sector employers an understanding of when the COVID-19 vaccine could be available to their employees and describes the options employers have to participate in the vaccination of their workforce. Missouri employers play a critical role in protecting their employees from COVID-19 workplace exposure and in making sure economic vitality continues through efforts to help employees receive access to the vaccine.

Because federal guidance on vaccine priorities and state vaccine administration recommendations change frequently, the information in this document may change over time.

For the most recent vaccine information, go to [MOStopsCOVID.com](https://moplastsCOVID.com).

When will my employees be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

The state's vaccine distribution plan prioritizes saving lives, preserving the essential functions of society and accelerating equitable economic recovery – in that order. Additionally, the state seeks to maximize a simple and efficient distribution process of the vaccine. Therefore, the state will not distinguish between essential and nonessential personnel within an organization falling into any of the categories identified in the phases/tier. Any employee within these categories is eligible for vaccination when the state begins to vaccinate individuals within the identified phases/tier.

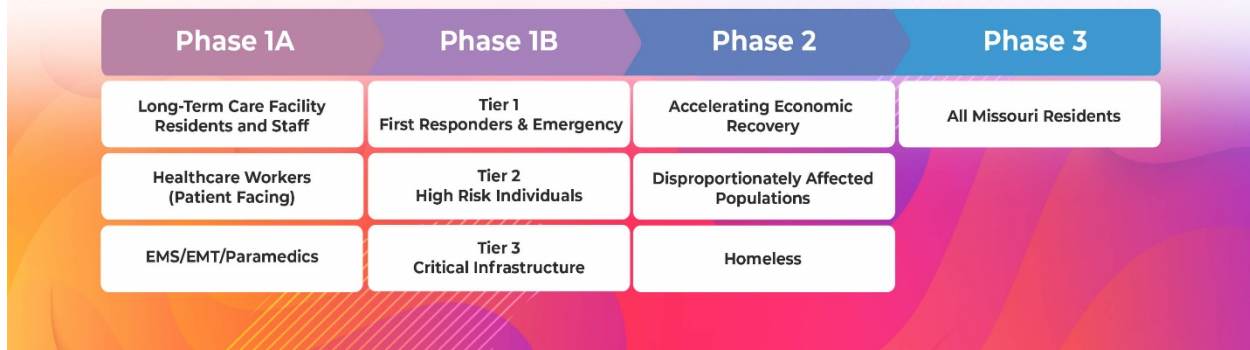
A phased vaccination approach is necessary to make sure individuals who are particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus receive the vaccine first, followed by workers who protect the public from emergencies, provide services critical to economic recovery and support the education of Missouri's children and young adults.

Currently, determining specific dates for the COVID-19 vaccine availability is not possible due to limited vaccine supply and varying amounts delivered weekly to each state and U.S. territory. Therefore, instead of dates, the vaccination of Missouri's workforce is presented in terms of vaccine prioritization in a phased and tiered approach.

The following descriptions of the workplaces/workers help determine the timeline of vaccine eligibility in each phase.

For the most updated information about job/employer classifications and expanded definitions of the job classifications identified within each phase and tier, please visit [MOStopsCovid.com](https://moplastsCovid.com).

COVID-19 Vaccine Availability



Phase 1

Phase 1 vaccinations are divided into two sub-phases: Phase 1A targets health care workers and emergency services and Phase 1B targets public health, critical public response, high risk individuals and critical infrastructure industries.

Phase 1A

Patient-Facing Health Care Workers and Long-Term Care Facility Residents and Staff ***Vaccinating those most vulnerable and those protecting them***

- Hospitals, long-term care facilities and residents, including Department of Mental Health (DMH)-operated facilities.
- Home health, hospice, dialysis centers, urgent care.
- Vaccine provider (vaccinator) staff and those administering COVID-19 testing.
- Congregate community health care settings staff and residents, including DMH contracted settings and adult day cares.
- EMS and high-risk non-congregate health care, including clinics, private physicians and home care providers.
- All remaining patient-facing health care providers, including but not limited to health care workers in emergency shelters, dental offices, pharmacies, public health clinics and correctional settings, school nurses and mental/behavioral health providers.

Phase 1B

Phase 1B - Tier 1: First Responders, Emergency Services, and Public Health Infrastructure

Protecting those who keep us safe and help us during an emergency

- Public health administrators and staff
- Law enforcement
- Fire services
- Corrections
- Emergency management
- Public works
- Emergency services sector

Phase 1B - Tier 2: High-Risk Individuals

Protecting those who are at increased risk for severe illness

- Anyone aged 65 and older
- Any Adult with:
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - COPD
 - Heart conditions
 - Weakened immune system due to organ transplant
 - Severe obesity (BMI >40)
 - Pregnancy
 - Sickle cell disease
 - Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus
 - Individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities such as Down Syndrome

Phase 1B - Tier 3: Critical Infrastructure

Protecting those who keep the essential functions of society running

- Education (K-12)
- Childcare
- Communications sector
- Dams sector
- Energy sector
- Food/agriculture sector 1
- Government
- Information technology sector
- Nuclear reactors, materials and waste sector
- Transportation systems sector
- Water and wastewater systems sector

Phase 2

Phase 2: Equity and Economic Recovery

Protecting those who have been disproportionately affected and accelerating economic recovery

- Disproportionately affected populations
- Homeless
- Chemical sector
- Commercial facilities sector
- Critical manufacturing sector
- Defense industrial base sector
- Financial services sector
- Food/agriculture sector (remaining workers not included in Phase 1B)
- Government (remaining workers not included in Phase 1B)
- Higher education

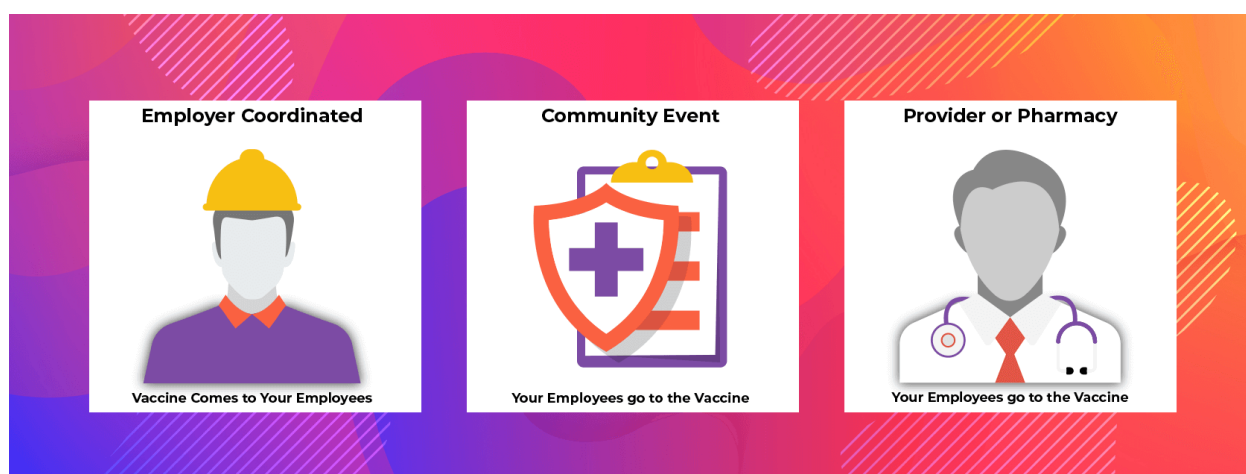
Phase 3

Phase 3: All Missouri Residents

Protecting everyone who has not been vaccinated, but wants to be

Note: If employees in Phase 1B - Tier 3, Phase 2 or Phase 3 are (1) 65 or older or (2) have underlying health conditions, they are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 1B - Tier 2. As described below, these employees may seek to be vaccinated through their primary care physician, a pharmacy, local health department or at a community-sponsored event.

How will employees within priority phases be vaccinated?



How can employers encourage and/or participate in the vaccination of their employees?

Employers may assist with the state's vaccination efforts in three important ways:

1. Communicate the importance of the vaccine to employees.
2. Consider providing vaccination to employees in the workplace or coordinating on their behalf at a specific vaccination site.
3. Help employees find a vaccine provider in their community.

How can employers communicate the importance of the vaccine to employees?

One of the most important things an employer can do is to encourage employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them. Employees need to educate themselves on the importance of receiving the vaccine. While the COVID-19 vaccine is optional, education, convenience and access will help encourage individuals to get the vaccination when available. A communications toolkit can be found at MOStopsCovid.com/toolkit. The toolkit provides messaging, printable communications and digital information employers may use as part of a communications strategy to employees.

Additional resources for businesses are available at [MOStopsCovid.com/priority](https://moplastscovid.com/priority).

Note: Develop a communication plan for employees desiring to be vaccinated, including who the point of contact at your organization will be for questions they may have, second dose coordination, etc.

How can employees receive the vaccination in their workplace?

Depending on the size of the workforce, employees' interest in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and vaccine availability, it may make sense to offer vaccinations at the workplace.

What are the benefits of providing the vaccination to employees at my facility?

The benefits of participating include:

- Demonstrating a commitment to employees' health and safety.
- Reducing operational disruptions by having employees receive the vaccine at work rather than leaving work to be vaccinated.
- Serving as an important community partner in public health response.

How can employers determine whether a workplace (private) vaccination event makes sense for their organization?

To help determine if an employer should consider sponsoring a private vaccination event at their facility, conduct a survey to determine how many employees would agree to be vaccinated if a clinic was held in the workplace. Each employer will determine if there is a sufficient level of interest to proceed with planning an on-site clinic.

How do employers provide the vaccination to employees?

Employers who are interested in sponsoring a private vaccination event at their facility have the following options:

1. Use on-site health care providers.

Employers may be able to sponsor a private vaccination event at their facility if they have medical staff on-site (a provider, nurse, paramedic, etc.) or have existing contracts/relationships with a health care provider who has registered with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) as a COVID-19 vaccinator. Information about becoming a DHSS-approved vaccinator is available at [MOStopsCovid.com/vaccinators](https://moplastscovid.com/vaccinators).

Employers who sponsor a private vaccination event should establish an agreement with the vaccinator(s) describing roles and responsibilities and a plan that includes:

- The location and layout of the area where vaccinations will occur, keeping in mind social distancing/infection control procedures and a place where people who have been vaccinated can be observed for 15 minutes after they receive the vaccine.

- A strategy for the safe and secure storage of vaccine, which may require refrigeration or ultra-low storage temperatures (-60° to -80°C).
- Providing non-medical staff from the organization to assist with vaccination efforts (e.g., registration, passing out educational literature, monitoring for adverse reactions, etc.).
- Training for employees who will assist with vaccination efforts.

2. Contact the Local Public Health Agency (LPHA) or Regional Implementation Team (RIT) in your area.

LPHAs may be able to help connect employers with a vaccinator who is willing to hold a private vaccination clinic at their workplace. The LPHAs have been on the front lines of this pandemic response. Most LPHAs are enrolled as vaccination providers and/or have relationships with vaccination providers within their jurisdiction. A listing of LPHAs is available at [Health.Mo.Gov](https://health.mo.gov). Coordinating at the local level is often the most efficient and effective means to address public health needs, including planning workforce vaccination events.

Note: LPHAs may be maintaining a waiting list due to limited vaccine supplies

To best use limited supplies of vaccine, several Regional Implementation Teams (RITs) are established throughout Missouri to support coordination of vaccination efforts. These RITs can act as a vaccination hub to assist LPHAs and employers in connecting with a vaccinator. These teams are equipped to help employers efficiently navigate the vaccination planning and administration process.

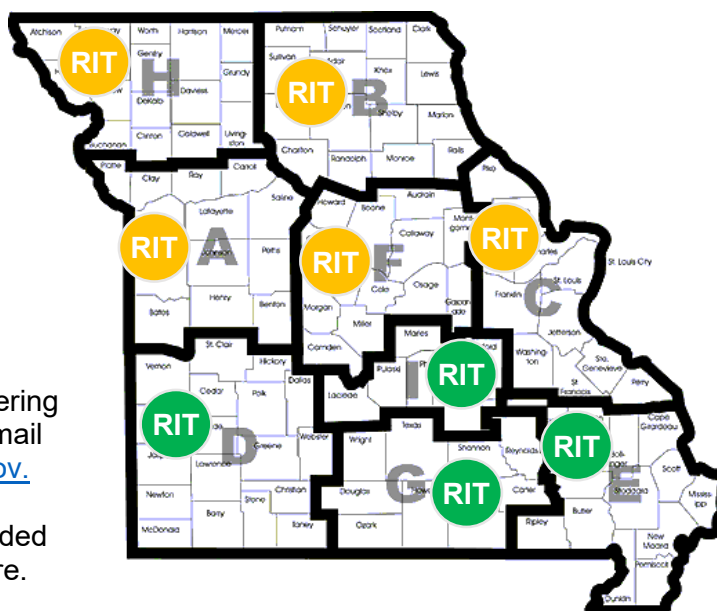
Note: RITs are not currently available in all areas of the state. Check back frequently to [MOPlastscovid.com](https://moplastscovid.com) as this information will be updated as additional RITs become operational.

RIT Status

- A – Solution Pending
- B – Solution Pending
- C – Solution Pending
- D – Active RIT
- E – Active RIT
- F – Solution Pending
- G – Active RIT
- H – Solution Pending
- I – Active RIT

If you are interested in partnering with an active RIT, please email CovidVaccine@health.mo.gov.

Additional RITs are being added soon and will be updated here.



What if there isn't enough vaccine, initially, for all the interested employees?

After reviewing the vaccination phases and tiers described above, employers should have a good sense of where their employees fall in terms of vaccine priority. However, because only limited amounts of vaccine may be available, employers may need to further assess their workforce to determine which employees should receive the vaccine first. The following questions will help in making this decision.

- Does the employee mainly work indoors or outdoors?
- Is the employee required to wear a face covering when performing tasks?
- How physically close is the employee to other employees and/or customers?
- Does the employee touch shared surfaces, common items, and other employees or customers?
- How many interactions does the employee have with other employees and/or customers occur daily?
- How long does an average interaction last?
- Are there screening procedures that protect the employee from interactions with contagious co-workers and/or customers?
- How frequently is the employee's work area sanitized and cleaned?
- Are handwashing stations readily available to the employee?
- Does the employee require highly specialized skills?

How can employers help employees find a vaccine provider in the community?

If sponsoring a private vaccination event is not an option for an organization/business, or if employees do not choose to be vaccinated through the workplace, employers should still encourage employees to be vaccinated as soon as possible. LPHAs, in conjunction with the RITs, can assist employers with finding vaccinators in the community who can vaccinate their employees. Options include:

- Local pharmacies such as Hy-Vee, CVS, Walgreens and Walmart
- Community-sponsored vaccination events
- Employees' primary health care providers

The MOStopsCovid.com website includes [a map of approved vaccinators](#). Each Vaccinator will have specific guidance on how to partner with their site for vaccination of your employees.

Note: Vaccinators may be maintaining a waiting list due to limited vaccine supplies.

Some may have an email address for initial inquiries or a web portal for interested employee/employers.

When the COVID-19 vaccine is widely available, employees and the general public will be able to use [VaccineFinder](#) to find a vaccine provider near them.

What if employers disagree with the category in which their industry has been placed?

Expanded definitions of Missouri's priority phases can be found at [MOStopsCovid.com/priority](https://moplastscovid.com/priority) or by viewing the [health order](#) published by the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services. The industry definitions are based on the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) guidelines, many of which are linked directly on the site.

Please use your best judgement to classify your businesses and organization appropriately. Additional business and organization resources are available at [MOStopsCovid.com/priority](https://moplastscovid.com/priority) as well. Please check back regularly because our team will be adding resources frequently.

What can I do now?

It is important that each priority business make a vaccination plan while their industry awaits its turn for vaccination. As an employer, we also encourage you to continue or develop a COVID-19 testing strategy, exposure mitigation plan and guidelines for your teams.

Additionally, please encourage your employees to maintain normal COVID-19 precautions while waiting for vaccination. These include:

- Wash hands often
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Stay home while you are sick
- Wear a cloth mask, which covers your mouth and nose, when outside your home.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing
- Avoid contact with people who are sick especially if you are 60 or over or have an underlying health condition, like heart disease, diabetes, lung disease or a weakened immune system.

Where can employers find more information?

Thank you for your partnership in keeping all Missourians safe and healthy, we truly are Stronger Together! For more information regarding COVID-19 vaccination planning, visit the Frequently Asked Questions page for employers at [MOStopsCOVID.com](https://moplastscovid.com), e-mail us at CovidVaccine@health.mo.gov or call us at 877-435-8411.