

Dear Partner,

HHS Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs COVID-19 update for February 25, 2021:

COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force: Tomorrow, the HHS Office of Minority Health will host the first meeting of the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force. The COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force was established by Executive Order 13995, Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery. The Task Force is part of the government-wide effort to identify and eliminate health and social disparities that result in disproportionately higher rates of exposure, illness, hospitalization and death related to COVID-19. The Task Force members represent a diversity of backgrounds and expertise, a range of racial and ethnic groups, and a number of important populations. You can watch the [livestream](#) tomorrow, February 26 from 3:00 to 5:30 pm ET.

Vaccine Updates

US Administers its 50 Millionth COVID-19 Vaccine Dose: President Biden delivered remarks [on America administering its 50 millionth COVID-19 vaccine shot](#) since he took office. “The more people that get vaccinated, the faster we’re going to beat this pandemic. That’s why one of my first goals in office ... was to get 100 million COVID-19 vaccine shots in peoples arms in my first 100 days as President,” Biden noted after the 50 millionth COVID-19 vaccine was administered.

Storage and Transportation Conditions at Conventional Temperatures for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine: Today, the FDA announced that it [is allowing undiluted frozen vials of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#) to be transported and stored at conventional temperatures commonly found in pharmaceutical freezers for a period of up to two weeks. This reflects an alternative to the preferred storage of the undiluted vials in an ultra-low temperature freezer between -80°C to -60°C (-112°F to -76°F). The change is being reflected in updates to the [fact sheet for healthcare providers administering vaccine](#).

FDA Meeting Tomorrow to Discuss Johnson & Johnson Vaccine: Tomorrow, FDA’s Vaccine and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee Meeting to discuss the Janssen’s (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine will be held from 9:00 AM – 5:30 PM ET. VRBPAC [meeting agenda](#) and [briefing materials](#) have been released and the meeting will be live webcast [here](#).

Reported Adverse Events: CDC has updated their page on [reported adverse events](#) after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Results from monitoring efforts are reassuring. Some people have no side effects. Many people have reported only mild side effects after COVID-19 vaccination. Adverse events described on this page have been reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). VAERS accepts reports of any adverse event following vaccination, even if it is not clear the vaccine caused the problem.

Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take to Prepare for COVID-19: CDC updated their [steps for healthcare facilities to stay prepared](#). The CDC added vaccination information for healthcare personnel. This page also has information on protecting your workforce and patients.

Vaccination FAQs: CDC updated their answers to [commonly asked questions about COVID-19 vaccination](#).

Information for Specific Populations

Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations: CDC updated their toolkit for [community-based organizations](#). This toolkit is designed for staff of organizations serving communities affected by COVID-19. These CBOs could include social service organizations, faith-based organizations, YMCAs/YWCAs, fraternities, school organizations (e.g., PTAs/PTOs), meal delivery services, senior centers, and others.

Migration and Border Health: CDC updated their guidance and resources on preventing and controlling COVID-19 infections in [globally mobile populations](#).

Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Business, Schools, and Homes: CDC updated their [cleaning and disinfecting guidance](#). This guidance is intended for all Americans, whether you own a business, run a school, or want to ensure the cleanliness and safety of your home. Slowing the spread of COVID-19 requires all of us to practice social distancing and other daily habits to prevent infection. Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces, workplaces, businesses, and schools is part of that strategy, and can also be applied to your home.

Research

Suspected Recurrent SARS-CoV-2 Infections among Residents of a Nursing Facility: CDC released an MMWR on [suspected recurrent SARS-CoV-2 infections among residents of a skilled nursing facility during a second COVID-19 outbreak](#) in Kentucky. Five residents of a skilled nursing facility received positive SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test results in two separate COVID-19 outbreaks separated by 3 months. Residents received at least four negative test results between the two outbreaks, suggesting the possibility of reinfection. Severity of disease in the five residents during the second outbreak was worse than that during the first outbreak and included one death. Skilled nursing facilities should use strategies to reduce the risk for SARS-CoV-2 transmission among all residents, including among those who have previously had a COVID-19 diagnosis. Vaccination of residents and health care personnel in this setting is particularly important to protect residents.

Communities Fighting COVID to Remove Barriers to Testing: A part of the National Institutes of Health's Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) initiative, the RADx Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) program is focusing on assessing and removing barriers to testing for populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Latinos/Latinas, Native Hawaiians, older adults, pregnant women and those who are homeless or incarcerated. RADx-UP aims to develop strategies to reduce disparities in COVID-19 testing by supporting more than 70 projects across the country that have existing community partnerships. [The Communities Fighting COVID! project](#) integrates a major research center with more than a dozen community organizations and a network of community health workers to boost COVID-19 testing among populations in San Diego.

Lab Publications: CDC updated their page for [lab publications](#). These publications range from diagnostics to treatment and more.

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