



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD
Commissioner

August 29, 2023

Dear Colleague,

The federal government is preparing for commercialization of COVID-19 vaccines in September, bringing the current COVID-19 Vaccination Program to an end.

Commercialization is timed to coincide with expected authorizations and recommendations for updated COVID-19 vaccine formulations, following an [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) meeting scheduled for September 12.

In anticipation of both of these changes, the New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Department) would like to ensure that providers are aware of next steps to ensure continued access to vaccination.

After commercialization, providers will need to purchase COVID-19 vaccines from the commercial market for most patients, as they do for other vaccines. COVID-19 vaccines will remain at no cost for most patients through private health insurance plans, Medicare and Medicaid.

For uninsured and underinsured patients, after commercialization, eligible providers may be able to obtain no-cost COVID-19 vaccines through two programs:

1. Vaccines for Children (VFC)
2. Vaccines for Adults (VFA), also known as the Bridge Access Program for COVID-19 Vaccines

Providers can also refer uninsured and underinsured patients to selected public-facing vaccination locations, such as pharmacies and health centers. Both CDC and the NYC Health Department are working to ensure uninsured and underinsured adults in NYC have access to public-facing locations where they may receive COVID-19 vaccines at no cost.

Vaccines for Children Program

VFC is a long-standing federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children up to 18 years of age who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay. The CDC buys vaccine at a discounted rate for distribution to registered VFC providers. Children who are eligible for VFC vaccines are entitled to receive those vaccines recommended by the ACIP, including COVID-19 vaccines.

In NYC, VFC-eligible children are those younger than 19 years of age who fall under any of the following categories: Medicaid eligible, uninsured, underinsured, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or enrolled in Child Health Plus B (CHPlus B). Note that providers may not bill New York State Medicaid for the cost of vaccines administered to Medicaid members younger than 19 years of age if the vaccines are available through VFC.

If you would like to receive COVID-19 vaccines at no cost for VFC-eligible children after commercialization, you must be enrolled in the NYC VFC program. You can start the enrollment process for your practice [here](#). Refer to the [NYC VFC Provider Requirements](#) for more information.

Vaccines for Adults Program, also known as the Bridge Access Program for COVID-19 Vaccines

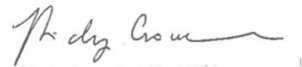
VFA, also known as the [Bridge Access Program for COVID-19 Vaccines](#), is a new program to provide vaccines at no cost to uninsured and underinsured adults ages 19 years and older. VFA's launch will coincide with commercialization of COVID-19 vaccines in September. Initially, VFA will be restricted to COVID-19 vaccines, but it may be expanded to include other vaccines for adults in the future.

VFA is not yet open for enrollment. We expect that enrollment will open in the coming weeks. We will send a letter with program requirements, enrollment instructions, and other details as soon as they are available. Sites will be prioritized based on the number of uninsured and underinsured adults in their practice. You can prepare now by pulling the number of uninsured and underinsured adults in your practice (ages 19-64 years and ages 65+ years) - this information will be requested when enrollment opens.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please email COVIDVax@health.nyc.gov.

Thank you for continuing to promote and protect the health of New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Bindy Crouch, MD, MPH

Assistant Commissioner

Bureau of Immunization

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene