

BRIEFING ROOM

FACT SHEET: President Biden to Announce New Actions to Protect Americans from COVID-19 and Help State and Local Leaders Fight the Virus

AUGUST 18, 2021 • STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

Since taking office, President Biden has mobilized a whole-of-government effort to provide states and communities the support they need to fight COVID-19, get Americans vaccinated and end the pandemic. As we face the more transmissible Delta variant that is driving a rise in cases, particularly in communities with low vaccination rates, the Administration is announcing additional steps to ensure that we are staying ahead of the virus and getting more people vaccinated.

These steps include a plan for COVID-19 booster shots; new vaccination requirements for long-term care workers; a directive to ensure state and local leaders are providing students a safe return to in-person learning; and an extension of federal support for state, Tribal and territorial response efforts.

Today the President will highlight the following actions:

Planning to Offer COVID-19 Booster Shots Starting the Week of September 20: Today, public health and medical experts from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a plan for administering booster shots later this fall, pending final Food and Drug Administration (FDA) evaluation and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Under this plan, a booster would be administered, eight months after an individual's second dose, beginning the week of September 20—at which point those individuals who were fully vaccinated earliest in the vaccination rollout will be eligible, including many health care providers, nursing home residents, and other seniors.

Thanks to the aggressive actions the President has taken to secure enough vaccine supply for every American and dramatically increase the number of places to get a shot, it will be just as easy and convenient for a person to get their booster as it is for an unvaccinated American to get their first shot today. We will also continue to expand our efforts to send vaccines to other

countries, building on the more than 600 million doses we have already committed to donate globally.

Requiring COVID-19 Vaccinations for Long-Term Care Workers Who Serve Medicare and Medicaid Enrollees. Today, President Biden is announcing that HHS will develop new regulations requiring nursing homes to require that all of their workers be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition of participating in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Some states have already taken similar steps to protect nursing home residents, and this action will ensure consistent and equitable standards across the country. These new regulations would apply to nearly 15,000 nursing home facilities, which employ approximately 1.6 million workers and serve approximately 1.3 million nursing home residents.

Since the spread of the Delta variant, there has been a rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, especially in those states that have low rates of vaccinated workers. Both CDC and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) data confirm a strong relationship between the increase of COVID-19 cases among nursing home residents and the rate of vaccination among nursing home workers.

Directing the Department of Education to Use All Available Tools to Safely Reopen Schools: Today, President Biden will issue a memorandum to the Secretary of Education directing him to use all available tools to ensure that governors and other officials are providing a safe return to in-person learning for the nation's children. Students have experienced tremendous disruptions in their learning over the past two school years, but with increased access to vaccinations for school staff and students age 12 and older, proven disease prevention and mitigation strategies, and unprecedented resources from the American Rescue Plan (ARP), all schools can and should open safely this Fall for full-time, in-person learning. However, some state governments have adopted policies and laws that interfere with the ability of schools and districts to keep our children safe during in-person learning, with some going as far as to try to block school officials from adopting safety protocols aligned with recommendations from the CDC. State and local leaders must do everything they can to put student health and safety first and comply with their legal obligations to their communities. Today's Presidential Memorandum will ensure the Department of Education is doing everything it can to prevent anything from standing in the way of local leaders and school leaders taking steps to keep all students safe in full-time, in-person learning, without compromising students' health or the health of their families or communities.

Extending 100% federal reimbursement to states for eligible COVID-19 emergency response costs. President Biden will highlight that earlier this week he directed his Administration to continue to fully reimburse states for eligible COVID-19 emergency response costs—including emergency medical care, non-congregate sheltering and vaccination

operations—through December 31, 2021. This extends the order the President issued on his second day in office directing Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to fully reimburse states for emergency response costs associated with COVID-19 from January 2020 to September 30, 2021. The extension, which was ordered yesterday, also allows states to receive retroactive 100 percent federal reimbursement for costs associated with the safe opening and operation of facilities, such as schools, health care facilities, and child care facilities—dating back to the start of the pandemic in January 2020.

Thanks in part to the ARP, the Administration has made available over \$25 billion to support COVID-19 response, including more than \$17 billion to support life-saving activities like emergency medical care, non-congregate sheltering, and emergency feeding, and nearly \$6 billion to support and enhance vaccination operations. The extension will ensure states, Tribes, territories and localities continue to have the resources they need to fight the virus.

Extending 100% federal reimbursement to states for mobilizing National Guard personnel to support COVID-19 response efforts. President Biden will also highlight that his Administration will continue to fully reimburse states for governors' deployments of the National Guard to support their COVID-19 response – through December 31, 2021. This extends the order the President issued on his second day in office directing FEMA to fully reimburse states for pandemic-related work performed by National Guard troops from January 20, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

Thanks in part to the ARP, the Biden Administration has already fully funded over 30,000 National Guard members who have supported vaccinations, direct patient care, contact tracing and testing, and food and PPE distribution in communities across the country. National Guard troops have played a key role in the pandemic response, and the extension will ensure states can continue to have these key personnel in place to support their response.

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