State and Territorial Issue Brief: COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution and Implementation in States and Territories

Background
The COVID-19 national vaccination campaign is a historic undertaking aimed at providing safe and effective vaccines to prevent COVID-19 infections in all residents of the United States. While the federal Operation Warp Speed effort has invested principally in the research, development, production, and approval of a safe and effective vaccine, a vaccine does not begin to stem the tide of the pandemic until it is administered to a significant segment of the population. ASTHO has pushed for a similar Warp Speed effort to support state and territorial implementation of jurisdictional plans to allocate, distribute, and administer unprecedented amounts of vaccine, update existing data systems and implement new ones, enroll providers to administer vaccines, develop public information and education campaigns, and work with partners across the public health and healthcare sectors (e.g., pharmacies, hospitals, physician offices) while continuing to manage the daily impact of COVID-19.

Issues and Considerations
- State and territorial health agencies do not have sufficient funding to rapidly execute a timely, comprehensive, and equitable vaccination campaign.
- Coordination and communication between federal, state, and local health agencies was slow in taking shape and continues to be fragmented. This lack of communication has impeded the collaborative development and execution of national vaccination campaign implementation plans customizable for local application. Questions remain concerning funding, IT system implementation, data sharing and privacy policies, and vaccine allocation decisions.
- Private sector pharmacy providers, including chain pharmacies, have been engaged by the federal government to administer vaccines with minimal state or local governmental public health pre-decisional involvement. There has been no coordinated effort to harmonize plans between public and private sectors, and a clear understanding of the role of the private sector in early phases of the vaccine effort is still lacking.
- There is no apparent coordinated communication strategy to promote confidence in the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine refusal and hesitancy and public mistrust of vaccines is compounded by a climate that is critical of state efforts to prevent and control COVID-19 and perceptions that vaccine development has been rushed for political purposes.

Solutions and Ideas for Improvement
- Support federal funding to state and local agencies for COVID-19 vaccination distribution and administration. ASTHO and the Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) submitted a funding request for $8.4 billion to ensure a vaccine is provided at no charge to individual Americans.
- Form a governmental public health advisory group including members of ASTHO, AIM, and other state and local officials to inform federal leadership on issues from the state or local perspective and to ensure a coordinated implementation of a national vaccine program.
• Develop a federally coordinated, locally customizable communications strategy following CDC’s Vaccinate with Confidence framework. Utilize a robust scientific evidence base and communications strategies devoid of political interference to promote confidence in vaccination among the American people.

• Develop a communications and community partnership strategy to address vaccine hesitancy among communities of color and to assure equitable administration and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine across the United States, including rural, frontier, and highly urbanized areas.

Further Resources
• [What You Need to Know About the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
• [Leading Health Organizations Unite to Implement National COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#)
• [Nation’s Health Officials Call for Greater Collaboration and Communication with Federal Government](#)
• [COVID-19 Vaccination Program Planning: A Checklist for State and Territorial Health Officials](#)
• [Summary and Analysis: ASTHO Survey of State Health Agency Staff on H1N1 Response Policy and Legal Issues](#)
• [ASTHO and the Association of Immunization Managers Immunization Campaign Policy Principles](#)
• [ASTHO Commentary on Equitable Vaccine Allocation](#)

Contact
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