

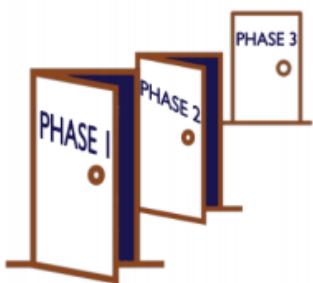
COVID RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Regional and National Practice Highlights

Issue 8 – December 23, 2020



A collective sigh of relief engulfs the nation with this month's roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines developed by Pfizer/ BioNTech and Moderna. Yet some experts herald the delivery chain's precision, multi-modal logistics with a dose of caution. Like transit systems' challenges to provide convenient, efficient, and safe "last-mile" connectivity to Metro and employment centers, vaccine distribution must proactively address public health's last-mile infrastructure, too.



"I'm worried about that last mile, when dealing with a vulnerable population," said former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D. With initial vaccine doses prioritized for delivery to hospitals, health systems, and nursing homes, last-mile concerns will surface later, he said, as the roll-out continues well into 2021. "We've had so much focus on the 'cold chain' [Pfizer's vaccine requires dry ice during transit, and sub-zero freezers for on-site storage], but we haven't focused as much on getting it to the community," Gottlieb explained at a [Dec. 14 forum](#) hosted by Duke University's Margolis Center for Health Policy. Relatedly, municipal governments and businesses should organize transportation to vaccine sites, suggested the American Public Health Assn.'s Executive Director,

Georges Benjamin, M.D. in a Dec. 18 [Politico article](#). Dr. Benjamin serves on Montgomery County's Public Health Advisory Board, established in June to advise County Health Officer Dr. Travis Gayles.

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) echoed these concerns in their Dec. 20 report on Moderna's vaccine, noting that advancing health equity will require reducing "access-related barriers to vaccination," and "engagement with community organizations and leaders among groups who experience disproportionate COVID-19-related morbidity and mortality," and expanding "access to clear and accurate information on COVID-19 vaccines." Across Montgomery County, such engagement will likely be nurtured in the coming months through the *Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar* initiative, and the African American Health Program, among other respected outreach channels. – Lee Rucker Keiser, MSPH, Editor

SPOTLIGHT: COVID-19 VACCINE PRIORITIZATION



On Dec. 22, the NIH Clinical Center in Bethesda hosted the country's first public administration of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine to NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D. (left), and NIH/ NIAID Director Anthony Fauci, M.D. (photo, top of [page 2](#)). HHS Secretary Alex Azar (not shown) was also vaccinated at this NIH event. (Photos: NIH Image Gallery/Flickr)

Dec. 22 also brought important COVID news from the **CDC**, including their updated web page, [**8 Things to Know about the U.S. COVID-19 Vaccination Program**](#), and revised prioritization guidance. ([Cont., page 2](#))

The CDC recommended on Dec. 22 that all jurisdictions use [new guidance](#) from its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices with **updated age criteria** in Phase Ib/c COVID-19 vaccine priority groups (below).

Phase Ia	Health care personnel; long-term care residents
Phase Ib	People aged ≥ 75 years; frontline essential workers
Phase Ic	People aged 65-74 years; people with high-risk medical conditions aged 16-64 years; other essential workers



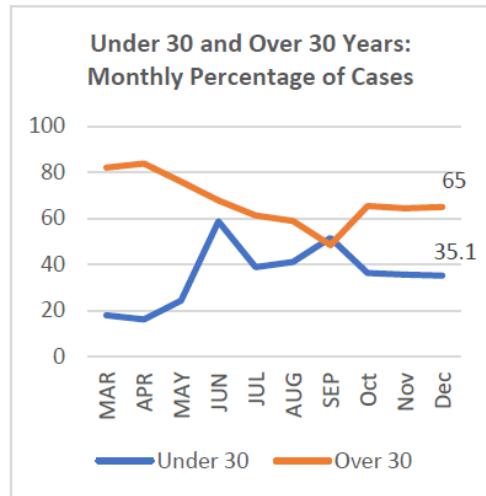
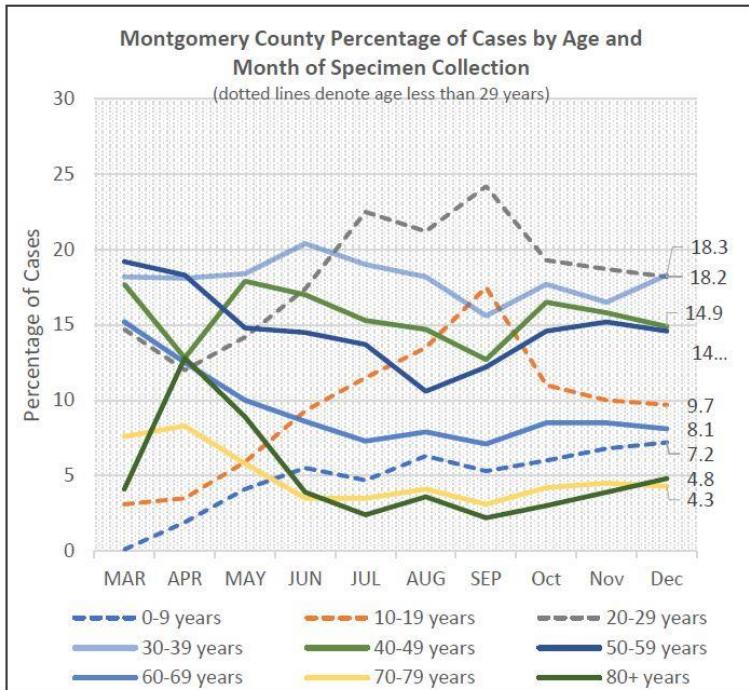
Dr. Fauci ,
age 79,
receives the
Moderna
vaccine
(Dec. 22)

Further, CDC launched its “V-safe” [smartphone app](#) for newly-vaccinated persons to record any side effects, and to receive a second-dose reminder message.



SPOTLIGHT: COVID-19 CASES BY AGE, OVER TIME

Early in the pandemic, adults age 65 and older accounted for the majority of COVID-19 cases nationwide; by December, they accounted for less than 15% of cases, but nearly 80% of deaths (Source: CDC’s COVID Data Tracker). This national trend mirrors Montgomery County’s experience, too: the two charts below show our cumulative percentage of cases by age group, as of Dec. 11. [Source: *Montgomery County COVID-19 Public Health Preparedness and Situation Awareness Report*, Dec. 11, 2020, courtesy of Dr. Earl Stoddard and his data team.]



SPOTLIGHT: MCPS UPDATES CASE HEALTH MATRIX

Health Metric Matrix for a Safe Phased-in Return to In-Person Instruction – Revised (12/15/20)

14-Day Raw Average of New Cases	52-105	105 -157	> 157
14-Day Average New Case Rate* (MD Calculation Model)	5-10	10-15	> 15
14-Day Average New Case Rate* (CDC Calculation Model)	70 - 140	140 - 209	> 209
14-Day Average Test Positivity Rate <5%	Special Student Populations	Partial in-person experience	Partial in-person experience
	Group 1	Partial in-person experience	Partial in-person experience
	Group 2	Partial in-person experience	Consider partial in-person experience
			Virtual

- Per 100,000 Residents. The models are calculated using a population estimate of 1.05 million residents in Montgomery County
- In-person experience includes physical distancing, mask wearing and frequent hand cleaning

Reassess if new case rate increases by 2 per 100k or if positivity rate increases by 1.5% within 2 weeks



Some Montgomery County Public School students could return for in-person instruction on **Feb. 1, 2021**, contingent on meeting public health goals in MCPS' updated "health metric matrix," approved by the Board of Education Dec. 15. One key metric is a 14-day average **test positivity rate below 5%** (last reached on Nov. 15; on Dec. 23, that average was 6.1%). Results from a Nov. MCPS survey found a nearly 50-50 split among respondents who preferred remote learning for their children, versus in-person instruction. Source: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/publicinfo/community/school-year-2020-2021/BOE-meeting-12-16-20.html>

SPOTLIGHT: COVID-19 VACCINE FAQS

With COVID-19 vaccine distribution underway, states and local health departments are creating **Frequently Asked Questions** and other resources to provide science-based factual information, per the examples below.



Maryland: <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/faqs/#faqVP>

Montgomery County: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/vaccine/>

North Carolina:

1. 5-page fact sheet: <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/COVID-19-Vaccine-Update.pdf>
2. PowerPoint (Dec. 17): <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/COVID19-Vaccine-101-Deck-Final.pdf>
3. COVID-19 Training for Providers/Immunizers: <https://immunize.nc.gov/providers/covid-19training.htm>

Massachusetts:

1. FAQs: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-frequently-asked-questions>
2. FAQs for Providers: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-frequently-asked-questions-vaccine-providers>

Chicago FAQs: <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid19-vaccine/home/faqs.html>

King County (Seattle), Washington:

1. FAQs: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/vaccine/FAQ.aspx>
2. 60-second YouTube videos:
<https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/vaccine.aspx>
 - a. *How COVID Vaccines are Made*
 - b. *How COVID Vaccines Work in your Body*



COVID-19 IN CHILDREN: TRUSTED RESOURCES

As of mid-December, **children represented 1.8 million (12.3%) of total COVID-19 cases**, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. (Twenty-two percent of the U.S. population is under age 18.) Below are reputable resources to help track COVID-19's effects on and transmission rates in children, a frequent topic of discussion among Councilmembers and constituents alike. (Chart compiled by L. Keiser.)

SOURCE	TYPE / FREQUENCY	WEBSITE
CDC / "MMWR" Reports	Federal / Weekly	https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/
CDC / Schools and Child Care Programs	Federal / Last update: Dec. 3	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html
American Academy of Pediatrics	Professional Society / Daily	https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/
American Academy of Pediatrics	COVID-19 Return to Sports interim guidance, last update: Dec. 17	https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-interim-guidance-return-to-sports/
American Academy of Pediatrics	<i>Children and COVID-19: State-Level Data Report</i> / Weekly	https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/
American Academy of Pediatrics	COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs (for children)	https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/covid-19-vaccine-frequently-asked-questions/
American Academy of Pediatrics	Collection of pediatric COVID-19 peer-reviewed articles	https://www.aappublications.org/cc/covid-19
JAMA Pediatrics	One of the AMA-sponsored specialty journals / weekly	https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics



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[See past issues of this newsletter here](#)

Happy (& Healthy) Holidays!