

# COVID RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Regional and National Practice Highlights

Issue 11 – March 17, 2021



Rolling down the highway is a late 1950s station wagon crammed with kids, whose continuous cacophony bursts from the windows, “Are we there yet?” Ahead, a looming destination sign, the town of *Normal*. An exasperated “Dr. Fauci” at the wheel, he replies to each child: “No! No! No! No!” This scene describes an editorial cartoon (artist: John Darkow, *Columbia Missourian*) published in *The Washington Post* on March 10, 2021. One day prior, Anthony Fauci, M.D., Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, had virtually joined the Montgomery County Council for their COVID-19 first-year proclamation. Now, new mileposts along our road to *Normal* are both [wisely cautious](#) and refreshingly familiar:



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- Montgomery County Public School buses are transporting students! In-person instruction began **March 1** for special education, and for career/technical students; and **March 15** for grades K-3. Other grades are scheduled for phased in-person returns in April. CDC’s updated [K-12 FAQs](#) were issued March 17.
- **March 12:** Montgomery County indoor and outdoor gathering limits increased to 25 and 50 persons, respectively; and religious facilities could increase capacity to 50%.
- **March 26:** Montgomery County capacity limits on indoor-dining, fitness centers, pools, retail establishments, and other venues will increase from 25% to 50%. Arts and entertainment venues can open at 25% capacity. The latest summary of changes is [here](#).

Over 22% of Montgomery County residents have received their first vaccine dose, and nearly 12% are fully vaccinated, County Health Officer Dr. Travis Gayles informed the County Council/Board of Health March 16. As Dr. Fauci reminded the Council last week, “Now is the time to keep our foot on the accelerator” with adherence to public health measures, “while we’re ramping up efforts to vaccinate people as quickly as possible.” Vaccine allotments are expected to increase in April. “Are we there yet?” – *Lee Rucker Keiser, MSPH, Editor*

## SPOTLIGHT: WEEKLY VACCINE ALLOTMENTS

Recent first-dose dose allotments, some documented below, demonstrate our very limited vaccine supply in MD’s largest jurisdiction. Meanwhile, for the six (operational or planned) state-sponsored mass-vax sites, each will reserve 2,100 priority appointments each week for nearby residents, [Gov. Hogan announced March 15](#).

Montgomery County Clinic Host	Week of March 15	Week of March 8
Montgomery County Health Dept.	6,600	4,500
Johns Hopkins / Suburban	2,000	2,000
Adventist / Shady Grove	200	400
Adventist / White Oak	200	400
MedStar / Montgomery (Olney)	at least 200	at least 200
Holy Cross / SS & Germantown	400	800
Giant Food* and Safeway*	100 doses/store	100 doses/store

Source: MD Dept. of Health

\***Giant & Safeway** receive an additional 100 doses per store for targeted clinics to vaccinate vulnerable populations. Not shown: **CVS & Walgreens**’ allocations from the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program; and Federally Qualified Health Centers, e.g., Montg. County’s CCI Health & Wellness, that vaccinates established patients.

## VACCINE AGE ELIGIBILITY: 10 SIMILAR-POP. STATES

In his March 11 address to the nation, President Joe Biden called for states to open vaccine eligibility to all adults by May 1, 2021. However, as of mid-March, among states whose total population is closest to Maryland's (about 5 mil. – 7 mil.), **over half set the minimum age at 65 years**, per the table below.

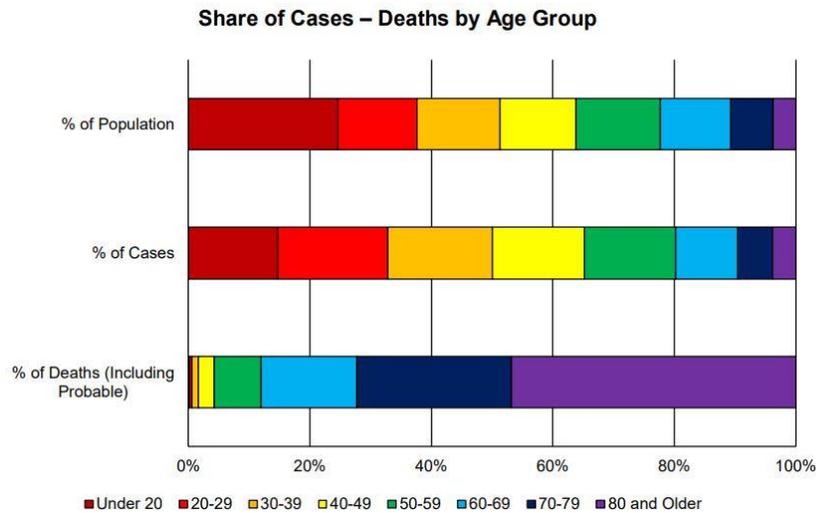
State	Age Now Eligible	Next Priority Age, if date has been announced	Single-site sign-up URL (if applicable)
<b>MA</b> 6.89 million	65+ and 16+ with 2+ cond.		<a href="https://vaccinesignup.mass.gov/#!/">https://vaccinesignup.mass.gov/#!/</a> (Mass-vax sites only) <a href="https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/">https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/</a> (other sites)
<b>TN</b> 6.82 million	65+ and 16+ with high-risk cond.		<a href="https://covid19.tn.gov/">https://covid19.tn.gov/</a> (Drop-down menu for each county)
<b>IN</b> 6.75 million	50+ and <50 w. high-risk cond.		<a href="https://vaccine.coronavirus.in.gov/">https://vaccine.coronavirus.in.gov/</a>
<b>MO</b> 6.13 million	65+ and adults w high-risk cond.		<a href="https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/navigator/">https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/navigator/</a>
<b>MD</b> 6.04 million	65+		<a href="https://onestop.md.gov/preregistration">https://onestop.md.gov/preregistration</a> Launched March 13: pre-registration portal/Mass-vax sites <u>only</u>
<b>WI</b> 5.82 million	65+	March 29: age 16+ w high-risk conditions; May 1: everyone 16+	<a href="https://vaccinate.wi.gov/">https://vaccinate.wi.gov/</a>
<b>CO</b> 5.76 million	60+	March 19: age 50+ and age 16-49 with high-risk conditions	
<b>MN</b> 5.6 million	65+ and many others (see * below)	N/A: March 10 marked latest expansion	<a href="https://vaccineconnector.mn.gov/">https://vaccineconnector.mn.gov/</a>
<b>SC</b> 5.1 million	55+ and 16-54 yrs. w. 1 or more high-risk cond.	N/A: March 8 marked latest expansion	
<b>AL</b> 4.9 million	65+	March 22: age 55+ and 16-64 yrs. w. certain high-risk conditions	<a href="https://govstatus.egov.com/vaccine-eligibility-form">https://govstatus.egov.com/vaccine-eligibility-form</a> (for state-sponsored clinics; shows counties accepting appts.)

\*Effective March 10, **MN** age-related priority groups includes: (1) age 45+ w. one or more condition; (2) age 16+ w. two or more conditions; (3) age 50+ living in multi-generational housing.

The CDC's age-eligibility guidance that informed states' original vaccine distribution plans is based on historic COVID-19 death data: persons at least 80; and those aged 65-79, have suffered the highest death rates. Greatly influenced early in the pandemic by nursing home residents' deaths, a steady upward trajectory of deaths among those age 80 and older was repeated from Nov. 2020 through Jan. 2021, according to CDC's COVID Data Tracker (March 1, 2020 through March 15, 2021).

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Compared to U.S. data, **Maryland** residents' COVID deaths have shown similar prevalence by age, seen below.



**Source:** [COVID-19 Public Dashboard](#), Maryland General Assembly, March 15, 2021

Until vaccine supply increases later this Spring, Dr. Gayles said on March 16 that the county is “looking at best practices” regarding age eligibility. Governor Hogan may be planning statewide adjustments sooner, however.

## SPOTLIGHT: RETURN-to-SPORTS RESOURCES

With the County Council scheduled on March 19 to address, receive testimony, and vote on updated guidance on youth sports, this week our county health officers cited these resources as key to their ongoing analyses:

1. From the American Academy of Pediatrics:
  - a. *COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Return to Sports and Physical Activity*, updated March 1, 2021: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-interim-guidance-return-to-sports/>
  - b. *Youth Sports and COVID-19: Understanding the Risks*, March 1, 2021: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Youth-Sports-and-COVID-19-Understanding-the-Risks.aspx>
2. From the CDC:
  - a. *Considerations for Youth Sports Administrators*, Dec. 31, 2020: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>
  - b. *Attending Sporting Events*, Feb. 19, 2021: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/attending-sports.html>



(CDC graphic)

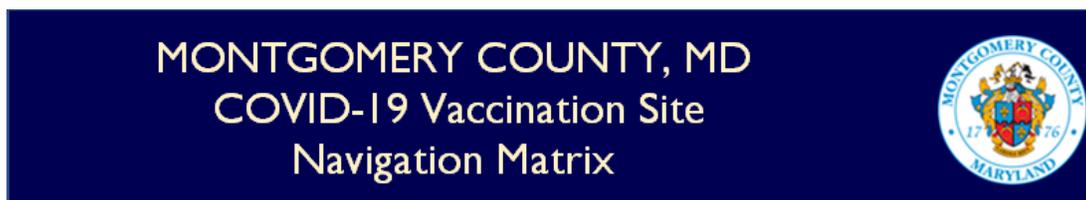
# SPOTLIGHT: EQUITABLE VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

Three months into administering the COVID-19 vaccines, states are learning what’s working – and what’s not – in terms of reaching vulnerable communities. On March 17, the CDC published research that examines [state-by-state vaccine distribution in “Social Vulnerability Index” regions](#), from mid-Dec. 2020 through March 1, 2021. **Maryland was near the bottom**, along with NY, FL, and CA. Top-performing states included: MT, AZ, WV, MN, TX, OH, AL, and NC. For example, Ohio’s [equity update](#) (Feb. 2, 2021) focused on:

- Boosting the overall number of vaccine providers to promote access “close to home.”
- Utilizing over 60 Federally-Qualified Health Plans in vulnerable neighborhoods.
- Piloting pop-up clinics and on-site clinics at affordable senior housing communities.
- Reducing transportation barriers.
- Fostering partnerships between local health departments and minority community-based groups.

The latter point has been a key focus for the Montgomery County Dept. of Health’s equity framework (see related “Spotlight” in the Feb. 22, 2021 *COVID Response* newsletter), whose evolution is chronicled for the County Council by Drs. Gayles, Crowel, and Bridgers. The County’s COVID-19 testing and vaccination registration outreach continues in close collaboration with the Latino Health Initiative / Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar, the African American Health Program, and the Asian-American Health Program. As Dr. Gayles said on March 16, they are also partnering for pilots with safety-net clinics, churches, and other “trusted” venues.

Relatedly, Governor Hogan unveiled this month what he called “the very first [vaccine equity operations plan](#) in America.” However, per the Ohio example above, plans already existed in other states: newly-revised are Washington’s [Equity & Engagement plan](#), and Michigan’s [Interim Vaccination Strategy](#), that grew from its Task Force on Racial Disparities established in April 2020. Several key strategies will be examined in future *COVID Response* issues. Meanwhile, the [Maryland Dept. of Health](#) announced this week: a pilot with 17 primary care practices to directly administer vaccines; new partnerships to vaccinate residents of independent and assisted living facilities; and “GoVAX” virtual [town halls](#) (March 16, 18, 30). Lakeforest Mall (Gaithersburg) was the site of a [March 10 clinic](#) organized through the MD Vaccine Equity Task Force, Cross Community, and Holy Cross.



Clinic Host / Location(s)	Websites: Pre-Registration and/or Appointments Updated March 15, 2021	Comments / Navigation Tips
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This month’s updated **Matrix** is online: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/news/Covid19.html>

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