SSVF COVID-19 Vaccine Planning
January 29, 2021

Link to Audio

- Webinar will last approximately 1 hour
- Participants' phone connections are "muted" due to the high number of callers
- Questions can also be submitted anytime to SSVF@va.gov

QUESTIONS...

- Welcome and Introductions
- VHA COVID-19 Vaccine Plan
- Vaccine Availability and Process for Veterans and Staff
- Vaccine Education and Communication
- Community Example
- Discussion

- **SSVF Program Office goal is that grantees facilitate access to COVID vaccinations for Veterans as soon as they are available**
  - SSVF staff, particularly HCNs, are expected to work with their VAMC, and with the community planning process for vaccinations for people experiencing homelessness, to ensure Veterans enrolled in SSVF have access to vaccinations

- Health Care Navigators connect all SSVF participants

- Community access may be preferable to VHA (vaccine availability or transportation barriers)

- Coordination needed to ensure both doses scheduled and received

Group 1: VHA Eligible

Group 2: Non-Veteran HH members, and Veterans ineligible for VHA

Group 3: VHA Eligible best served by community provider

COVID-19 Vaccines

Jillian Weber, PhD, RN, CNL

Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team (HPACT) National Program Manager

VHA Homeless Program Office (HPO)

- [COVID-19 Vaccination Plan for the Veterans Health Administration](#)
  - Plan outlines VHA activities for COVID-19 vaccination where VHA provides health care to enrolled Veterans.

  1. VHA COVID-19 Vaccination Plan Guiding Principles
  2. VHA COVID-19 Vaccination Program Operational Goals

- **VHA COVID-19 Vaccination Plan Guiding Principles**

1. The primary goal of the VHA COVID-19 vaccination plan is to lower the risk of infection, severe disease from COVID-19, and spread of SARS-CoV-2

2. Safety of Veterans and staff is the highest priority

3. Vaccine risk stratification, distribution, and accessibility should be fair, evidence-based, equitable, transparent, and aimed at maximizing benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.

- **VHA COVID-19 Vaccination Program Operational Goals**

  1. Develop and implement a plan to procure, distribute, and administer COVID-19 vaccine for Veterans and VA staff.
  2. Develop a population-based risk stratification plan for COVID-19 vaccine administration and implement as required by vaccine supply limitations.
  3. Implement solutions to track and report vaccine supply, administration, course completion, safety and outcomes for internal and external stakeholders.

- **VHA Vaccine Breakdown**
  - 2 vaccines with Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from FDA
    - 37 VAMC sites with Pfizer
    - 140 VAMC sites with Moderna
- **Other vaccine candidates**
  - Janssen/Johnson & Johnson Vaccine
    - Likely next available vaccine
    - One shot
  - AstraZeneca Vaccine

Prioritization of vaccination

- Risk stratification based on CDC guidance and other frameworks

  – Risk of acquiring SARS-CoV-2 infection
  – Risk of severe morbidity and mortality
  – Risk of negative societal impact
  – Risk of transmitting SARS-CoV-2 infection to others

- ## Prioritization of vaccination
  - ### CDC recommendations
    - Phase 1a- healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents
    - Phase 1b- persons 75 years of age or older and frontline essential workers
    - Phase 1c- persons 65-74 years of age, persons 16-64 years of age with high-risk medical conditions, and other essential workers
  - ## As vaccine availability increases, vaccine recommendations will expand to include more groups

- ## Prioritizing vaccination for Homeless Veterans

  - Healthcare eligible homeless Veterans prioritized early in the risk stratification table and currently being vaccinated at some VHA sites.
    - Residing in congregate settings (GPD & HCHV CRS)
    - All homeless Veterans (unsheltered, all other homeless programs)
  - Resources to assist with vaccination efforts
    - Facility vaccine team
    - Electronic health record clinical reminder

- ## Additional resources
  - # VHA
    - ### VHA Public Health: COVID-19
      - Education and clear, consistent messaging
      - Informational resources for Veterans (VHA, CDC, HUD, etc.)
      - COVID-19 related statistics
      - List of VA medical centers providing COVID-19 vaccinations
  - # Non-VHA
    - ### CDC COVID-19 Vaccines
    - ### CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Communications Toolkit
    - ### CDC COVID-19 Vaccination for People Experiencing Homelessness: Frequently Asked Questions
    - ### HUD COVID-19 Vaccine Updates for Homeless Service Providers

Vaccine Availability and Process for Veterans and SSVF Staff

- Where Veterans can get vaccinated depends on their VHA eligibility
- SSVF grantees will need to know VHA eligibility for all enrolled Veterans to identify where to connect them to vaccines

VACCINE ELIGIBILITY

VHA Status	Vaccine Source	Notes
VHA Eligible Veterans	VAMC	
Non-VHA Eligible Veteran AND VHA Eligible Veterans who are unable or unwilling to access vaccines at the VAMC	Health Provider Local Health Department	
SSVF Staff who are not VHA Eligible Veterans	Health Provider Local Health Department	SSVF staff are considered essential workers

- Contact Homeless Program Manager at local VAMC as soon as possible. The Homeless Program Managers are working with the VAMC's Vaccine Team and will know the plan for vaccinating Veterans in homeless programs.

- All Veterans enrolled in SSVF, whether they are currently homeless or housed, are considered homeless under the VHA's vaccine plan.

- Veterans will probably need to go to the VAMC for vaccination – grantee should facilitate transportation through grantees, VAMC or partner resources.

- Contact local CoC to determine if they are planning for vaccine distribution for people experiencing homelessness and program staff.

- If CoC is not working on a vaccine distribution plan, then contact local public health department to discuss vaccination process for Veterans and staff.

- Follow-up on community process to include SSVF program in vaccine distribution to homeless programs. Stay up to date on changes in vaccine plan for community.

- If SSVF staff are not VHA Eligible Veterans then they cannot receive vaccine from local VAMC.

- Staff may be able to receive vaccine through their health provider or from the local public health department.

- The federal government designated staff and management of outreach programs, homeless shelters, and other programs sustaining human life as essential workers.
  - Agency leadership can reference this memo when identifying staff that should be prioritized for vaccinations.

Vaccine Education and Communication

- People experiencing homelessness often have a history of trauma and many have had negative experiences with medical services.

- Systemic discrimination in healthcare and social inequities experienced by racial and ethnic minority groups, and by members of the military, have led to diminished trust in healthcare systems.

- To improve vaccine confidence and build trust between healthcare providers and people experiencing homelessness, communities and providers must provide easily understandable and consistent vaccine information to staff, community organizers, and people experiencing homelessness.

- Grantee leadership should survey their staff and Veterans to understand their plans for the vaccine and any questions they have.
- Using VAMC, CDC and public health resources, grantee leadership should develop a plan for communication about vaccines to staff and Veterans.

Why Get Vaccinated?

To Protect Yourself, Your Family, and Your Community

- Building defenses against COVID-19 in your community is a team effort. And **you** are a key part of that defense.
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine adds **one more layer of protection** for you and your community.

Here are ways you can help protect yourself and others from COVID-19:

- Grantees should prepare some or all staff, particularly the HCN, to support Veterans receiving vaccines by providing accurate information from VHA, CDC and public health sources.

- HCNs or other staff can become vaccine ambassadors to address any questions or hesitancy Veterans have about the vaccine.

- Some communities are planning to have case managers or other staff who plan to get the vaccine receive their vaccination at the same time as program clients to help reduce vaccine hesitancy.

- Programs should still protect Veterans and staff with mask wearing and social distancing as recommended by their local public health department.

Supporting Access to COVID 19 Vaccinations S:US SSVF Program

Adam Wawrynek

January 29, 2021

Identifying Community Resources

- **S:US is coordinating with a variety of local agencies to enhance participants' access to COVID vaccines. These include:**

  - VA Medical Centers
  - Local Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
  - NYC Department of Homeless Services
  - State department of health
  - Community clinics
  - Local pharmacies

S:US

SERVICES FOR THE UNDERSERVED

Prioritizing Homeless Veterans

- **Some of our most vulnerable SSVF participants reside in EHA hotels.**
  - S:US is using our SSVF Health Care Navigator to facilitate access to COVID vaccines for these veterans first by:
    - Coordinating with dedicated vaccine hotline/teams at the VA to schedule 1st and 2nd doses
    - Scheduling weekly vaccination events at S:US sites in the community
    - Assisting with transportation if necessary to/from vaccine appointments
    - Leveraging our EHA Case Conference structure to track progress

- **We are also coordinating with shelters and Department of Homeless Services to support other homeless veterans' access across the continuum**

Supporting Access for Other Participants and Staff

- **In addition to the Rapid Re-Housing Caseload, S:US will continue to work with our partners to facilitate vaccinations for other stakeholders:**
  - Participants over 65 years old
  - Those with chronic health conditions
  - Current Homeless Prevention households
  - Participants in permanent housing
  - Program staff (eligible in NYS as essential employees)

- **S:US is also planning to use our outreach team to follow up with former participants regarding their interest/plans to access vaccines.**

S:US
SERVICES FOR THE UNDERSERVED

Continuing Efforts

- **Services for the UnderServed is committed to sharing up-to-date and accurate information to the people we serve, as well as our staff, so that individuals can make informed decisions about their personal healthcare.**
  - Sharing information based on the science, and only from approved sources.
    - Resources include FAQs, articles, webinars and video recordings/town hall sessions about the pandemic and vaccines
  - Reinforcing the need for continued testing, maintaining social distancing, and mask wearing, hand washing and other precautions.

S:US

SERVICES FOR THE UNDERSERVED

Questions & Answers