

February 3, 2021

Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary
California Health and Human Services Agency
1600 9th Street, Room 460
Sacramento, CA 95814

Kim Johnson, Director
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Vaccination Needed for Resource Parents Immediately

Dear Secretary Dr. Ghaly & Director Johnson,

We are writing to urge you to clarify the priority in which Resource Parents can receive a COVID-19 vaccination by their health care provider, and/or by their county of residence. We urge the State to issue guidance to public health departments to classify resource parents to the State's foster children and youth under Phase 1a, Tier 2a "Community health workers, including promotoras" in order to obtain immediate access to vaccines.¹

Resource Parents are currently caring for California's abused and neglected children who cannot remain safely in their home of origin. They are placed in the homes of Resource Parents who are working on the state's and counties' behalf to care for children and youth in their own homes. They have been recruited to serve as VOLUNTEERS (paid only a stipend to meet the child's own needs). They often do not know if the children have been exposed (through no fault of their own) to the virus prior to their placement. Unfortunately, we know of Resource Parents who have been infected by previously exposed children who have been placed in their homes.

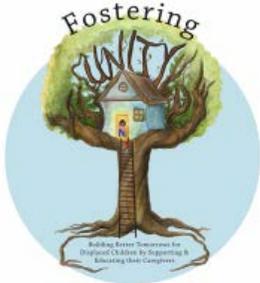
Our organizations urge that Resource Parents be in the same vaccination classification or tier as IHSS (In Home Support Services) workers.² Abused and neglected children require close proximity to, and often hands-on care from, their Resource Parents, especially young children and those who have other medical conditions requiring hands-on support.

In addition, court-ordered visitation between children in foster care and their biological parents, which supports reunification, presents another source of possible exposure for Resource Parents who provide support for these in-person visits.

Exposure to the COVID-19 virus from visitation has put Resource Parents and their vulnerable family members at very great risk.

¹ <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPH-Allocation-Guidelines-for-COVID-19-Vaccine-During-Phase-1A-Recommendations.aspx>

² For reference see attached letter sent by DSS to IHSS providers.



- Resource Parents volunteer their time and homes to care for children in foster care.
- Resource Parents are currently enduring great and dangerous exposure to COVID-19. This exposure can now be mitigated by the state.
- Resource Parents support reunification to biological families by facilitating in person visits, thereby putting themselves and other family members at great risk of exposure to the virus.
- Resource Parents are an asset of the state, opening their hearts and homes to foster youth, and are an important alternative to congregate care.
- Some older youth who have run away are asked by counties to accept a youth back into their homes to avoid shelter care or congregate care placement, but in doing so, they risk exposure.
- Fears of exposure has hampered counties' and nonprofit agencies' efforts at recruitment of new resource families and is reducing the number of families available to care for foster children.

Resource Parents provide the very bedrock in which our child welfare system is built upon, many of those caregivers are no longer taking placements due to their high risk of contracting the virus.

In closing, Resource Parents were overlooked when the state issued guidance for vaccination tiers. It is unacceptable to require these parents to fend for themselves in obtaining vaccinations as the age-based tiers open, especially given the differences in vaccine availability across the state. Further, Resource Parents are providing in-home care to children and youth in close proximity where exposure may not be known and where precautions (such as social distancing, etc.) are not possible, very much like IHSS providers.

This problem can be immediately remedied by providing counties with the clarification our organizations request. Resource Parents deserve the same prioritization as essential, frontline workers, similar to IHSS workers, by the nature of their work in taking in-home placement of foster children and supporting in-person visitation. We sincerely hope that no Resource Parents have to lose their lives as a result of providing the very great gift of a loving home for abused and neglected children.

Sincerely,



Jenn Rexroad, Executive Director, California Alliance of Caregivers

Dorothy Daniels, Executive Director, Fostering Unity

Patricia Negus, President, California State Foster Parent Association

Marylud Baldwin, President, SLO County Foster/Resource Parent Association

Cathy Senderling-McDonald, Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association

Christine Stoner-Mertz, Chief Executive Officer, California Alliance of Child & Family Services

cc:

Jennifer Troia, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Social Services

Greg Rose, Deputy Director, Children & Family Services

Cynthia Vatalaro, Bureau Chief, Foster Care Support Services

Rebecca Breen, Manager, Foster Caregiver Policy



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

Date: JANUARY 8, 2021

TO: ALL COUNTY IHSS PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: CORONAVIRUS 2019 (COVID-19) VACCINATIONS

This In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program Managers' Letter (PML) provides counties with information regarding COVID-19 vaccinations for IHSS providers. The purpose of this PML is to advise county IHSS programs that they should expect to be contacted by their local county health departments to coordinate notification to providers about the distribution of vaccinations.

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 VACCINATION

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is working diligently with a variety of partners including state agencies, local public health departments, community-based organizations, and public and private immunizers to prepare for the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines in California.

The COVID-19 vaccine is currently being distributed in phases and tiers. The COVID-19 California Governor's Vaccine Task Force has reviewed the duties of the IHSS Providers and has placed the IHSS providers in the Phase 1A Tier 2 vaccine category.

COORDINATION OF COVID-19 VACCINATION

COVID-19 vaccinations are being coordinated by each county's Public Health Department. The CDSS provided the IHSS program manager contact information to the CDPH and the county public health departments as reflected in the Very Important Contacts (VIC) list so county public health departments should be reaching out for assistance with the coordination of communications to IHSS providers. The CDPH is aware the IHSS providers are not employees of the county or State and that IHSS providers are employees of the IHSS recipient(s) they provide services for.

County Public Health departments will work with the county IHSS programs to notify IHSS providers when and where vaccinations will be available in their county. County IHSS and Public Authorities are not obligated to perform outreach to IHSS providers for the vaccine but may do so at your choice in coordination with your local Public Health Department. The rollout process of vaccinations is a county Public Health Department responsibility.

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COUNTY RESPONSIBILITY

The rollout of the vaccines is based on phases and tiers and it is up to each county Public Health Department to determine how, when and to whom they are distributed based on that guidance. County IHSS program offices can reach out to their local Public Health Department for more information.

You can find additional information about the COVID-19 Vaccine at the links below:

COVID-19 Vaccines

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-19Vaccine.aspx>

Questions or requests for clarification regarding the information in this letter should be directed to the Adult Programs Division, CMIPS and Systems Enhancements Branch, Systems Operations & Data Analysis Bureau at (916) 651-1069.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL DOCUMENT SIGNED BY

DEBBI THOMSON
Deputy Director
Adult Programs Division

Attachment: Vaccine Rollout Letter 12-29-2020



To: IHSS/WPCS Providers

Topic: COVID-19 Vaccines in California

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is working diligently with a variety of partners including state agencies, local public health departments, community-based organizations, and public and private immunizers to prepare for the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines in California. The COVID-19 vaccination will be managed at local county level and will be distributed in phases and tiers.

The COVID-19 California Governor's Vaccine Task Force has reviewed the duties of the IHSS Providers and has placed the IHSS providers in the Tier 2 vaccine phase. County health departments will work with the county IHSS programs to notify IHSS providers when and where vaccinations will be available in their county.

The California Department of Social Services greatly appreciates the hard work IHSS Providers provide for their Recipients.

You can find additional information about the COVID-19 Vaccine at the links below:

COVID-19 Vaccines

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-19Vaccine.aspx>