

Arizona Launches Initiative Easing Access To COVID-19 Vaccine Sites For Vulnerable Individuals



PHOENIX, ARIZONA – Governor Doug Ducey and AHCCCS, Arizona’s state Medicaid agency, today announced a first-in-the-nation initiative that will make it easier for Medicaid members to get transportation to drive-

through COVID-19 vaccination appointments.

Beginning today, AHCCCS will reimburse non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) providers for driving eligible Medicaid members to and from their COVID-19 vaccination appointments, including reimbursement for time spent waiting during the drive-through vaccination process.

“We are committed to making the COVID-19 vaccine accessible to all Arizonans,” said Governor Ducey. “This change will make it easier for our most vulnerable Arizonans, individuals with disabilities and those with chronic and long-term care needs to get vaccinated. Arizona is thrilled to be the first state in the nation to implement this rate reimbursement innovation, and we will continue expanding access to the vaccine as supply increases. I’m grateful to AHCCCS for pioneering this change and their work to serve vulnerable Arizonans.”

This is possible thanks to a temporary rate change, effective today, Feb. 22, 2021, that will cover the cost of transportation for eligible AHCCCS members who have

appointments at drive-through vaccination sites. In accordance with federal guidelines, Medicaid members who cannot provide or arrange their own transportation have access to non-emergency transportation (NEMT) to and from appointments for covered Medicaid services.

Arizona's Medicaid program is a leader in the nation in adjusting Medicaid rates to ensure its members are vaccinated, and the first state to adjust NEMT rates to account for wait times at drive-through vaccination sites. On Friday, AHCCCS will meet with other state Medicaid programs to present its vaccination strategy and approach.

AHCCCS serves approximately 30 percent of Arizonans. Medicaid beneficiaries who have a scheduled COVID-19 vaccination appointment at a drive-through site can contact their health plan to schedule non-emergency transportation to attend that appointment.

"With the increasing availability of the COVID-19 vaccines, AHCCCS is working to ensure that Medicaid-eligible individuals have equal access to this critical health service, and that we are eliminating any potential barriers to care," said Jami Snyder, director of AHCCCS, "whether that may be a transportation, scheduling, or mobility issue."

AHCCCS also announced today a collaboration with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to train and equip additional staff as vaccine navigators to assist Medicaid members with scheduling vaccine appointments. In addition to assisting with appointment scheduling, vaccine navigators will also be able to help in coordinating transportation for Medicaid members to and from vaccination appointments.

Additionally, AHCCCS is leveraging mobile vaccine providers to administer COVID-19 vaccine doses to individuals in congregate care settings, including members with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities.

For COVID-19 vaccine information, a map of all COVID-19 vaccination sites and eligibility criteria, visit **azhealth.gov/findvaccine**. Those without computer access or needing extra help registering can call 1-844-542-8201 to be connected with an operator who can assist. (Note: You can use the online registration system to make an appointment for someone else in a prioritized group, such as someone 65 and older.)

Due to limited supply and high demand, COVID-19 vaccine appointments are limited and available only to eligible individuals in prioritized groups. Arizona's four state-run vaccination sites are serving individuals in Phase 1B Priority, including individuals age 65 or older, education and childcare workers, protective services occupations and anyone in Phase 1A. County vaccine sites may have different eligibility criteria. For more information, visit **azhealth.gov/findvaccine**.

For more information about how AHCCCS has responded to the needs of its members and providers during the COVID-19 pandemic, see **azahcccs.gov/AHCCCS/AboutUs/covid19** and **AHCCCS COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions**.