



CHIEF OFFICERS OF STATE LIBRARY AGENCIES

201 East Main Street, Suite 1405 | Lexington, KY 40507
Phone: 859-514-9826 | info@cosla.org | www.cosla.org

Written comment from COSLA for submission to the CDC ACIP Regarding Docket No. CDC-2021-0002

We appreciate the important and difficult work underway at the CDC around prioritization of COVID-19 vaccine distribution during a period of initial limited supply. We believe that this work is helpful to state and local jurisdictions but request clarification of the placement of librarians in the ACIP-recommended phased allocation of COVID-19 vaccines. Specifically, we request that all librarians explicitly be prioritized in phase 1B, whether working in school, academic, or public library settings. In all settings library workers are at a great risk for exposure to infectious disease and, if infected, at risk of transmitting disease, including to vulnerable populations.

On January 19, 2021, the CDC posted ACIP's list of industries that will be prioritized for vaccines, with workers involved in education included in phase 1B and librarians in Phase 1C. This creates confusion at the state and local levels. Librarians, particularly school and academic librarians, are in some cases classed (rightly so) with educators. This is not universal, however. We believe the requested explicit prioritization of all librarians to phase 1B will achieve the necessary clarification.

The nation's more than 366,000 library workers, from reference librarians to circulation clerks in public, school, and academic libraries, provide essential public services for the over 1.3 billion visits to libraries annually. Public library workers support students learning from home, whether by choice or resulting from pandemic precautions. Libraries serve as after school centers for students when parents are still at work. They provide access to technology for job seekers, telehealth, and e-government services and assist communities through engagement with persons experiencing homelessness, a population difficult to reach and serve. Members of the community are in and out of public libraries during all open hours, picking up materials, using computers and asking questions that need answers. School and academic librarians are likewise continuing to address community needs while shifting to new service models.

Throughout the pandemic, our nation's public libraries have adapted services to provide safety for staff while offering these critical services. With the advent of reliable vaccines, library workers are poised to dive deeper into community services. However, library staff currently lack the designation of essential worker that would allow vaccinations at the same time as other educators.

With more library staff vaccinated more quickly, our libraries can move forward toward restoring robust public services and helping communities recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Jennie Stapp
President
Chief Officers of State Library Agencies

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