

People 75 and older in Massachusetts eligible for vaccines next week

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As frustration with the state's vaccination efforts grows, Gov. Charlie Baker detailed plans to Monday to have 103 public vaccination sites open by the end of the week with an online map and registration portal ready for eligible residents to make appointments. Baker also said that residents aged 75 or older would become eligible to receive the vaccine beginning Feb. 1 at the start of the state's second phase of vaccination. Residents aged 65 and older have been bumped up in priority, and will join people with two or more comorbidities in the second group to become eligible in Phase II sometime in February.

The update to the state's progress on vaccinations was delivered as public health experts and policy leaders are increasingly voicing their concerns with the pace of vaccination in Massachusetts, which ranks among the bottom of states, by some metrics, in distributing vaccine to its residents. Baker said that by mid-February the state will have 165 public vaccination sites open with the capacity to administer 305,000 doses per week, but he stressed that Massachusetts will need to begin receiving more vaccine from the federal government than it currently receives in order to fulfill that promise.

As part of the effort to increase access to the vaccine, Baker said the state plans to open a total of seven mass vaccination sites. In addition to Gillette Stadium and Fenway Park, Baker said the Eastfield Mall in Springfield will open on Jan. 29 as

a mass vaccination site, followed by the DoubleTree Hilton hotel in Danvers on Feb. 3 and the Reggie Lewis Center in Roxbury sometime in the first week of February.

Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders said retail pharmacies that will be among the public vaccination sites will also be told to prioritize sites in communities of color like Chelsea, Revere, Mattapan, Dorchester, Roxbury and communities outside of Boston that have have experienced a disproportionate impact from the COVID-19 pandemic.