

Pfizer Booster Shots Begin Across Massachusetts

By Katie Lannan

State House News Service

SEPT. 27, 2021....With people 65 and older and some other populations now eligible for COVID-19 booster shots if they received the Pfizer vaccine, Gov. Charlie Baker said Monday that the state plans to make mobile booster programs available to people residing in long-term care and other congregate settings.

“There are literally hundreds of sites that are already up and operating and available for people to get booster shots,” Baker said three days after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued its Pfizer booster recommendation.

On Friday, the CDC recommended that people age 65 and up, people age 18 and older in congregate care settings, and people between the ages of 50 and 64 with certain medical conditions should get a booster shot at least six months after their second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

Adults between 18 and 49 years old who have underlying conditions or who face “increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting” may also get a booster if they have previously received the Pfizer vaccines, the CDC said.

First responders, educators and workers in grocery stores, public transit, the U.S. Postal Service, corrections, manufacturing, food and agriculture are all occupations the CDC considers at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission.

The Boston Teachers Union began making boosters available to

its eligible members on Saturday.

“As luck may have it, we already have public vaccine clinics set up at the BTU for our Back to School Fair available to families and educators, and we learned this morning they have the Pfizer booster shots ready to go already!” the union’s officers wrote in a Friday bulletin.

Baker said it is “very important for everybody to keep in mind” that the federal government has so far only approved boosters for individuals vaccinated with the Pfizer shots, and that eligibility for the affected populations kicks in six months after the second dose.

He said those factors are “critical to defining and helping people understand who exactly should be thinking about this at this point in time.”

Under the federal government’s initial criteria, approximately 600,000 Massachusetts residents are eligible for Pfizer boosters, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services said Friday it expects Massachusetts will have the capacity to administer more than 300,000 Pfizer booster doses per week by mid-October.

Appointments can be made online through the state’s VaxFinder website, or for those who are unable to do so, by calling 2-1-1. The shots will be available at more than 460 locations, including more than 450 retail pharmacies, the Baker administration has said.

Like the initial doses, the booster shots are free, and state health officials said they can be accessed without an ID, health insurance or showing a vaccine card. The state has posted an online tool that can be used to check eligibility.

Baker, who will turn 65 in November, received his second Pfizer dose on April 27, exactly five months ago. He noted he is not yet eligible for a booster.

President Joe Biden, who at 78 years old meets the CDC's age criteria, received his Pfizer booster shot on camera at the White House Monday afternoon.

Biden said he did not have side effects from either of his first two doses and did not expect any from the third shot.

Asked about groups like the World Health Organization that have made the case that wealthy nations should help other countries get initial doses to their populations before proceeding with boosters, Biden said the U.S. is "doing more than every other nation in the world combined."

He said more than 77 percent of American adults have gotten at least one shot, and about 23 percent have not received any doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. The minority of adults who are unvaccinated are causing "an awful lot of damage for the rest of the country," the president said, according to a transcript.

"This is a pandemic of the unvaccinated. That's why I'm moving forward with vaccination requirements wherever I can," said Biden, who urged people to get vaccinated and plans to visit Chicago on Wednesday to talk about private-sector vaccine requirements.