



January 13, 2021

RE: Developmental Disabilities and Vaccination Priority

Dear Governor Raimondo,

We write to strongly urge you, on behalf of some of the most COVID-19 vulnerable individuals in our state, to prioritize people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) living in Rhode Island for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Research shows that people with developmental disabilities are more likely to have a seriously negative reaction to the virus, including being three times more likely to die. (See attached). Additionally, many individuals with I/DD have co-occurring medical issues that can further increase the risk of COVID-19, placing them in a high risk and priority group. In Rhode Island, there are approximately 4000 adults with I/DD that must be considered a priority for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Family members living with, and individuals providing services to, adults with I/DD should also be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine, given the close contact required for daily support. Moreover, many staff provide services to multiple people in multiple homes. This exponentially increases the risk of transmission among these individuals, as well as the broader community.

The 4000 Rhode Islanders with I/DD receive supports and services across multiple settings including family homes, shared living, group homes, independent living, and employment locations. The number and diversity of settings clearly illustrates

the necessity for a coordinated distribution and communication plan to ensure a clear and effective vaccine distribution for all individuals with I/DD, family members with whom they live, and their providers.

We recommend the following actions immediately:

- 1. Prioritize people with developmental disabilities, and those who care for them, to be Tier 1(B) in the vaccination distribution protocol. This includes family members and staff.**
- 2. Work with advocates and provider agencies to ensure that distribution can happen in an orderly and efficient manner.**
- 3. Issue a clear and understandable statement to let people and the community know that they are eligible to receive the vaccine and where/how to get it.**

The DD Advocacy Community is willing and prepared to support your efforts to develop a distribution and communication plan.

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