



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH
SECRETARY

January 15, 2021

The Honorable Paul Newby
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of North Carolina
PO Box 1841
Raleigh, NC 27602

Dear Chief Justice Newby:

Thank you for your letter regarding North Carolina's COVID-19 Vaccine planning, and where courthouse personnel fit within the prioritization framework.

The COVID-19 vaccine rollout and prioritization is evolving at the federal and therefore state level. On Tuesday, the US HHS and Operation Warp Speed directed states to go to the 65 years and older population as the next group to receive vaccine and NC will follow this recommendation with an announcement tomorrow. Other groups will move down in the prioritization framework to allow for providers to vaccinate those in Groups 1 and 2 who are at higher risk for severe illness and death.

Yesterday, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced a revised [Vaccine Prioritization Framework](#) to reflect this direction as well as the December 22 meeting of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP). As you mention in your letter, ACIP refers to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security which developed a list of categories of essential critical infrastructure workers who are serving in a frontline role that likely puts them at highest risk for work-related exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, because their work-related duties require them to be on-site and involve being in close proximity (<6 feet) to the public or to coworkers.

As such, the revised vaccine prioritization for NC will reflect the 8 recommended CISA categories, including Community or Government-Based Operations and Essential Functions, which would include workers supporting the operations of the judicial system in Group 3. Within this category, eligible frontline workers would be those whose work-related duties must be performed onsite and involve being close to members of the public or other co-workers. Note that the timing of when NC moves into subsequent Groups, will depend on the current priority population and vaccine supply.

In the meantime, I ask that you take all steps necessary to allow judicial system employees to continue working remotely to the greatest extent possible to reduce the risk of viral transmission. Should some employees be required to work onsite, please ensure they are following the recommended protocols to promote face coverings, social distancing and frequent hand washing.

Please let me or Walker Wilson, Assistant Secretary for Policy, know if we at DHHS can be helpful to you and your staff as you transition into new roles. In the meantime, I encourage you to have your staff review the [NC Vaccine Resources website](#) which includes many resources on NC's Vaccine Plan and the current prioritization framework, which is updated regularly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mandy K. Cohen".

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Secretary