

# NYS DOH Bureau of EMS & Trauma Services Vaccination Update for EMS Agency Leadership and Providers Wednesday 12/30/20, 5:35 PM to 6:37 PM

## Unofficial Notes

This is not verbatim transcript of the call. Notes were typed during the call and reviewed and added to afterward. There was no prepared agenda distributed before the call. Questions and/or comments from providers were submitted before and during the call.

### **Panelists:**

Ryan Greenberg, Director, Bureau of EMS & Trauma Services

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Peter Brodie, Deputy Chief, Informatics, Bureau of EMS & Trauma Services (Host)

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Michael Bagozzi, Deputy Chief, Syracuse, Central Region

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There were about 400 signed on at the beginning of the call.

### **Michael Bagozzi**

- Turnaround time at some hospitals has been excessive in certain areas.
- After the call there will be an e-mail sent out to County EMS Coordinators and Regional EMS Program Agencies with a link to an on-line form to report problem situations.
- Monroe County and Onondaga County are being monitored on a daily basis.
- BEMS&TS has been working with hospitals to address EMS agency concerns.
- Send info to BEMS&TS if hospital turn around times become excessive.

Ryan Greenberg added:

- It is understood that hospital wait times are up and things have a ripple effect.
- There will be an on-line form to notify BEMS&TS of problem situations. Also notify District Chiefs. Do not assume BEMS&TS knows about problems. Good, timely and early situational awareness may help avoid hospitals getting to the point of asking for diversion status.
- A 2 hour turn around time can affect agency staffing requirements to maintain satisfactory response times.
- BEMS&TS is working on surge & flex operations including discharge issues, patients sitting in waiting rooms for a bed upstairs, etc.

## Vaccination/Vaccine Update

### **Ryan Greenberg**

EMS vaccinations in Phase/Tier 1A are progressing forward. Being in the 1<sup>st</sup> group means being involved in working out the kinks. The button that allowed a group of 20 people to be scheduled into 1 vaccination slot has been disabled. People were rescheduled and it should no longer be an issue.

Expect a Word or EXCEL document to come out to agencies with new dates and times later tonight or early Thursday.

Thanks to everybody for scheduling their providers in phases/groups and everybody has not tried to go on the same day and it has been helpful. If done with 1<sup>st</sup> group an agency can go on with scheduling 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> groups as dates and times become available.

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) may show up on POD list as the list is designed for all healthcare providers and not just EMS. However, EMS is not designated to be vaccinated at an FQHC. If scheduled at one a provider should reschedule at another POD or call to see if it is one of the few that will accept EMS providers. EMS should primarily be vaccinated at hospitals.

Providers under age 18 would have to get Pfizer vaccine as it is OK'd for those age 16 and older. Moderna vaccine is approved for those 18 years and older. There is more Moderna vaccination PODs than Pfizer vaccine PODs due to ultra cold storage requirements. Bulk of Pfizer vaccine has been sent to hospitals. If under age 18 call POD first because Pfizer vaccine may not be easiest to find.

There was a report of providers being turned away from a POD with advice that it was was not vaccinating EMS. BEMS&TS needs to know about similar situations in order to correct them. BEMS&TS has contacted facilities. Send e-mail about problems or questions to [covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov)  
An unexpected staffing problem at a POD on a particular day is a different level problem.

Fire Department and police personnel qualify for Tier 1A eligibility under EMS if they provide EMS services. See [Policy Statement 20-08 Guidance for EMS Personnel to Receive COVID-19 Vaccination](#). If they are not in Tier 1A they would be in Tier 1B as "other essential workers". There have been terminology changes and CDC Phase 1, 2 and 3 is the same as NYS Tier 1A, 1B and 1C. When 1B opens up around the state may be different but would be in weeks not months – expect late January to early February. Depends on vaccines coming in, number being vaccinated, choice of vaccines vs. no choice and it all come into play.

Fire Department and police personnel might have patient care contacts a couple times a year at maybe a car accident. DOH is working on additional guidance. Some departments have special response units active on the EMS side such as trench rescue. There are lots of situations where a department has 100 members where 15 may be DOH certified and involved in patient care and qualify under Tier 1A but the other 85 members would be in a different tier.

Scheduling of 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID-19 dose is dependent on how individual PODs are handling it. Some are scheduling 2<sup>nd</sup> dose during the 1<sup>st</sup> dose visit while others advise an e-mail will be sent to schedule it. DOH is working on additional guidance for 2<sup>nd</sup> dose which may come out this weekend or next week. It will talk about where and how it needs to happen, should be in the same location, same lot, what happens if person can't schedule 2<sup>nd</sup> dose in 21/28 days, etc. The federal government did allocate for 2<sup>nd</sup> doses from the same lot. Local health departments could change things.

Training for EMS vaccinators is done through EMS agencies. If agency is interested it will be signing up its members. Training will be a mix of web based on-line classes on the Vital Signs Academy specifically approved by the DOH Commissioner. There are 2 CDC trainings, a 3<sup>rd</sup> set of CDC videos, the NYS DOH training and a skills assessment.  
Agencies can log onto <https://apps.health.ny.gov/pubpal/builder/survey/ems-survey-2> to request information on training to administer vaccinations

An independent individual provider who wants to be a vaccinator is advised to go partner with their local health department or vaccination POD and they would provide the necessary training.

### **Responses to Questions and Comments Submitted Before the Call**

(There were a lot of duplications)

Information on Tier 1B scheduling of essential worker personnel who do not have direct patient care responsibilities will be coming out. It will be a similar process to Tier 1A.

An Erie County POD did not know how to schedule for a 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Information to come out next week.

Quarantine requirements have not changed for those vaccinated. Even those receiving both vaccine doses will still need to follow the travel and quarantine requirements. They would also need to follow quarantine requirements following close contact with a COVID-19 positive person. Contact tracing would still apply. Quarantine has just changed from 14 to 10 days.

EMS providers who are college students should get 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccine doses in the same location. There may be situations where 1 dose may be at home and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose at college or vice versa. If there are exceptions to both doses at same POD the BEMS&TS needs to know

EMS providers can go outside to a neighboring county if there is a need with prior BEMS&TS permission. BEMS&TS must be notified of situation as the number of doses (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>) was allocated based on agency locations.

Guidance on 2<sup>nd</sup> dose is coming out next week including information on when, where and how to register.

Some PODs across the state may only operate 1 day a week. Providers may need to watch for that especially if there are personal obligations to consider.

There is no state mandate or requirement to be vaccinated. It is strongly encouraged.

There is great knowledge and videos on COVID-19 out there.

Regions have links on their web sites to resources.

Jeremy Cushman, MD University of Rochester Medical Center and Joseph A. Bart, DO Erie County Medical Center have YouTube videos providing information on the COVID-19 vaccines.

Dr. Clementina from the Buffalo area was also mentioned as putting out great content on video.

A local health system is requesting EMS standby during vaccinations. Agency realizes this could be a long term commitment. There is no NYS reimbursement model related to that. Agency advised they can talk to the local health system about compensation.

Vaccination sites can ask a person for their health insurance information. They can bill insurance for an administration fee but there is no-copay. The administration fee may be in the \$40 to \$50 range. The vaccine itself is free.

**Health Advisory: Revised Protocols for Personnel in Healthcare and Other Direct Care Settings to return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure** was issued 12/26/20. It will be posted on the BEMS&TS web site as Policy Statement 20-09.

The new guidance document contains stricter policy.

There is no longer an exception for EMS systems for person to return to work if symptomatic. Person should not be at work.

Agencies need to have Continuity of Operations Plan for what happens if they can't staff an ambulance. Think about that situation and how agency could operate. There are already 3 communities in the state that are in this situation and are being covered by another EMS agency.

Mandatory reporting of multiple COVID-10 positive cases in a department is coming as BEMS&TS needs to know about operational sustainability early on. Information on this will be coming out. They are increasing seeing 5 or 6 positive outbreaks in a department vs. only 1 positive case in the past. Was it something among members like a local BBQ event or something outside the department?

Additional guidance is coming out for how agencies can work through outbreaks in their personnel.

Fire Department and police personnel are considered essential workers and would be eligible to schedule vaccinations in Phase 2/Tier 1B. Local health department may be their POD locations and they may be using EMS personnel as vaccinators.

Received comments about PODs around the state:

- Rome Hospital in Oneida County received kudos for a professionally run system.
- SUNY Stony Brook POD in Suffolk County had a good process.
- Stony Brook Southampton campus had a good system.
- Long Island Community Hospital in Suffolk did a great job.

POD are learning every day and improving.

## **Responses to Questions and Comments Submitted During the Call**

Some people turned away from testing due to recent COVID-19. Getting different answers and have heard from 14 days after a negative test to 60 days. Working on getting a concrete answer.

Providers who travel outside the northeast during the holidays may need to follow quarantine regulations before going for a vaccination.

Wrong address shown on vaccination appointment ticket as happened on Long Island and Erie County should send an e-mail to: [covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov)

Vaccination candidate with a history of anaphylaxis reactions should speak with their agency Medical Director and/or personal primary care physician. It is not a contraindication for vaccine but maybe additional observation time after vaccination.

NYS based agency asked about its Canadian members receiving vaccination in the USA and response was that they will check. Ryan Greenberg requested he be contacted with more information.

Agency can start to schedule 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of Tier 1A providers for vaccinations before 1<sup>st</sup> wave is complete. Maybe a week apart.

An agency cannot reschedule a provider for a vaccination. Software was not designed for how it is now being used. Individual has to do their own cancellation and reschedule. Agency cannot do bulk scheduling of providers.

Spouses of EMS providers are not eligible for vaccinations in Tier 1A.

Vaccination training for EMS providers will be the same for ALS and others such as BLS and others who do not inoculate patients on a regular basis. Length will be 3 to 4 hours in total. ALS providers may find it tedious but should be able to get through it and the skills assessment quicker than others who may require more time and education. The training is being re-evaluated and may go down in length.

If person already has had COVID-19 there is no mandate to be vaccinated. Many who had COVID-19 are going for the vaccination.

Will check on an answer to question about a person who gets COVID-19 between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> doses.

EMS providers have reportedly been told the state is only allowing them to be provided Moderna vaccine. If provider runs into this situation and there is a need for the Pfizer vaccine such as being under age 18 they should e-mail [covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov)

Notification to EMS providers who transport a COVID-19 positive patient is part of contact tracing. Consideration might include provider use of PPE such as masks, gloves, gowns, eye protection, etc.

EMS provider eligible in Tier 1A who did not get vaccinated will be able to set up appointments for vaccinations in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> phase at a later time.

Counties and local health departments are starting to vaccinate. EMS may go to a local health department for vaccination if the location is approved for that. Agencies can expect an updated EXCEL file listing additional PODs later tonight or tomorrow.

Hospital asked about COVID-19 vaccinations for New Jersey and Pennsylvania providers who frequently bring patients to its hospital in NY if their local hospital cannot accommodate them. Answer was no unless the providers are serving with a NYS based EMS agency or are a NYS certified provider.

Have not heard of much in the way of adverse reactions other than not feeling well for a few minutes and other small side effects.

Provider who is an EMT-CC and also an RN should speak to POD leader about doing vaccinations.

PODs using EMS providers as vaccinators will be required to report weekly on the number of EMS providers used and how many vaccine doses the EMS providers administered and how many doses the site administered. EMS providers must complete training on the Vital Signs Academy.

**Peter Brodie**

- PCR forms for BLSFR and separate forms ambulances and ALSFR agencies will be available after 2/2/21. Contact Regional EMS Program Agency and they will be happy to assist their local agencies.
- Be safe and please follow social distancing as super spreader events are creating chaos and havoc all over the place and we need to bring the EMS system back to order and move beyond the pandemic.

Next call is Wednesday 1/6/21 at 5:30 PM