



Mission: To promote the availability and accessibility of quality hospice and palliative care for all persons in New York State confronted with life-limiting illness.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Hospice & Palliative Care Association of NYS Urges Inclusion of All Healthcare Workforce in State
Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccination:
*Certain Healthcare Workforce Remains Excluded & State-Issued Guidelines Remain Unclear***

Albany, NY – Jeanne Chirico, President and CEO of Hospice and Palliative Care Association of New York State, said, “As New York State works to combat another COVID-19 Surge and manage hospital capacity throughout the state, New York State Hospices continue to help with the effort. Yet, hospice and palliative care providers are not explicitly included in guidance. The result is a segment of the healthcare workforce being excluded from Phase 1 of the COVID-19 vaccination distribution.”

Universally, it is recognized that health care in the home should be included in the Public Health Emergency priority actions. Medical providers in hospitals and other healthcare settings are considered priority recipients of the vaccine in New York State. Hospice and palliative care professionals are equally essential health care workers. The COVID emergency declaration and the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recognize providers of hospice and palliative care as essential workers. HPCANYS supports the ACIP’s decision to prioritize for Phase 1A vaccine access health care workers, which includes providers of hospice, palliative care, and other health care services provided in the home. These standards defining essential health care workers are consistent with other state and federal standards.

It is important to explicitly include hospice and palliative care providers in Phase 1 distribution plan. The lack of inclusion leads to confusion and keeps these workers who care for vulnerable patients at risk. Additionally, because hospice and palliative care providers care for most of their patients outside of hospital settings, listing these providers will help manage hospital capacity.

We strongly urge the inclusion of hospice, palliative care, and other home care workers in Phase One of the COVID-19 vaccination distribution.

- As currently outlined in the Governor’s plan, Phase One will initiate the vaccination of healthcare workers in “patient settings.” Hospice providers are on the frontlines of the pandemic. Collectively, tens of thousands of patients with active COVID-19 infections are being cared for nationally and over 60% of hospice providers report serving COVID-19 infected. Without hospice and palliative care, these patients would likely be hospitalized leaving beds unavailable for COVID patients.

- This workforce is at higher risk of contracting and/or transmitting the virus. They are in close contact with patients and their families for extended periods of time. As the Governor has stipulated it is these small micro-gatherings that are providing the highest rate of infection.

The Hospice and Palliative Care Association of New York State (HPCANYS) is a not-for-profit organization representing hospice and palliative care programs, allied organizations and individuals that are interested in the development and growth of quality, comprehensive end-of-life services.