



State of New Jersey  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
PO BOX 360  
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0360  
[www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health)

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER  
Lt. Governor

JUDITH M. PERSICILLI, RN, BSN, MA  
Commissioner

February 12, 2021

**TO:** Points of Dispensing participating in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program  
**FROM:** Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A. Commissioner *J.P.*  
**SUBJECT:** Importance of demographic data collection and reporting to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

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Complete and accurate race and ethnicity information is urgently needed to support equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in New Jersey, to track equitable access, and to inform outreach.

The Department expects all points of dispensing to collect and to report high-quality data on vaccine recipients' race and ethnicity to help ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in New Jersey. Please ensure questions pertaining to race, ethnicity, and other demographics are asked of each COVID-19 vaccine recipient (note: recipient may decline to answer, and this should be accounted for accordingly).

Statewide data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, by gender, and by age group can be found on the COVID-19 Data Dashboard: [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_dashboard.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml) This memo supplements the other materials circulated by NJDOH regarding the provision, delivery and administration of COVID-19 vaccines: [https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019\\_vaccination.shtml](https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019_vaccination.shtml)

Please share this information with all the appropriate staff in your vaccination program. Points of dispensing may contact the New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine Operations Center at [Vax.Operations@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Vax.Operations@doh.nj.gov) with any further questions.

Thank you for your partnership in this initiative.

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As of February 12, race and ethnicity information is unknown for approximately 18% of vaccine recipients.

Please instruct staff on how to document race and ethnicity in registration records.

Please consider:

- Every vaccination is an opportunity to battle racism. Complete race and ethnicity data are essential to determining which groups need additional support to get vaccinated.
- COVID-19 has laid bare enormous racial and ethnic inequities driven by historic and ongoing structural racism across society, most notably in jobs, housing, transportation and healthcare.

- In New Jersey, our minority communities are disproportionately represented in COVID-19 cases and deaths.

Vaccinators are strongly encouraged to:

- Ensure that all staff, especially those who conduct vaccine recipient intake or administer vaccinations, understand the importance of these data, why they are being requested, and how they are used.
- Instruct staff to explain to vaccine recipients why these data are requested and how they are used. For example, state and incorporate in registration forms: “As part of our efforts to make sure we are doing our best to provide vaccination access to our diverse community, we ask all vaccine recipients about their race and ethnicity.”
- Facilitate recipients to report their own race and ethnicity. Never assume someone’s race or ethnicity based on the person’s name, appearance, languages spoken, or other observations. A best practice is to integrate this question into pre-registration forms accompanied by an explanation that the question is asked to help New Jersey monitor equity.
- Reassure vaccine recipients that immigration status is not requested. Points of dispensing must not ask for immigration status. Data collected for the COVID-19 vaccination program may only be used for public health purposes – not for civil, criminal, nor immigration enforcement.

As a reminder, the ethnicity options reported to the New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIS) include:

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino
- Prefer Not To Specify  
*Note: Use only when a vaccine recipient declines to answer after the question has been asked and after explanation of why this question is being asked.*
- Unknown/Undetermined  
*Note: Use only in rare situations where it was not possible to ask the recipient about their ethnicity. It should not be used to avoid asking for the vaccine recipient’s race/ethnicity.*

As a reminder, the race options reported to NJIS include:

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African-American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other Race
- Prefer Not To Specify  
*Note: Use only when a vaccine recipient declines to answer after the question has been asked and after explanation of why this question is being asked.*
- Unknown/Undetermined  
*Note: Use only in rare situations where it was not possible to ask the recipient about their race. It should not be used to avoid asking for the vaccine recipient’s race/ethnicity.*

Recognizing that equitable access requires dedicated effort within and outside the vaccine clinic, please contact the Department of Health Vaccine Operations Center if your POD requires additional assistance providing access for the underserved. Thank you.