

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Vaccinations of Teachers and School Staff Remains Ahead of Schedule**

*Pennsylvania is on track to complete this special initiative by March 31*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Approximately three weeks after Governor Tom Wolf and the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force announced the voluntary single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine would be available to Pre-K to 12 educators and school staff, the special initiative is ahead of schedule and nearly complete. As of this morning, 104,331 teachers, school staff, and contractors from across the state have received the J&J vaccine through this special initiative.

“History was made a year ago when school buildings across Pennsylvania were ordered to close due to COVID-19, and history continues to be made as we work tirelessly to vaccinate our teachers and school staff in record time,” said Acting Secretary of Education Noe Ortega. “I am grateful for the collaborative efforts that helped bring us to where we are today and look forward to building on this momentum as we move toward returning all of our students and teachers back safely to classrooms for in-person instruction.”

The departments of Education and Health and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) are collaborating with Intermediate Units (IUs), the Pennsylvania National Guard, and AMI Expeditionary Healthcare to coordinate and operate vaccine clinics for Pre-K to 12 education personnel and support staff. Thirteen regional IU clinics will operate between today through Tuesday.

“The complexity of this initiative required very deliberate and comprehensive planning by multiple agencies and organizations,” said PEMA Director Randy Padfield. “We look forward to maintaining those connections and building on what we’ve learned as we continue with this initiative and the ongoing vaccination efforts in the weeks and months ahead.”

One week after the governor and bipartisan COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force announced the special initiative, clinics began opening through the 28 IUs across the state. The vaccinations of staff working with elementary school and vulnerable students was completed two weeks ahead of schedule. Several IUs have completed vaccinations of middle, high school, non-public, cyber and charter school educators and staff as well.

“COVID-19 created many difficult situations for everyone – especially our schools. However, by having the special initiative to vaccinate teachers and school staff through the efforts and coordination of Governor Wolf, the COVID-19 Vaccine Task

Force, PEMA, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, we are now seeing the proverbial light at the end of this tunnel,” said Dr. Donald Martin, Executive Director of Intermediate Unit 1. “Our teachers and students are excited to get back to the classroom, and this initiative is a huge step in the right direction.”

“Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine through Intermediate Unit 1 was a wish come true,” said Brianne Eiler, the Student Service Coordinator for K-6 Students at Fort Cherry Elementary Center. “Our students need structure and normalcy now more than ever, and by being vaccinated I am confident I can continue to meet the needs of our students without the fear of spreading or contracting COVID-19. We can focus solely on the emotional well-being and educational needs of the child without compromising our own health and the health of our families.”

The Administration is also working through the retail pharmacy partnership to ensure all early childhood education workers, including those not associated with an IU have access to the vaccine, including childcare workers providing an essential service to working families across the commonwealth.

[More information and answers to questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine for teachers, childcare workers, and school staff is available on PDE’s website.](#)

Philadelphia operates its own vaccine distribution. The special initiative to vaccinate teachers and school staff is separate from Pennsylvania’s ongoing Phase 1A vaccine rollout, which continues at an accelerated pace.

[Access photos, videos, and soundbites from an IU vaccination clinic in Cumberland County, including school personnel receiving the vaccine.](#)