



November 26, 2020

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, Chair, Community Vaccine Advisory Committee
Dr. Oliver Brooks, Co-Chair, COVID-19 Vaccine Drafting Guidelines Workgroup
Dr. Robert Schechter, Co-Chair, COVID-19 Vaccine Drafting Guidelines Workgroup

RE: COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization and Californians With Developmental Disabilities

Dear Drs. Burke Harris, Brooks, and Schechter:

Since 1950, The Arc of California has promoted and protected the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and actively supported their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. Our 23 regional chapters provide direct services and supports to thousands of individuals and families across the state, and our individual members actively advocate on behalf of more than 350,000 Californians with IDD and their families.

We strongly urge the inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as their direct support professionals (DSPs) and families in the priority list of those who will have first access to a COVID-19 vaccine.

People with IDD are at higher risk for becoming infected and three times more likely to die of COVID-19, compared with patients without IDD, a new analysis found¹. This heightened risk can be mitigated, however, with healthy DSPs and family caregivers.

The DSPs who make integrated community life possible are **essential** elements in our fight against COVID-19, and they have continuously demonstrated their commitment and heroism throughout this pandemic. Their close and extended proximity to those they serve means they are at exceptional risk of being infected by, or transmitting, COVID-19. We must do everything possible to protect the health of DSPs so that they can continue their front-line heroism.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/10/health/covid-developmental-disabilities.html>

Similar to DSPs, parents and family members provide **essential** daily support for the many people with IDD who live at home. These family caregivers are critical to the health and safety of people with IDD, and an infection at home, particularly with aging caregivers, could mean that the person with IDD would have to move to a congregated residential setting with higher risks.

For these reasons we strongly urge that your discussions and ultimate decisions include and prioritize Californians with IDD, their DSPs, and their family caregivers in access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Respectfully,

Jordan Lindsey
Executive Director

Cc:
Nancy Bargmann, Director, Department of Developmental Services
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, Health and Human Services Agency