

Bridge Access Program for COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatment

This document contains information summarized from the [Bridge Program Fact Sheet](#) released by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on April 18, 2023. More details will be provided as they become available. Please email PolicyISDBridge@cdc.gov with any additional questions related to the Bridge Program.

Context

- **Fighting COVID-19 remains a key public health priority for the Administration.** Over the last two years, the Administration implemented the largest adult vaccination program in U.S. history, with nearly 700M doses of COVID-19 vaccines given to 270M Americans.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and exacerbated longstanding barriers to adult vaccination**, including accessibility, availability, and confidence. It also demonstrated the importance of a strong adult vaccination program, including funding and support for adult vaccine purchase and an adult-specific vaccine infrastructure.
- The **Administration proposed the Vaccines for Adults program in FY2023 and FY2024** to build upon the investments made during the COVID-19 pandemic and to close the gap in providing vaccines at no cost to all Americans. **This proposal has not yet been enacted** into law.
- **COVID-19 vaccines and treatments will likely transition to the commercial marketplace in fall 2023.**
 - Most Americans will continue to pay nothing out-of-pocket for the COVID-19 vaccine due to their insurance coverage.
 - However, **25 million uninsured adults will lose access** to affordable vaccines and treatments.
- In April 2023, HHS announced the ***Bridge Access Program for COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatment*** – a public-private partnership as a **temporary measure to prevent the loss of under- and uninsured adults’ access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments at no-cost after commercialization.**
- **The Bridge Program is temporary, beginning in the Fall of 2023** and scheduled to end December 31, 2024.

Bridge Program

- **Program purpose:** to ensure broad access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments for under- and uninsured adults once these products are commercialized. This program will support only COVID-19 vaccinations for the under- and uninsured and will not provide access to other vaccines routinely recommended for adults, such as flu, pneumonia, and Shingrix.
- **The first component of the program will be implemented through existing public health infrastructure**, specifically state immunization awardees, local health departments (LHDs), and HRSA-supported health centers.
 - Awardees will support and coordinate with their existing adult immunization programs, which include LHDs and HRSA-supported health centers, to get vaccines to under- and uninsured adults in their communities.
 - HRSA will also support delivery of vaccines and treatments directly to their health centers.

- CDC will use its authority under Section 317 of the Public Health Service Act to purchase and distribute COVID-19 vaccines and allocate operational funds to awardees.
- **The second component of the program will be implemented through retail pharmacies.**
 - There will be **contracts with pharmacy chains** to provide COVID-19 vaccines and treatments at no cost for under- and uninsured adults.
 - The pharmacy component will rely on donated vaccines from manufacturers, with administration costs to be covered by the federal government.
 - Pharmacies included in the program will be among those that have previously participated in Federal partnerships during the public health emergency and have the infrastructure in place to administer COVID-19 vaccines.
 - Closing gaps in COVID-19 vaccine access is a program priority. Participating pharmacies will be eligible for additional incentive payments to establish sites in areas with low rates of access or vaccination.

Additional information

- **Most Americans will continue to pay nothing out-of-pocket for the COVID-19 vaccine due to their insurance coverage.**
 - **For most private insurance plans**, vaccines recommended for routine use by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), including COVID-19 vaccines, will be fully covered without a co-pay thanks to the Affordable Care Act.
 - **For Medicare Part B beneficiaries**, COVID-19 vaccinations are covered without cost sharing, and this will continue.
 - **For Medicare Part D/equivalent plans**, ACIP-recommended vaccines will be fully covered at no cost, because of the Inflation Reduction Act.
 - **Medicaid** will continue to cover all COVID-19 vaccinations without a co-pay or cost sharing through September 30, 2024, and will cover ACIP-recommended vaccines for most beneficiaries thereafter.
- **For under- and uninsured adults who are not able to access COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics at no-cost**, the proposed Vaccines for Adults program could serve as a comprehensive, long-term solution.
 - The White House has proposed a *Vaccines for Adults* (VFA) program in the FY 2023 and 2024 Presidential Budgets, which would create a permanent, mandatory program modeled after the successful Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, to cover vaccination at no cost for under- and uninsured adults.
 - While the Bridge Program ensures critical access to COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics in the near term, VFA is still necessary in the long term to reduce existing disparities in access and strengthen confidence in adult vaccines and in the health system broadly.