



## Pandemic Alert Notification: COVID-19 Technical Instructions for Panel Physicians

August 19, 2021

Dear State Refugee Health Coordinators and Refugee Health Partners:

The COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly evolving, and guidance is being routinely updated. CDC has released new Technical Instructions for Panel Physicians that incorporate COVID-19 vaccination for all eligible applicants for refugee or immigrant status.

### *Vaccination and Testing for US-Bound Refugees and Other Newcomers*

COVID-19 is a public health emergency of international concern, as determined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and meets the definition of a quarantinable communicable disease under 42 U.S.C 264 and Executive Order 13295, as amended by Executive Order 13375 and 13674. COVID-19 meets the definition of severe acute respiratory syndromes as specified by [Presidential Executive Order 13674](#) (issued July 31, 2014), thus making it a Class A Inadmissible Condition.

The U.S. Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended COVID-19 vaccination for the age-appropriate, general U.S. population. **Therefore, COVID-19 vaccination now meets the vaccination criteria for applicants for refugee or immigrant status**. If a COVID-19 vaccine listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO) or licensed or authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is available to the applicant in the country where the medical examination is conducted, the eligible applicant must complete the COVID-19 vaccine series. Applicants who are too young to receive the vaccine, have a medical contraindication to the vaccine, or who do not have access to one of the approved COVID-19 vaccines in their country will not be required to receive the vaccine. Individuals may apply for an individual waiver based on religious or moral convictions with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). A combination of vaccination, strategic testing, and routine infection control practices will provide the best protection from COVID-19 for applicants, as well as U.S. communities.

All applicants who receive their medical examination from a Civil Surgeon or Panel Physician on or after October 1, 2021 will be subject to this requirement and are encouraged to complete a COVID-19 vaccine series as soon as possible. These Technical Instructions will be in place until the CDC determines they are no longer needed to prevent the importation and spread of COVID-19. Visit the [Technical Instructions for Panel Physicians](#) for more information about the medical examination for applicants for refugee or immigrant status. Visit [Technical Instructions for Civil Surgeons](#) for more information about the medical examination for status adjusters.

In addition, all air passengers coming to the United States, including **applicants for refugee or immigrant status, are required to show a negative result of viral test obtained within 3 days of departure, or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 in the past 3 months, before boarding a flight to the United States**, as part of CDC's [Requirement for Proof of Negative COVID-19 Test or Recovery from COVID-19 for All Air Passengers Arriving in the United States](#).

### *Vaccination and Testing Documentation*

COVID-19 vaccines (meeting the requirements outlined in the [COVID-19 Technical Instructions for Panel Physicians](#)) administered overseas will be documented on the DS-3025 form. If the COVID-19 vaccine is a two-dose series, both doses must be documented. In the eMedical system, COVID-19 vaccinations will be

documented in the 951 Vaccinations form. If COVID-19 testing is performed during the medical examination, results should be documented in the remarks section in eMedical or the DS forms.

### ***Domestic Medical Screening Recommendations***

The domestic medical screening should be scheduled at least 14 days after arrival unless there is an acute or chronic health issue that needs to be addressed immediately. Routine post-arrival screening and immunization activities should continue in accordance with the domestic pandemic notifications and standard [CDC Domestic Screening Guidance for New Arrivals](#). **COVID-19 vaccination should be considered part of the domestic medical screening and offered to all eligible refugees and newcomers if they were not vaccinated prior to arrival in the United States.** Refer to the [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines](#) for additional information. All eligible refugees and newcomers should be offered COVID-19 vaccination as soon as feasible after the recommended post-travel self-quarantine period. Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic.

### ***Additional Information***

For detailed guidance regarding COVID-19 testing and quarantine recommendations for refugees and other newcomers, please refer to ‘*Pandemic Notification Alert: Interim COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Guidance for Newly Arrived Refugees*’ (sent May 5, 2021). For information about co-administration of COVID-19 vaccines and routine immunizations during the domestic medical screening examination, please refer to ‘*Pandemic Notification Alert: Interim Guidance for Co-Administration of COVID-19 and Routine Vaccines for Newly Arrived Refugees*’ (sent May 24, 2021). Refer to [After International Travel | CDC](#) and [People Vaccinated Outside the United States](#) for additional information.

As this is a rapidly evolving situation, additional guidance may be issued in the future. CDC, in partnership with in-country and international partners, will continue to monitor refugee movement as well as the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination efforts, and will follow-up with additional information and recommendations as they become available.

Sincerely,

Domestic Team  
Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Health Branch  
Division of Global Migration and Quarantine  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[irmhdomestic@cdc.gov](mailto:irmhdomestic@cdc.gov)