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**HOT TIPS #121** DATE 03/02/2021

Please copy and distribute to ALL physicians at your location.

**COVID Vaccine Eligibility for Persons Between 16 and 64 Years of Age**

As of March 15, 2021 the State asks that any person between 16 and 64 years of age with a serious co-morbidity be eligible for the COVID vaccine. This puts a burden on the medical providers in Ventura County in 3 ways. First, people will be coming to their providers for verification of their status as eligible recipients of the vaccine. Second, in light of the limited amounts of available vaccine, providers must function as gatekeepers to the proper application of the qualification guidelines. It is extremely important that you do this not only because of the limited availability of the vaccine but because to bend the rules and make the vaccine available to people who are not qualified will lead to discontent and distrust of both the medical and public health systems. And third, providers are going to need to know what those guidelines are.

The following text lists those who are eligible to receive the vaccine. I suggest that you either refer your eligible patients for COVID vaccination by filling out a fixed message on your practice stationary or state that there is a qualifying condition on a prescription pad that has your name on it. Suggested language for a letter on your stationary follows. Since patient confidentiality issues are at stake, you will want to avoid putting the specific co-morbidity exemption on your note. In either case, please make the letter or prescription available to your patient so that they may present it at the vaccination site.

Qualifications: Individuals ages 16 through 64 who are deemed by the clinical judgment of their health care provider to be at the very highest risk for morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 as a direct result of one or more of the following severe health conditions:

- Cancer, current with debilitated or immunocompromised state
- Chronic kidney disease, stage 4 or above
- Chronic pulmonary disease, oxygen dependent
- Down syndrome
- Immunocompromised state from solid organ transplant
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies (excludes hypertension)
- Severe obesity (Body Mass Index  $\geq 40$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus with hemoglobin A1c level greater than 7.5%

OR

If as a result of a developmental or other severe high-risk disability, one or more of the following applies:

- The individual is likely to develop severe life-threatening illness or death from COVID-19 infection
- Acquiring COVID-19 will limit the individual's ability to receive ongoing care or services vital to their well-being and survival
- Providing adequate and timely COVID-19 care will be particularly challenging as a result of the individual's disability

Suggested text for office practice stationary or a prescription:

This patient, \_\_\_\_\_, has a California Department of Public Health condition which qualifies them for COVID vaccination.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(Note to our providers: Thank you very much for your cooperation in this matter. We are truly sorry for any inconvenience or burden this additional responsibility places on you.)

This bulletin is intended to improve the public health in our county by keeping physicians and nurses informed of noteworthy diagnoses, disease trends and other events of medical interest. Another goal of a public health department is to educate. We hope that you will use this information to increase your awareness. Please allow us to continue in our role of speaking to the press so that we may maximize the educational message to the benefit of all citizens of Ventura County.

**Communicable Disease Office**

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