

December 18, 2020

Delaware Health and Social Services - State of Delaware
Attn: James Talbot
Main Building
1901 N. DuPont Highway
New Castle DE 19720

RE: Prioritize Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants for COVID-19 Vaccine

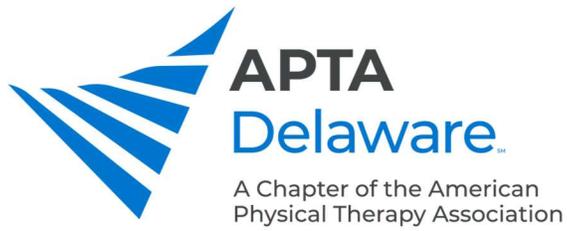
Dear Mr. Talbot,

On behalf of over 450 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy represented by the Delaware Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association, I am writing in support of the [CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Recommendation for Allocating Initial Supplies of COVID-19 Vaccine](#), wherein health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities should be offered the COVID-19 vaccine in the initial phase of the vaccination program. We fully support ACIP's recommendation and urge you to prioritize those populations in the state's plan for vaccine distribution and administration.

In addition, APTA Delaware recommends that the Delaware Health and Social Services recognize physical therapists and physical therapist assistants who work in other facility-based and community settings, including hospitals, congregate settings, patients' homes, clinics, and schools, as essential health care personnel who also must be prioritized for purposes of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration in Delaware.

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are identified by the [U.S. Department of Homeland Security as essential critical infrastructure workers](#). Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are working on the front lines of the pandemic, in hospitals, congregate settings, skilled nursing facilities, patient's homes, clinics, and schools. Controlling the spread of COVID-19 is crucial in these settings; moreover, physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are often treating patients who have chronic disease and are considered high-risk, vulnerable populations. Also important is the fact that physical therapy represents a more proactive approach to long-term patient care management and prevention of unintended consequences of chronic disease, resulting in reduced hospital admissions and readmissions. This can be instrumental during public health crises, such as COVID-19, when hospital beds are at a premium and need to be prioritized for those in life-threatening conditions as a result of the pandemic.

Last, we encourage Delaware Health and Social Services to consider the entire health care ecosystem — including physical therapists and physical therapist assistants who work in acute care hospitals, assisted living facilities, critical-access hospitals, home health agencies, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, long-term care hospitals, private practices, physician offices, rehabilitation agencies, schools, and skilled nursing facilities — when developing closure and reopening policies and guidance related to personal protective equipment.



APTA Delaware urges you to issue detailed guidance on appropriate and effective vaccine distribution that prioritizes the safety and continued functioning of all health care providers, especially those on the front lines. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at slarkin@udel.edu or 302-530-6452.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacie Larkin".

Stacie Larkin PT, DPT
President - APTA Delaware