



Congresswoman
VERONICA ESCOBAR
Texas' 16th Congressional District

Updated January 27, 2021

Frequently Asked Questions

On Saturday, January 23, 2021, Congresswoman Veronica Escobar (TX-16) held a bilingual tele-town hall about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the latest information on the El Paso vaccination program, the second round of IRS Economic Impact Payments, and unemployment benefits. She was joined by local experts from the El Paso Office of Emergency Management, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and Workforce Solutions Borderplex. Local experts shared important updates and answered questions about the COVID-19 pandemic and resources available to El Pasoans.

You can watch the full video of tele-town hall [here](#).

COVID-19 Vaccines FAQs

Q: Where can I get vaccinated?

A: The City of El Paso Department of Public Health is one of the hundreds of health care providers registered and able to administer the COVID-19 vaccine. You can pre-register for the COVID-19 vaccine on their [website](#). You can also call your primary care provider and ask if they are able to administer the vaccine.

Q: Who is eligible to receive the vaccine?

A: The City of El Paso is following the state recommendations which were put in place by a group of medical and science experts. Currently, El Pasoans who qualifies under Phase 1A and Phase 1B are eligible to receive the vaccine.

Q: What are the phases?

A: There are currently two active phases for who can receive a COVID-19 vaccine in Texas. These phases are determined by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The active phases are:

Phase 1A: This phase includes frontline healthcare workers and resident of long-term care facilities.

Phase 1B: This phase includes:

- People 65 years of age and older
- People 16 years of age and older with at least one chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19, such as but not limited to:
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
 - Down Syndrome
 - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
 - Solid organ transplantation
 - Obesity and severe obesity (body mass index of 30 kg/m² or higher)
 - Pregnancy
 - Sickle cell disease
 - Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Future phases and who will be eligible will continue to be determined and announced by DSHS.

Q: Is the COVID-19 vaccine similar to the flu shot? Is it safe?

A: COVID-19 vaccines have a higher immunization rate than the flu shot, but data is still being gathered to determine the length of immunization. The two COVID-19 vaccines that are available, Pfizer and Moderna, require two doses. If you receive the Pfizer vaccine, you will need to wait 21 days after your first dose before receiving your second dose. If you receive the Moderna vaccine, you will need to wait 28 days after your first dose before receiving your second dose. The vaccines are safe and will protect our community against COVID-19.

Q: When will I be notified if I signed up for the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: If you pre-registered with the City of El Paso, you will receive a confirmation email. You can contact the COVID-19 hotline at 915-212-6843 to see where they are on the list or if there are any issues with pre-registration process. The City of El Paso will contact those who pre-register if they do not have an email through landline or cell phone.

Q: I registered on the [City of El Paso's website](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine a few weeks ago and have not been contacted. I know someone who was able to set up their appointment within 15 minutes. Is there something else I need to do?

A: Before registering on the City of El Paso's website, please make sure you fall into the appropriate category. For example, if you are in phase 1A or are a healthcare worker, or if you are part of phase 1B, you currently qualify for the vaccine. Once you pre-register on the website, you receive a confirmation of your registration, and your place in line will be saved. When you are next in the queue to receive the vaccine, you will receive an email or text message indicating that you are next and able to schedule your appointment. If you wish to know the status of your registration, you can contact the COVID-19 hotline by calling 915- 212-6843.

Q: I am having trouble registering for a vaccine at the University Medical Center of El Paso (UMC). How do I register with UMC to receive the vaccine? Is there a phone number to register with them?

A: [UMC](#) only allows slots to be opened depending on vaccine availability. If UMC is exhausted of all available and appointments for their current allotment, you will not be able to register. Please note that UMC and the City of El Paso vaccination efforts are not related. The City of El Paso has created a pre-registration process on their [website](#). Once you enroll, you will receive an email or text message with details about your appointment. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call 915-212-6843 to pre-register.

Q: I have underlying conditions and am over the age of 65. I have had an allergic reaction to the flu shot and need to be at a location that can assist me medically if need be when I take the COVID-19 vaccine. What do you recommend I do?

A: Once you confirm your appointment to receive the vaccine, there will be medical personnel at the vaccine sites where they will allow you to stay for 15 minutes to make sure you do not have any reactions. If you have any medical concerns, please contact your primary-care provider.

Q: I am 71 years and don't have any underlying conditions. I am already pre-registered, what category do I fall into? Is the vaccine that is being administered effective on the new strain that came out, is it going to help?

A: If you are 65 and older, you are automatically qualified for the Phase 1b for the vaccine. In terms of the new variant, although there is not much information at the moment, what we do know is that there is some assurance that the vaccine will work with the strain variant of COVID-19.

Q: If we received the first vaccine shot, and we are given a follow-up appointment date for the second vaccine, can we just show up on that

date or are we getting a confirmation first on vaccine availability?

A: We want to make sure that people are getting their second dose with the same provider. If you received your vaccine with the City of El Paso, you will receive a follow-up link and a reminder on when your next appointment is for your second dose for the vaccine.

Q: If I take a blood-thinning medication should I be concerned about taking this vaccine?

A: Please contact your primary-care provider.

Q: Now that the Biden-Harris administration has taken over, what immediate impact can we reasonably expect to have on the nationwide distribution and administering of the COVID-19 vaccine? And what improvements can we expect to the numerous problems encountered under the previous administration (i.e., amounts of vaccines available, distribution issues, lack of national planning)?

A: The very first thing that the Biden-Harris administration is doing is making a [plan to tackle COVID-19](#). An example of the work this administration is doing is unleashing FEMA funding as we have come to recognize the pandemic as a nationwide disaster. The Biden-Harris administration is also discussing setting up Defense Production Act (DPA) run vaccine sites to expedite the process of El Pasoans getting vaccinated. Read about the Biden-Harris' National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness [here](#).

Q: How soon will the community see Walgreens and CVS distribute the vaccine?

A: Walgreens and CVS currently are not offering in-store vaccinations in Texas. At the moment, both are engaged in the Pharmacy Partnership for Long Term Care program which aims to vaccinate long term care residents. However, as the Biden Administration begins to use every tool at their disposal to increase the existing vaccine supply, Congresswoman Escobar expects Texans will be able to go to their local pharmacy to receive a COVID-19 vaccine later this year.

Q: Where are veterans being vaccinated?

A: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has worked in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop a plan to vaccinate veterans through the VA.

Veterans that are currently eligible to receive the vaccine under this plan include:

- Veterans living in VA long-term care facilities
- Veterans who receive care at VA and are at high risk from COVID-19 based on VA and CDC risk criteria. **Based on the established guidelines, the El Paso VA Health Care System (EPVAHCS) is providing vaccines to Veterans in high-risk categories that include chemotherapy, dialysis and solid organ transplant patients.** At many VA health care facilities, this group includes all Veterans who are at least 75 years old. Each facility will determine when Veterans in this group can receive a vaccine. They'll base this decision on vaccine availability, local needs, as well as the strict storage and handling requirements of the vaccines. **As more vaccines are allocated to EPVAHCS, they will expand the population eligible to receive the vaccine.**

Q: Why are teachers not qualifying for phase 1A or 1B if schools are reopening?

A: While teachers are not included in phase 1A or 1B, the city of El Paso is preparing for teachers to be included in the next phase. The final decision will be up to the Texas Department of State Health Services. My office will continue to advocate that vaccines are allocated and distributed as soon as possible to El Paso.

Economic Impact Payment FAQs

Q: How do I know if I'm eligible for the second round of Economic Impact Payments?

A: Generally, if you're a U.S. citizen or resident, or are married to a U.S. citizen, you may be eligible for a \$600 (or \$1,200 for a joint return), plus \$600 for each qualifying child if you aren't a dependent on another taxpayer's 2019 tax return. To check your eligibility, please click [here](#).

Q: If my child is 17 or 18 and is still claimed as a dependent, why did I not receive any stimulus payment for them?

A: If they are a qualified dependent and if they were claimed on parent's return, they should have received payment for that individual. If you did not receive payment for the child under 17 on your 2020 tax return you can file for that amount by claiming the recovery rebate credit. For more information on recovery rebate credits, please click [here](#).

Q: I did not receive the second stimulus check. If I file for the recovery rebate, will I receive the full amount?

A: You can file for a recovery rebate credit on your 2020 return. To check the status of your economic impact payment, please click [here](#).

Q: How long should I wait for my stimulus check to arrive by the mail?

A: Please allow for three to four weeks to receive mailed payments.

Q: If I don't have a computer, is there a phone number for the IRS to check my status on my stimulus payment?

A: Yes, the IRS phone number is 1-800-866-1040 or 800-919-9835.

Q: Both rounds of the stimulus I received were incorrect. I did not receive the amount for my two children both times. Will I be able to claim both missing amounts?

A: Absolutely. You will be able to claim both amounts for your qualified children on your 2020 tax return, as a recovery rebate, which can be transmitted to IRS starting on February 13, 2021. Please click [here](#) for more information or call 800-919-9835.

Q: Is the IRS form 1444 required to file taxes?

A: No, it is not required. What is required is the information on the form, but it does not have to be attached. If you are claiming the recovery rebate credit, the IRS needs the amounts previously received especially in events where you did not receive the maximum amount.

Q: If I cannot find my IRS form 1444, am I able to request a duplicate form?

A: You cannot get a duplicate for this form. Go to irs.gov and set up an account. The amount of economic payment will appear there. If it is not there yet, it will soon post. An alternative is to request a transcript to see the amount of economic payment received. If you received the full amount for round 1 and round 2, it should be easier to file the tax return.

Economic Impact Payment FAQs

Q: Are there any plans for job creation for people who have been unemployed as a result of COVID-19 in place?

A: Last Congress, the House of Representatives passed [H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act](#), sweeping legislation that would invest more than \$1.5 trillion to rebuild America's infrastructure while creating millions of good-paying jobs, combatting the climate crisis, and addressing disparities in communities across the country. Unfortunately, H.R. 2 was never voted on in the Senate, but Congresswoman Escobar will continue to work with her colleagues and the Biden-Harris administration to champion another economic recovery package that will include job creation and ensure El Pasoans are able to recover.

Q: Does Congress plan on passing any type of legislation to assist with student loan relief?

A: President Biden signed an executive order that has extended the forbearance period for student loan repayment through at least October 1, 2021. Student loan forgiveness is still under consideration.

Other Questions?

Please don't hesitate to contact the Office of Congresswoman Escobar for additional questions. Call (915) 541-1400.

Visit escobar.house.gov/services/coronavirus for more local and state resources available to you and your family.