

Your health policy appointment.

Presented by [The AIDS Institute](#)

---

By [Paige Winfield Cunningham](#)

with *Alexandra Ellerbeck*

[Email](#)

## [Here are six key ways Biden is promising to fight the coronavirus pandemic](#)

By the time President-elect Joe Biden takes the oath of office on Wednesday, [more](#) than 400,000 Americans will have died of covid-19 — a dismal milestone in the deadly pandemic.

**Yet the crucial task he faces — rapidly distributing coronavirus vaccines to the American public — is one that most experts one year ago didn't think would even be an option by this point.** Few expected multiple vaccines to be approved within a year — a record for vaccine development, by any measure. And although the rollout has been criticized, Israel and Great Britain are the only major nations the United States lags in [vaccinations per capita](#) and its daily rate of immunizations has more than doubled in the past two weeks.

“You have my word: We will manage the hell out of this operation,” Biden said in a speech on Friday, announcing his own vaccination plan.

President-elect Joe Biden speaks during a news conference about his plan to administer coronavirus vaccines. (Kevin Lamarque/Reuters)

Regardless of whether one views the vaccine effort up to this point as a failure or success, this much is true: Biden and his new administration will face an enormous task, not only in getting the vaccines distributed but also in ramping up testing, convincing Americans to follow public health recommendations and responding to the economic fallout from the pandemic.

**Here are six key promises Biden is making about his pandemic response:**

**1. Administer 100 million doses of coronavirus vaccine during the first 100 days of his administration.**

Biden previously cited this as a goal. He reiterated it Friday while rolling out a broader plan for coronavirus vaccinations

The plan would require a rate of 1 million immunizations per day — and the United States isn't too far away from that goal right now. Nearly 800,000 Americans [are getting](#) shots every day on average. That's a considerable improvement from two weeks ago, when the daily rate was closer to 350,000.

The 100-shot goal is “absolutely a doable thing,” Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Disease, told NBC's Chuck Todd yesterday.

“The feasibility of his goal is absolutely clear; there's no doubt about it,” Fauci said. “That can be done.”

Fauci receives his first dose of the covid-19 vaccine at the National Institutes of Health. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, Pool, File)

---

ADVERTISEMENT

Content from [The AIDS Institute](#)

## **People with HIV can't afford another health crisis.**

A new Trump Administration rule could take away copay assistance for life-saving HIV medicines. Call the White House today and demand they leave copay assistance alone. [TheAidsInstitute.org/action](https://TheAidsInstitute.org/action)

---

But top Biden advisers are also cautioning ramping up immunizations will be gradual and will require lots of coordination.

“The first days of that 100 days may be substantially slower than it will be towards the end,” Michael Osterholm, a member of Biden’s covid-19 task force, [told Stat News](#). “It’s not going to occur quickly ... you’re going to see the ramp-up occurring only when the resources really begin to flow.”

## **2. Set up mass vaccination clinics.**

By the end of his first month in office, Biden has promised to open 100 federally managed clinics to administer shots. According to his vaccination plan, these sites would be set up by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The federal government would reimburse states for sending National Guard members to help run them.

Biden says he also wants to deploy mobile units to rural and underserved areas, along with boosting the role already being played by pharmacies in distributing shots.

This approach would diverge significantly from how things are being done now, with the Trump administration leaving it up to hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and state public health departments to administer the shots. Some cities and states [have set up](#) large vaccination sites, but many haven't.

“Overall, the president-elect’s plan lays out a more muscular federal role than the Trump administration’s approach, which has relied heavily on each state to administer vaccines once the federal government ships them out,” [Anne Gearan, Amy Goldstein and Laurie McGinley report](#).

“Many of the elements — such as seeking to expand the number of vaccination sites and setting up mobile vaccination clinics — were foreshadowed in a radio interview Biden gave last week and in an economic and health ‘relief plan’ he issued Thursday, which contains a \$20 billion request of Congress to pay for a stepped-up campaign of mass vaccination,” our colleagues add.

The White House on Sunday. (Oliver Contreras/SIPA USA/Bloomberg News)

### **3. Allow federally qualified health centers to directly access vaccines.**

These community health centers — which receive higher government reimbursements but are required to accept all patients regardless of

their ability to pay — are a core part of the nation’s safety net for low-income Americans.

Biden’s plan proposes a new program “to ensure [federally qualified health centers] can directly access vaccine supply where needed,” although here, too, it’s unclear exactly how that might work.

Under the Trump administration’s plan, these centers have been asked to enroll with state health departments as vaccine providers. States were then supposed to communicate to the federal government how many doses were needed and where they should go.

How well this is actually working is “all over the map,” said Amy Simmons Farber of the National Association of Community Health Centers. She said supplies vary from county to county and many health centers have received their supplies with little notice, making it challenging to prioritize and plan.

Farber declined to comment on the Biden plan, saying she doesn’t have a lot of details about it. But she’s “very encouraged by the recognition of the important role health centers have played in fighting the pandemic and the need to adequately resource them.”

#### **4. Use the Defense Production Act to ensure plenty of vaccine supplies.**

Several times over the course of the pandemic, President Trump has invoked the Defense Production Act, which allows the president to require companies to prioritize contracts deemed essential for national security.

Ventilator tubes are attached to a covid-19 patient at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center in Los Angeles. (Jae C. Hong/AP)

He has used the DPA to speed the production of [coronavirus tests](#) and [ventilators](#), and to [keep meatpacking plants open](#). But he hasn't invoked the authority to compel faster production of the supplies needed for packaging and administering the vaccine.

Biden says he will invoke DPA to ensure a steady stream of these supplies, which include glass vials, stoppers, syringes, needles and the capacity for companies to rapidly fill vaccine vials and finish packaging them.

## **5. Sign executive actions to combat the virus.**

Biden has promised a raft of executive actions in his first ten days as president, [laid out](#) over the weekend in a memo from incoming White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain. They'll include a number of pandemic-related orders.

On Inauguration Day, Biden intends to issue a mask mandate on federal property and for interstate travel, while encouraging all Americans to wear masks for what he's calling a "100 Day Masking Challenge."

The following day, Thursday, he'll sign executive orders aimed at helping schools and businesses reopen safely, expanding testing, protecting workers and establishing clearer public health standards. And on Friday, Biden will direct his Cabinet secretaries to take immediate action to deliver economic relief to families.

“President-elect Biden will take action — not just to reverse the gravest damages of the Trump administration — but also to start moving our country forward,” Klain wrote.

## **6. Launch a vaccine education campaign.**

The memo says Biden will run a “federally-run, locally-focused public education campaign.”

“The campaign will work to elevate trusted local voices and outline the historic efforts to deliver a safe and effective vaccine as part of a national strategy for beating covid-19,” it says.

But the transition team hasn’t detailed how the education campaign might differ from one launched by the Trump administration last month.

The Department of Health and Human Services said it plans [to spend](#) \$250 million on efforts to promote vaccine awareness. It kicked off the effort with a [\\$150,000 buy](#) on YouTube for ads that feature Fauci and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn.