

Centralized coordination and support are critical to COVID-19 vaccine success

The rollout of COVID-19 vaccines will be anything but business as usual. State public health leaders are confronting the following challenges as they finalize their vaccine distribution plans:

- Six potential vaccines are being fast-tracked for use – with some possibly having different effectiveness for different populations.
- Some vaccines must be stored at -98°F without a deviation of more than 2°. Localized dry ice shortages already exist, making it tougher to maintain a viable supply of the vaccine.
- Several potential vaccines must be administered in multiple doses at prescribed times and will require subsequent booster shots. Individuals cannot switch between vaccines to be effectively immunized.
- Supplies of vaccines and any necessary boosters will be scarce, requiring public health leaders to develop frameworks for prioritizing the order in which people are vaccinated and for planning the logistics of connecting people with vaccines as individuals become eligible to receive them.
- The mass vaccination of a state's entire population during pandemic conditions will likely require coordination with ongoing testing, contact tracing, and social distancing efforts. Moreover, success will require ongoing course correction as public health professionals respond to changing pandemic conditions, including the flexibility to ration, pause, or cease rollout of some vaccines.

A centralized vaccine support hub offers tremendous benefits to the public

The coming COVID-19 vaccine rollout will mark the first-ever attempt to vaccinate the *entire* population of the United States. A wary public will have numerous questions. Recent polling has indicated that only 50% of Americans are presently willing to be vaccinated – far fewer than the threshold needed to arrest social transmission via herd immunity. Addressing concerns and providing clear information will prove critical in fostering public trust.

Without a dedicated customer helpline, people will inundate providers, pharmacies, government agencies, and other resources – both legitimate and sketchy – for information. Offering a resource for coordinating consistent, reliable information will help control the rampant spread of misinformation that's obstructed much of the response to COVID-19.

States can create centralized information and coordination service hubs to provide the most straightforward customer journey and experience throughout the protracted vaccination process. This "Vaccination Hub" would provide transparency and direction to the public and providers, align expectations, and build trust in the vaccination program – all key to encouraging patience, persistence, and self-discipline as we work through the long duration of the COVID-19 pandemic together.

A Maximus solution focused on the customer experience

The logistical complexity required to vaccinate an entire population in record time will put immense strain on staff and resources for public health programs. The additional stress of answering thousands of phone calls and emails will only make the Herculean task harder. A Vaccination Hub would free up critical public resources when they are needed most.

Maximus is the Nation's leading provider of customer service to state and federal governments. We support more than 100 government health and human services programs in the United States – crossing more programs and engaging more of the population than any other vendor. Our service centers are powered by scalable, flexible engagement platforms that provide consistent tools and data integrity and are HIPAA-compliant. Our focus has always been on the customer experience.

Our solution to vaccine coordination focuses on four primary objectives:

1. Provide a clearcut, uncomplicated customer experience that provides transparency and promotes trust in government
2. Enable providers and pharmacies to administer vaccines efficiently
3. Reduce “vaccine shopping” across providers, pharmacies, and geographies
4. Ensure vulnerable populations, including rural residents and low-income residents, do not “fall through the cracks” by providing culturally sensitive service and fair and equitable access to vaccines

Enable two-way dialogue to build and maintain trust

Our ability to answer basic questions about vaccines, locations where they are administered, and when individuals need to get inoculated bolsters the public's confidence in the process, improves compliance with public health guidance, and may reduce fears or frustrations as the pandemic wears on. We have the social skills, scientific knowledge, and technical know-how to get your health messages disseminated broadly and connect people with vaccines at scale, in a clear and orderly way. We also draw upon health literacy, translation, and customer support expertise from the Maximus Center for Health Literacy to ensure our health communications are understandable and accessible.

We also account for region- and population-specific needs within your state – ensuring information is communicated in a transparent, culturally-sensitive manner to every person in your state. Having operated public engagement centers for the 2020 Census, Maximus brings relevant experience engaging diverse populations, in multiple languages, for the only other U.S. government program charged with reaching everyone, everywhere. Whether engaging directly or coordinating with local stakeholders, our center can help public health programs target and engage vulnerable, hard-to-reach populations (such as individuals with language barriers, tech limitations, homelessness, disabilities, etc.) This gives public health programs the flexibility and reach to communicate plan changes and updates quickly. Such flexibility would be vital to optimizing outreach strategies, building public trust, and ultimately maximize vaccine uptake.

Ensure technology does not get in the way of connecting

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the urgency of government's move to digital-first customer service. The Vaccine Hub will support the range of engagement channels favored by an increasingly digital-savvy public – from websites and online chat to virtual agents and chatbots. Our omnichannel

platform also enables agents to track inquiries and contacts across channels and allow communication to shift across channels at any relevant stage of a transaction – for example, offering agent support to a customer while they're using a self-service channel.

Phone lines remain the essential access point for those who prefer talking with a live agent, *especially for complex issues such as adverse event reporting, or those who do not have internet access.* [Research](#) from the Pew Research Center shows that across the country, “racial minorities, older adults, rural residents, and those with lower levels of education and income are less likely to have broadband service at home.” A communication strategy that relies exclusively on web resources and email access could disadvantage the most vulnerable members of your community and risk exacerbating barriers to access.

Provide support through every step of the vaccination and pandemic response

Placing the burden of certifying and verifying eligibility based on medical conditions on individual and providers risks unequal implementation of prioritization criteria – opening the door for “vaccine shopping” across providers, retailers, and geographies. This could further increase differences in access between those who have the means to “work the system” and those who do not.

To address challenges like these, the Vaccination Hub can coordinate and manage queues for receiving vaccines. The Maximus Vaccination Hub is independent and has no financial conflict in the administration of vaccines – added assurance to individuals that Maximus is working in their best interest when assisting them with their vaccination needs.

We can help you determine how to distribute and allocate vaccines based on your population's demographic characteristics, assigning your citizens to tiers that will prioritize the administration of vaccines as they become available. We can:

- Create algorithms to determine vaccine priorities based on current epidemiologic findings, CDC guidance, and state policy
- Provide vaccine screening tools – available online, on mobile applications, and by calling the Vaccination Hub – that enable members of the public to assess their eligibility to receive a vaccine
- Enable individuals to create an account, register to be added to a vaccination waitlist, and monitor where they are on the list
- Provide scheduling assistance to individuals either through block scheduling at distribution points or referral services to proximal points of access
- Provide reminders, rescheduling assistance, alerts, and support for ongoing vaccine booster compliance
- Track and transmit patient data to relevant government-based systems of record, in accordance with HIPAA privacy rules
- Assist vaccinated citizens with reporting adverse events or side effects to the appropriate agencies. We can also help you by conducting quantitative analyses that provide insights into the adverse events reported in your jurisdiction.

Maximus has helped state and federal agencies address the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**
 - **CDC-INFO** – Maximus agents respond to calls and emails from healthcare providers and the public. At the beginning of the pandemic, CDC requested additional agents to expanded operations to 24/7 coverage. When call volumes peaked in April, **500 agents responded to more than 16,000 calls and 2,000 emails per day.**
 - **Vaccine Order Management Contact Center (VOMCC)** – Maximus operates the VOMCC, the helpdesk supporting users of the CDC's Vaccine Tracking System (VTrckS). **This system connects 64 immunization programs**, more than 44,000 provider sites, six vaccine manufacturers, and CDC's centralized distributor. Its users are participating state, local, and territorial health departments and healthcare providers who use the system to order, track, and manage vaccine supplies in their communities.
- **Contact Tracing in Five States** – Since April, Maximus has recruited, hired, trained, and deployed home-based contract tracers and disease investigators to support programs in Indiana, Florida, Kentucky, Pima County, Arizona, and Springfield-Greene County, Missouri.
- **State of New York COVID-19 Screening and Scheduling** – In the early days of New York's COVID-19 outbreak, Maximus launched an information hotline in just three days to screen callers for COVID-19 symptoms. If symptomatic, our staff schedules the caller to be tested for COVID-19 and inputting this appointment directly into a unified test scheduling system.
- **Statewide COVID-19 Hotlines in California and Indiana** – Provide Call Center services to support calls received regarding COVID-19.
- **Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) COVID-19 Testing Call Center** – In just four days, Maximus launched an outbound call center for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This center receives test results from 47 federally-facilitated COVID-19 testing sites across 12 states. More than 260 onsite and home-based agents notify individuals of their COVID-19 test results, and we provide HHS staff with real-time reports of test results by area and age.