



Do You Need a Home to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine?

by Nicole Arcieri

The COVID-19 pandemic has left many civilians both physically and emotionally vulnerable. People that are immunocompromised and above the age of 65 are especially wary about the effects of coronavirus, but even young, healthy people face many concerns. It seemed as if the world would never recover from such a debilitating health crisis, but fortunately, top experts across the globe teamed up to develop vaccines to help stave off this deadly virus.

President Joe Biden and local government officials across the United States are rolling out the first phase of administering vaccines nationwide. However, only certain people are eligible to get vaccinated in many if not all states across the country. In New York City, for example, you can currently get vaccinated if you are 65 or older, a school staff member, a correctional staff

member, a first responder, a public transit worker, a public-facing grocery store worker, or if you work at or live in a group homeless shelter. While this list is impressive and includes several vulnerable populations, it is important to consider the community of homeless people in such a grave epidemic. Being able to get vaccinated if you live in a homeless shelter sounds like it would solve the issue of vaccinating people that are homeless, but we must not forget that many people that are homeless purposely avoid these shelters. Many shelters are ill-kept and bed bug infested. High rates of sexual assault exist in these facilities as well. For many, it is safer to sleep on the streets, but with coronavirus cases on the rise and over 400,000 Americans dead, you are still only eligible to get the vaccine if you live in a shelter. Not only is this unethical and unfair, but it is also a public health concern. People that are homeless are less likely to be able to afford personal protective equipment (PPE). On the off chance that they could afford it, they probably would not be able to replace it frequently and when necessary. People that are homeless rarely have access to clean showers or bathrooms. An opportunity may arise in which one would be able to clean themselves in a gym or a well-kept public restroom, but these opportunities are few and far between. Furthermore, if someone that is homeless avoids shelters, it is likely they will end up sleeping on a public bench, a subway platform, or any other area that is probably not very clean. It is imperative that people that are homeless are able to get vaccinated, regardless of whether or not they stay in homeless shelters. No one should be homeless, especially during an epidemic, but unfortunately, there are individuals out there that are vulnerable to this virus and need help now. We must not forget about people that are homeless during this time.