



November 23, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Request to Include Orthotic and Prosthetic Providers in Initial Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine

Dear Secretary Azar:

The American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA), representing more than 2,000 member organizations that provide essential healthcare to Medicare beneficiaries, implores the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to ensure that employees of orthotic and prosthetic (O&P) facilities have access to COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they become available.

O&P providers were identified as essential healthcare workers at the onset of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) and have continued to deliver medically necessary care throughout the PHE despite the increased risk of exposure to and contraction of the COVID-19 virus. While AOPA has supported its members in taking every precaution possible to reduce the risk of exposure to their employees and patients, vaccination remains the most effective method to prevent COVID-19 infection.

AOPA believes that due to the close patient interaction that O&P providers require to treat patients, they should be included with the other essential healthcare workers that get access to COVID-19 vaccination as soon as it is available. Access to vaccination is not only crucial to reduce infection of essential healthcare workers like O&P providers but to also reduce potential exposure to the vulnerable patient populations that AOPA members treat every day. O&P care is often affiliated with secondary conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease that exponentially increase a COVID-19 infected patient's chances of developing severe disease. Including O&P providers in the initial distribution of COVID-19 vaccines will benefit both providers and their patients.

AOPA appreciates DHHS' tireless efforts in combating COVID-19 and looks forward to our continued collaboration to ensure the safe and effective provision of O&P care in the U.S.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Lutz, CPO
AOPA President