**Statement On The Need For COVID-19 Vaccine Access For Clinical Research Professionals**

January 18, 2021

The clinical research and technology companies of the Association of Clinical Research Organizations (ACRO) conduct or support the conduct of a majority of all FDA-regulated clinical trials in the United States and deploy more than 25,000 people who provide critical services at clinical trial sites. This includes nurses, laboratory and medical technicians, clinical research coordinators (CRCs) and research associates (CRAs) who monitor trials. Member companies are providing services to all COVID-19 vaccine trials and during the peak periods of each vaccine trial the number of CRAs deployed to support that trial ranges from 110-160 FTEs across the US.

These professionals are working in hospitals, other medical facilities, and stand-alone research sites each day to manage and support the conduct of clinical research. It is essential that they have access to a vaccine in order to protect themselves, the clinical trial participants they come into contact with, other patients at the site, including COVID-19 patients enrolled in studies or accessing medical care at the health facility.

ACIP’s *COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations[[1]](#footnote-1)* and CISA’s *Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce[[2]](#footnote-2)* stipulate that healthcare and other essential workers be prioritized for vaccine distribution. Clinical research professionals fall into the below categories:

* They are healthcare personnel, because they provide services in healthcare settings or are in proximity to patients who may be COVID-19 positive, or infectious materials; or
* They are essential workers, such as laboratory workers and others who are critical to the ongoing conduct of clinical trials

Although clinical trial professionals clearly fit into the descriptions above, ACRO member companies are encountering difficulty in securing access to available COVID-19 vaccines for these essential personnel. Most states and state health officials are distributing available vaccines via hospital systems and health departments, using employee and affiliate lists to determine who is eligible. This is the root of the problem. Unless research personnel are credentialed at a health facility, they are not technically “on staff” and will therefore not be included among the people vaccinated at the facility and similarly, they will not be included among the first responders and others essential workers vaccinated at public health facilities.

**ACRO believes that companies that employ research professionals who provide on-site services or are essential workers, such as laboratory workers, should be given access to state vaccine registration systems so that these professionals can be included in appropriate vaccination schedules.**

Recognizing the professionals who support clinical research as essential and providing them access to a vaccine will assist in ensuring that clinical trials in the United States remain safe for all those involved, so that new biomedical products and treatments continue to reach the patients who need them in an efficient and timely manner.

1. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm695152e2-H.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ECIW\_4.0\_Guidance\_on\_Essential\_Critical\_Infrastructure\_Workers\_Final3\_508\_0.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)