

Fleet Staff Assisting at Vaccine Sites

By: Keith Kerman and Nate Koszer

It's now been one year since COVID-19 changed all of our lives. In our newsletters, we've reported on all the ways fleet staff citywide have assumed new roles to support the emergency response. We've done street-side fueling of ambulances, worked on procurement of medical supplies, helped distribute food and air conditioners, organized hazmat cleanings, and supported The Office of Chief Medical Examiner. We are now assisting in the most hopeful of all roles, serving at the City's Vaccine Hubs.

Since early February, five DCAS Fleet staff, so far, have been spending their weekdays and some weekends assisting New Yorkers who have appointments at City-run vaccine sites, known as hubs to the public and as PODs, Points Of Dispensing, to staff. Our DCAS staff have joined volunteers from DOHMH, other City agencies, the private sector, and medical professionals and EMTs operating the sites.



Volunteers perform various tasks depending on the site needs. While the actual vaccine injections are given by trained medical professionals, support staff assist with PPE and other supplies for the medical staff. Volunteers help recipients navigate the lines in the centers and ensure they have their appointments set for their second shots. Some volunteers assist disabled and non-English speaking vaccine recipients in accessing available accommodations, and City staff volunteers assist with general site coordination as needed.

City-run hubs are located in high schools across the five boroughs, utilizing gyms and cafeterias as makeshift clinics, teachers lounges as break rooms, and locker rooms as rest and observation centers to make sure vaccine recipients don't have an adverse reaction. Operations are all on the first floor to ensure accessibility. The use of the schools for this medical purpose was a large coordination project, with extensive scheduling needs, the need to minimize impacts to school educational programs, and the challenge of explaining this new and critical process to participants.

“It’s a long day, and we all have the same objective. Get people in, vaccinated, and out” said DCAS Fleet volunteer Veronica Rodriguez. Every worker did their very best to ensure their step in the process went smoothly. According to our volunteers, this effort was noticed and appreciated. Despite the lines and confusion, volunteers and workers received a constant outpouring of gratitude from vaccine recipients. It was a happy experience for nearly all involved. Selfies were commonplace and some vaccine recipients shed tears of happiness, finally able to let go of some of the anxiety that has followed them for an entire year.



Our staff is proud to be able to support this effort. We want to thank the DCAS Fleet staff participating including Vincent Stephens, Marcin Gubernat, Veronica Rodriguez, Jason Li, and Latia Riley. We also want to recognize all the health professionals, National Guard and security, and other DCAS and agency volunteers leading the charge to vaccinate our fellow New Yorkers and shining the light at the end of this tunnel.

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