



Center for Public Representation



March 1, 2021

Secretary Marylou Sudders  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
One Ashburton Place, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Madame Secretary:

The undersigned organizations ask that a serious mental illness diagnosis including schizophrenia spectrum disorder, bipolar disorder, and severe depression be included in the list of Phase 2 eligible conditions for COVID-19 vaccination in light of recently published data. These data published by JAMA Psychiatry (1) and Lancet (2) show that adults with a serious mental disorder diagnoses were associated with an increased risk for mortality from COVID-19 (2), and that schizophrenia spectrum disorder was second only to age as a risk factor in one cohort studied in New York City. (1) This study demonstrated that the risk from schizophrenia was independent of other related medical conditions. As you know many individuals with schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders suffer from other medical comorbidities at high rates, which put them at greater risk for worse COVID-19 outcomes.

Under your leadership, data from Massachusetts DMH and other states in 2000 revealed that individuals with serious mental illnesses already have a 25 year shorter lifespan than the rest of the population, and, sadly, COVID-19 has already contributed to a decreased life span in the US. In light of the recently discovered increased risk of COVID-19 mortality in serious mental illness, prioritizing individuals with schizophrenia spectrum disorders, bipolar disorder, and severe depression on the list of Phase 2 eligible medical conditions will help prevent further widening of this lifespan disparity. While many people with serious mental illness live in congregate settings and were prioritized in Phase 1, there are many others still awaiting prioritization.

We would be happy to discuss this further in a meeting with you and the COVID-19 Task Force if that would be helpful in making the decision. Thank you very much for your attention to these important new data, and for all of the unrelenting dedicated work of the COVID-19 Task Force and the COVID Command Center.

(1) <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2775179>

(2) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)00429-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)00429-3/fulltext)

Sincerely,



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