

February 24, 2021

Contact:

Redmond Haskins
The Legal Aid Society
(929) 441-2384
rhaskins@legal-aid.org

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

In Response to Reporting that Young New Yorkers in Youth Homeless Shelters, Congregate Foster Care Placements and other Youth Residential Programs will now have COVID-19 Vaccine Access, Legal Aid Calls on Governor Cuomo to Immediately Expand Vaccine Eligibility to Include All Incarcerated New Yorkers

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society called on Governor Andrew Cuomo to expand COVID-19 vaccine access to include all incarcerated New Yorkers in response to [reporting](#) that youth residing in congregate settings - including foster care, juvenile detention and placement, runaway and homeless youth shelters and other youth residential programs - [will now have access to the vaccine](#).

On February 9, 2021, Legal Aid [called](#) on the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to expand OCFS guidance to include young people residing in congregate settings overseen by the agency, consistent with guidance issued by the New York State Department of Health.

Yesterday, OCFS issued new guidance acknowledging that youth age 16 and older in congregate facilities it licenses are eligible for the vaccine. OCFS also instructed congregate care programs to assist eligible residents in securing the vaccine.

“While we welcome this news that our young clients in congregate settings will now have access to the COVID-19 vaccine, it is imperative that our incarcerated clients in prisons and jails gain access immediately. COVID-19 still rages at these facilities throughout the state, and any further delay will only result in more infections and more loss of life. We urge Governor Cuomo to grant this essential relief now,” stated **The Legal Aid Society**.

As of February 23, 2021, per data released by the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision (DOCCS), 5,806 New Yorkers in DOCCS’ custody have now tested positive for COVID-19 since March. Another 32 incarcerated New Yorkers have succumbed to the virus.

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated

for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org