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Here's what health care providers want to see now that the city has declared monkeypox a state of emergency

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Mayor Eric Adams declared a state of emergency around the monkeypox outbreak in the city on Monday. The declaration could shift the way the city handles the outbreak, pours money into public health measures and procures vaccines from the federal government. Here's everything we know so far about what could happen now that we're in an emergency—and what health care providers think the city should do.

What does a state of emergency mean?

Declaring a state of emergency allows Adams to suspend or amend local laws to protect New Yorkers. The city health department's public health declaration of emergency issued on Saturday allows commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan to order amendments to the city's health codes, if necessary. In TV appearances, Vasan has said declaring an emergency can also speed up the process by which the city secures contracts with vendors to provide vaccines, testing or treatments.

Gov. Kathy Hochul declared monkeypox an imminent threat to public health on Thursday, July 28, in an effort to secure more vaccines.

Dr. Jay Varma, former senior advisor for public health in the mayor's office, told *Crain's* a state of emergency also allows the city to accelerate processes for hiring staff, purchasing supplies and issuing contracts—normally expediting them “dramatically.”

What has happened so far?

So far, no local laws have been suspended that are directly related to the new state of emergency. This piece will be updated when suspensions or amendments are made public.

City Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan told *Crain's* that the state of emergency is largely about data sharing and increasing flexibility for more professionals to administer vaccines, such as EMS workers. He said he hopes it also pushes the federal government to send the city more resources.

"I think it's an important signal," he said.

What is the process for expediting contracts for vendors who want to help control the outbreak?

Agencies can file to provide services using the city's existing emergency procurement process. This allows agencies to confer with the comptroller's bureau of contracts and get prior approval for an incoming contract, and eventually register for procurement related to monkeypox.

Crain's has not found any vendors who have filed an emergency contract for registration for monkeypox.

Checkbook NYC, the city's spending database, lists 13 spending items from the department of health related to monkeypox, the largest being for \$1.7 million as of Wednesday.

Most of those 13 line items are for lab testing, according to the department. The department declined to provide the dates of the spending or where the funds are going.

What issues are patients experiencing?

In June and July, patients had difficulty accessing monkeypox tests and vaccines, with appointments filling up minutes after they were announced and a switch in vaccine providers causing confusion. Now, Jonathan Baker, a physician assistant at Laser Surgery Care in Chelsea, said that while testing capacity is up, it's still difficult to get patients vaccinated because the supply is dictated by the federal government.

He added patients are having difficulty accessing Tecovirimat, a monkeypox treatment that is still under investigation by the Centers for Disease Control. Some patients have confirmed it's hard to get “Tpoxx” on social media.

What do providers think the city can do to crush the outbreak?

Baker said the most important thing the city can do right now is make sure communities that might not have access to social media or other technology, or engagement with health care, can get vaccinated. He suggested community groups hosting venues or events. Antonios praised the city's efforts so far to work with community health organizations who can increase access, as well as its efforts to educate providers and the public about the virus.

Varma is most concerned about testing access, since the city's vaccine supply is constricted by the federal government.

Specific steps to take include working with the city's Economic Development Corporation to develop easier-to-use testing methods, such as testing saliva and throat swabs, and developing rapid tests, according to Varma.

"Many scientists have worked on these issues in research labs before, so the science that supports this can work. It just needs to be validated and commercialized," he said.

He urged the city to reopen the four sexual health clinics that are currently closed in Crown Heights, Central Harlem, Riverside and Corona and restore pre-Covid hours at all nine clinics around the city.

Varma also said the city should deploy mobile vans to test, vaccinate and help patients access treatments, especially in higher risk communities, as it has done for Covid, using data it keeps on sexually transmitted infection and HIV rates to identify higher risk and need communities. He added that many providers do not know Tpoxx is available and highly effective.

The city should "demand that the Federal government pre-position Tpoxx at chain pharmacies throughout the NYC area so that patients can pick it up as soon as a provider calls in a prescription," he said.

Finally, the Public Health Corps should be used for contract tracing, he said.

What progress has been made?

City providers used to have to send patient samples to the state health department to get approval to test for the virus. Now, several private companies are making tests, expanding access.

The city should also see an increase in supply of the Jynneos monkeypox vaccine, which it receives from the federal government. It will receive 80,000 more vaccine doses in the coming weeks, beginning with an installment of 32,000 vaccines, according to Hochul.

City health officials plan to release 23,000 first-dose appointments today. Remaining doses will be administered to close contacts of known cases and New Yorkers referred by community partner organizations and health care providers.

The city is adding five new vaccine clinics to administer those doses, it announced Wednesday night:

- The Livonia (506 Livonia Avenue in Brooklyn)
- The Jefferson (1300 Flushing Avenue in Brooklyn)
- Long Island City (5-17 46th Road in Queens)
- NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings (686 New York Avenue in Brooklyn)
- NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Gouverneur (227 Madison Street in Manhattan)

New York has the highest percentage of cases in the country, about 25%, but in July had 10% of available vaccines. The city has received 79,000 vaccine doses out of about 131,000 allocated to the city.

Patients can schedule vaccines through the health department's [website](#). The city previously contracted with private companies to handle appointment booking but had issues with its [vaccine rollout](#).

Are there hurdles to getting a second dose?

Jynneos vaccines are administered in two doses four weeks apart, and people are not considered immunized until two weeks after their second dose. Despite offering vaccines since June, there are still no second-vaccine appointments available, in an effort to conserve supply.

Dr. Vera Antonios, the associate medical director at Amida Care, which is a Medicaid managed care special needs health plan that serves more than 8,500 New Yorkers affected by HIV, said data shows there can be a one-week grace period between vaccine doses, for a total of five weeks. If a patient goes longer than five weeks between doses the second one must be administered as soon as possible, according to the CDC, she said. The city says patients can wait "longer than four weeks" between doses.

The city health department repeatedly declined to provide *Crain's* with demographic data of people who have received vaccines, and has not yet provided data on how many people have been vaccinated.

Where does the city stand on cases?

As of Wednesday, there are 1,558 cases in the city. Most cases are in Manhattan (562), in men (1,068) and in people ages 30-39 (546). 311 people with cases identify as white and 620 identify as LGBTQ+, while 451 peoples' sexual orientations or identities are unknown.

The 7-day average of daily cases on July 25 was 69, up from two on June 14. —Jacqueline Neber

Maya Kaufman contributed reporting.

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