

BRIEF19

A daily review of covid-19 research and policy.

POLICY BRIEFING

Executive orders a-plenty to support new national pandemic strategy.

Immediately after his inauguration, President Biden [launched](#) his National Strategy to address the ongoing pandemic. While he had previously [announced](#) a new stimulus package, Biden's first actions focused on the national coordination and executive actions required to get the program running. The plan itself is broken into seven components. To accompany each of these priorities, we have added our own commentary.

1. “Restore trust with the American people.” *Commentary: Today, Dr. Anthony Fauci spoke at a press conference for the first time in months. He spoke openly about the new administration's willingness to say “we don't know” when a question is asked to which an answer is unknown. Last week, incoming Director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dr. Rochelle Walensky published an opinion in the [New York Times](#) in which she vowed to tell the truth, even if the news was bleak.*
2. “Mount a safe, effective, comprehensive vaccination campaign.” *Commentary: this was underway under President Trump, but expanding supply lines may accelerate it.*
3. “Mitigate spread through expanding masking, testing, treatment, data, workforce, and clear public health standards.” *Commentary: Biden's proposed relief package would provide \$50 billion in funding for tests. But the plan will have to go through Congress. But with the stroke of a pen, he can enact a mask mandate in all Federal buildings.*
4. “Immediately expand the emergency relief and exercise the Defense Production Act.” *Commentary: This act was used by Trump to increase mask production, but very little else. Biden has announced a plan to use the DPA to boost vaccine supply lines and other needed items.*
5. “Safely reopen schools, businesses, and travel, while protecting workers.” *Commentary: reopening schools will depend more on local case controls than anything schools can do themselves. Testing regimens can help but the best way to keep students and teachers safe is to reduce transmission everywhere. The biggest battle in many areas will be with teachers' unions, who in some areas have refused to go back to work unless specific demands are met. Some of this may be out of the President's hands.*
6. “Protect those most at risk and advance equity, including across racial, ethnic, and rural/urban areas.” *Commentary: one way to achieve this would be to change the vaccine rollout strategy. Another would be to provide further paycheck support during the pandemic so that people can stay at home without risking their safety or financial security of their families.*
7. “Restore US leadership globally and build better preparedness for future threats.” *Commentary: Yesterday, Dr. Anthony Fauci announced that the United States would indeed not withdraw from the WHO, which President Trump had announced would occur. This is a major step towards addressing this priority.*

Details on how each of these core components will be further addressed can be found in Biden's National Strategy [document](#). These measures add to and complement the 12 [executive actions](#) Biden put forth on the first two days of his presidency, outlining how seriously this new administration is taking the global health crisis. *Various. [22 January 2021](#).* —Brief19 Policy Team

President Biden takes aim at coronavirus policies on day one.

President Biden wasted no time in taking aim at President Trump's covid-19 inchoate and ineffectual policies. Among the first executive actions signed by newly inaugurated President Biden yesterday was a mask mandate on federal property, a reversal from the Trump administration's stance. He also extended the federal eviction freeze, an action that newly sworn-in Director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dr. Rochelle Walensky supported via Twitter later in the evening.

Biden installed Jeff Zeints as coronavirus response coordinator, a role intended to supervise vaccine and medical supply distribution and other aspects of the government's covid-19 response. The creation of this position comes as the United States reached another grim milestone: 400,000 deaths due to covid-19.

Another effort put forth by President Biden is his pledge to vaccinate 100 million people within the first 100 days of his administration. To come close to achieving this, improved manufacturing and distribution of the currently approved vaccines is needed. He may invoke the Defense Production Act (DPA), which many Senate Democrats have already called for in order to boost production of medical and testing supplies, personal protective equipment and vaccines. The Biden Administration will likely also call on states to expand the categories for residents eligible to receive a covid-19 vaccine.

After reversing many of the Trump administration's executive actions on his first day in office, including policies on immigration, the environment, and public health, it is clear that the Biden presidency will take a very different tack in many areas, including our course in the fight against covid-19. Clearly, the new administration sees a more active role for the federal government in fighting this pandemic. Now, we await the results. [21 January 2021](#).
—Miranda Yaver, PhD

New details of national vaccine rollout plan.

As the United States continues to struggle with its vaccine rollout, President-elect Biden (perhaps President, depending when you read this), has detailed his plan to get shots in arms, focusing on five key areas.

The first component is somewhat controversial, as he broke with the [recommendation](#) given by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). The expert body at NASEM argued for prioritization of all individuals with significant comorbidities to come after frontline workers, whereas Biden [intends](#) to vaccinate everyone over 65 first.

Further proposals by Biden are more straightforward, including his second planned phase, which utilizes the help of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish more vaccination sites across the country, in locations such as arenas and school gyms. The third proposed step is to increase the availability of supplies to vaccine manufacturers. While the Trump administration's promise to release vaccines from the federal reserve was quickly quashed after it became apparent there [was no reserve](#), it seems drugmakers will see increased manufacturing capacity, which of course relies on the availability of the needed supplies, which Biden has promised. Part four requires a more robust workforce to staff the vaccination centers and engage in more thorough contact tracing. The fifth part seeks to create an educational campaign to fight vaccine misinformation. Opening the eligibility pool is a conceptual goal that will be relatively easy to achieve. However, the remainder of the plan is financially dependent on passage of the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package [revealed](#) last week. Congress is expected to consider the legislation in the coming days and weeks. *Various*. [20 January 2021](#).

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Brief19 is a daily executive summary of covid-19-related medical research, news, and public policy. It was founded and created by frontline emergency medicine physicians with expertise in medical research critique, health policy, and public policy.