

**Research Report**

**IOWANS CANNOT AFFORD  
TO WAIT FOR SENATE-CONFIRMED  
HHS SECRETARY**

**ACCOUNTABLE** 

## SUMMARY:

- **COVID-19 By The Numbers In Iowa As Of Late January:**
  - **Total Case Count:** 313,140
  - **Daily Case Count Average:** 1,118
  - **Total Death Count:** 4,487
  - **Hospital Bed Occupancy Rate:** 59.2%
  - **Iowans Completely Vaccinated:** 1%
  - **Iowans Who Received At Least One Vaccine Dose:** 5.1%
  - **Percent Of Vaccine Supply Distributed:** 53%

## COVID-19 Continues To Devastate Iowa As State Vaccination Efforts Lag Behind, Highlighting Need For Coordinated Federal Response.

### What Iowans Are Reading ...

- **The Gazette HEADLINE:** “Iowa Hits Almost 1,860 Coronavirus Deaths In Long-Term Care Facilities” [The Gazette, [1/23/21](#)]
- **Des Moines Register HEADLINE:** “‘It’s Not Enough’: Too Many People Are Declining To Get A COVID-19 Vaccination” [Des Moines Register, [1/24/21](#)]
- **Times-Republican HEADLINE:** “Report: Fewer Than Half Iowa Veterans Home Workers Given COVID-19 Vaccine” [Times-Republican, [1/26/21](#)]
- **KCCI HEADLINE:** “Iowa’s COVID-19 Hospitalizations Increase, Positivity Rates Decline” [KCCI, [1/26/21](#)]
- **We Are Iowa HEADLINE:** “Facing Both Financial And Personal Loss, Iowans Await Reimbursement For COVID-19 Funerals” [We Are Iowa, [1/26/21](#)]

### Iowa COVID-19 Cases Continue To Strain Hospital Capacity As Deaths Climb.

*Iowa Has Reported 313,140 COVID-19 Cases, Ranking Eighth In The Nation In Cases Per Capita.*

**January 24, 2021: Following Unprecedented Surge In November 2020, COVID-19 Infections In Iowa Have Continued At Heightened Pace.** [New York Times – “Iowa Coronavirus Map and Case Count,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

- **January 24, 2021: 313,140 COVID-19 Cases Have Been Reported In Iowa.** [New York Times – “Iowa Coronavirus Map and Case Count,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]
- **January 24, 2021: Iowa Had An Average Of 1,118 Daily Cases Over The Past Week.** [New York Times – “Iowa Coronavirus Map and Case Count,” accessed [1/26/21](#)]

- **January 24, 2021: Iowa Ranked Eighth Among All States For Cases Per Capita, At 9,925 Cases For Every 100,000 Residents.** [New York Times – “Iowa Coronavirus Map and Case Count,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

*Iowa Recorded Over 4,487 Deaths – Up Over 15% From The End Of 2020.*

**January 24, 2021: 4,487 Iowans Have Died Of COVID-19.** [New York Times – “Iowa Coronavirus Map and Case Count,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

- **As Of December 31, 2020, Iowa Had 3,890 COVID-19 Deaths.** [New York Times – “Iowa Coronavirus Map and Case Count,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

*As Of January 25, 6,812 Iowans Had Been Hospitalized With COVID-19 Over The Previous Two Weeks, With Over Half Of Inpatient Hospitalization Beds Not Currently Available.*

**6,812 Iowans Faced Hospitalization From COVID-19 Over The Past Two Weeks.** [State of Iowa – “COVID-19 in Iowa; Regional Medical Coordination Center Dashboard,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

**January 24, 2021: 59.2-Percent Of Iowa’s Inpatient Hospitalization Beds Were No Longer Available.** The state of Iowa database showed 3,230 beds, representing 40.8-percent of total capacity, are currently available. [State of Iowa – “COVID-19 in Iowa; Regional Medical Coordination Center Dashboard,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

## **Iowa Struggled To Vaccinate Even Most Vulnerable Populations.**

*Iowa Had Administered Only Half Of Vaccine Supply It Had Already Been Allocated, Completely Vaccinating Just 1% And Lagging Behind Nation By Giving Initial Dose To Just 5.1%.*

**January 24, 2021: Iowa Has Only Given Out A Bit More Than Half (53-Percent) Of Its Vaccination Supply.** Iowa has given out 191,183 vaccination shots, out of a total supply of 361,475. This represents 53-percent of the total number of shots. [New York Times – “See How the Vaccine Rollout Is Going in Your State,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

- **The US National Average For Percent Of Vaccine Doses Used Was Also 53-Percent.** [New York Times – “See How the Vaccine Rollout Is Going in Your State,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

**January 25, 2021: 161,445 Iowans Have Received At Least One Vaccination Shot, Representing 5.1-Percent Of The Population.** [Washington Post – “COVID-19 Vaccine Distributions,” accessed [1/26/21](#)]

- **The US National Average For Vaccine Distribution By Population Was 5.8-Percent.** [Washington Post – “COVID-19 Vaccine Distributions,” accessed [1/26/21](#)]

**As Of Jan. 24, Only 1% Of Iowa’s Population Had Been Fully Vaccinated.** [Washington Post, [1/24/21](#)]

- **The US National Average For Percent Of Population Fully Vaccinated Was 1%.** [Washington Post, [1/24/21](#)]

*Iowa Has Been Slow To Vaccinate Residents Of Nursing Home Facilities, With 69 Nursing Homes Reporting Active Outbreaks.*

**Upon Initial Vaccine Rollout, The Iowa Health Care Association President Expressed That Nursing Homes Would Require A Several Week Process To Disburse.** “Pharmacy teams started vaccinating Iowa

nursing home residents and staff against COVID-19 on Monday, with the goal of curtailing deadly outbreaks that have devastated scores of the facilities. Industry leaders hailed the start of the vaccination campaign, but they warned that it could take a few weeks to get shots to all the facilities. 'I wish it could move faster, but we're going to have to be patient,' said Brent Willett, president of the Iowa Health Care Association." [Des Moines Register via Ames Tribune, [12/28/20](#)]

**Iowa Nursing Homes Account For 40-Percent Of Iowa's COVID-19 Deaths, Despite Making Up Less Than 1-Percent Of The Population.** "Nursing home residents make up less than 1% of Iowa's population, but they have accounted for more than 40% of Iowa's COVID-19 deaths, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health. Assisted living facilities are also a high priority for vaccination, although their residents tend to be less frail and live more independently than nursing home residents." [Des Moines Register via Ames Tribune, [1/25/21](#)]

**January 25, 2021: 69 Nursing Homes Were Listed By Iowa As Having Current Outbreaks (Three or More Residents Testing Positive).** "The number of nursing home outbreaks has dropped by more than half in Iowa since late November. On Monday, the state reported 69 nursing homes had current outbreaks, defined as three or more residents testing positive." [Des Moines Register via Ames Tribune, [1/25/21](#)]

*Iowa Did Not Follow A Federal Recommendation To Vaccinate Individuals Over The Age Of 65, Citing Supply Concerns.*

**Iowa Department Of Public Health Said It Did Not Plan To Immediately Offer COVID-19 Vaccinations To Individuals Older Than 65, Despite A Federal Recommendation.** "Iowa does not plan to immediately offer coronavirus vaccinations to all people older than 65, as the federal government recommended Tuesday, the Iowa Department of Public Health said. [...] Earlier Tuesday, the nation's top health administrator announced a major shift in federal recommendations on coronavirus vaccinations. U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar urged states to open vaccinations to everyone 65 or older." [Des Moines Register, [1/12/21](#)]

**Iowa's Department Of Public Health Said They Would Activate Vaccine Availability When They Had Confidence That Vaccine Supply Met Demand.** "Iowa does not plan to immediately offer coronavirus vaccinations to all people older than 65, as the federal government recommended Tuesday, the Iowa Department of Public Health said. 'Once we have reasonable confidence that supply meets the demands of this broader eligibility criteria, we will activate the broader distribution criteria,' the department said in a news release Tuesday afternoon. 'From the very beginning (of) this distribution effort, it has been our goal to reach all Iowans.'" [Des Moines Register, [1/12/21](#)]

## **Further Delays In Confirming Biden's HHS Secretary Could Impede Administration's COVID-19 Response.**

**Biden Nominee Xavier Becerra Faced Uphill Confirmation Battle, Based Not On Concerns Over Competency On COVID-19, But Republican Objections To His Pro-Choice Views And Support For Universal Health Care.** "Xavier Becerra, President-elect Joe Biden's pick for health and human services secretary, the Cabinet member tasked with overseeing vaccinating millions of Americans against the coronavirus as quickly as possible, faces an uphill confirmation battle. It won't be because of how he'll handle the pandemic, but over his support for abortion rights and universal health care, say Republicans who control the Senate and are already warning that he could be denied confirmation, or see the process take longer." [NBC News, [12/28/20](#)]

**CNN: President Biden's Administration "Inherit[ed] No Coronavirus Vaccine Distribution Plan To Speak Of From The Trump Administration."** "Newly sworn in President Joe Biden and his advisers are inheriting no coronavirus vaccine distribution plan to speak of from the Trump administration, sources tell CNN, posing a

significant challenge for the new White House. The Biden administration has promised to try to turn the Covid-19 pandemic around and drastically speed up the pace of vaccinating Americans against the virus. But in the immediate hours following Biden being sworn into office on Wednesday, sources with direct knowledge of the new administration's Covid-related work told CNN one of the biggest shocks that the Biden team had to digest during the transition period was what they saw as a complete lack of a vaccine distribution strategy under former President Donald Trump, even weeks after multiple vaccines were approved for use in the United States." [CNN, [1/21/21](#)]

**NBC News: Regarding Becerra's Confirmation As HHS Secretary, "A Delay Could Complicate Biden's COVID-19 Response."** "While Democrats remain confident that Becerra's confirmation is not in any real danger, a delay could complicate Biden's Covid-19 response." [NBC News, [12/28/20](#)]

- **HHS Is A "Crucial Agency Amid The Pandemic That Will Be Tasked With Distributing Hundreds Of Millions Of Coronavirus Vaccines."** "If confirmed, Becerra would become the first Latino to lead HHS, a crucial agency amid the pandemic that will be tasked with distributing hundreds of millions of coronavirus vaccines." [Newsweek, [12/7/20](#)]