

Some Americans resist COVID vaccines as world faces shortage

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A woman receives a COVID-19 vaccine at Jordan Downs in Los Angeles, California on March 10, 2021 [File: Lucy Nicholson/Reuters]

San Francisco, June 5 (RHC)-- California held its first COVID-19 lottery on Friday, which saw 15 vaccinated residents of the state win \$50,000 each as part of a host of efforts across the United States to encourage Americans reluctant to take one of the country's jabs, as the world struggles with rising cases and deaths amid a global shortage.

California is the most populous state in the U.S., with nearly 40 million residents, and its program is the largest in the nation. The state government has set aside \$116 million in cash prizes and incentives as part of “Vax for the Win” -- including awarding a \$50 grocery gift card to the first 2 million people vaccinated since May 27.

Faced with a nationwide slowdown, other states have undertaken similar lotteries, including Washington, Colorado and Ohio, which has already given \$1 million to two vaccinated residents as part of a lottery that will give away \$5 million in total. Ohio’s governor Mike DeWine congratulated the second winner on Twitter.

Anyone 12 and older who has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is eligible for California’s giveaways, Southern California’s ABC 7 reported.

The head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday urged American parents to vaccinate adolescent children. Dr Rochelle Walensky cited “severe health impacts of COVID-19 on adolescents” and a report on a spike in hospitalizations in that age group.

The U.S. began vaccinating children with the Pfizer jab on May 10, but the World Health Organization has said children – who face little danger of death from the virus – are “not a high priority” as the global shortage continues.

The lotteries are meant to help reach President Joe Biden’s goal of 70 percent of the US fully vaccinated by July 4. The Biden administration has partnered with childcare providers to offer free childcare to those who get the vaccine, and some businesses are offering incentives like free groceries and beer.

More than 596,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the US, according to the Johns Hopkins University tally, the highest in the world.

The U.S. saw most of these deaths occur in 2020, before the country became one of the world’s leading nations for vaccinations. Biden said he envisioned a “summer of freedom, a summer of joy, a summer of get-togethers and celebrations, an all-American summer that this country deserves after a long, long dark winter.”

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