

## Community Weeklies Vaccine Update Week of 2-1-21

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It's hard to believe that we have been in Phase 1b distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in our community for only three weeks. Yet in that time, together with our partners, we have dispensed over 10,000 shots to frontline essential workers and some of our most vulnerable citizens.

We so wish that we had more vaccine to provide. Unfortunately, for the foreseeable future, the Roanoke City Alleghany Health Districts (RCAHD) expect to receive only 3,150 doses per week. We are committed to doing the best we can with the vaccine we receive.

We know many people have questions about how appointments are scheduled. Here are some FAQs:

### **Who is being vaccinated now?**

The current priority groups include:

- Health care workers
- Residents aged 75 and up
- The first 3 tiers of essential workers:
  - Law enforcement, Fire, and Hazmat
  - Corrections and homeless shelter residents and staff
  - Licensed Childcare/ PreK-12 Teachers/Staff (public and private)

Because we have reached, or have plans in place to reach, most of the group qualifying as Phase 1a (health care providers and long-term care facilities), our emphasis will remain on vaccinating specific priorities in Phase 1b for the coming weeks. We do not expect to be able to vaccinate all those who are eligible in Phase 1b until March or later, depending on the vaccine supply.

While we intend to continue prioritizing those residents over the age of 75 because they are the most likely to have poor outcomes associated with COVID-19 (including hospitalization and even death), we are opening our vaccine clinics to people on the aged 65 and up who are on the waitlist (see below).

### **How do I join the waitlist?**

Residents who are interested in receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and who are eligible under Phase 1a or Phase 1b, have a few actions that can be taken now to prepare:

- If you are aged 65 and up or aged 16-64 years old with certain medical conditions that increase your risk of severe illness from COVID-19, fill out our brief online survey on the RCAHD website (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/roanoke/>) with your contact information to express interest in receiving the vaccine. By completing this survey, you will join the group interested in receiving notifications about vaccine availability. Filling out this form does NOT reserve you a vaccine nor guarantee appointment availability. As clinics are planned, RCAHD and our healthcare partners will reach out to eligible individuals in this group, either by email or phone.

- If you are part of Phase 1c or the general public, please stay tuned to the media, our website and social media to learn when we will have enough supplies to begin vaccinating these groups.
- If you are an essential worker in other tiers of Phase 1b or Phase 1c, ask your employer to collect a list of email addresses and submit them as instructed on the RCAHD website.

As we have appointment openings a registration link will be sent to your email if you provided it, or you will receive a phone call. Providing us with an email address may allow us to notify you more quickly, however we are working to address disparities among those without online access. Emailed registration links are intended for you alone and should not be shared with others. Those not eligible or properly registered for an appointment will be turned away onsite.

*Please help us keep our phone lines open for our community members who do not have access to a computer or the internet by visiting our website rather than calling your local health department.*

### **How long will it be until I get a vaccine?**

After you complete the survey, we ask that you remain patient as it will take weeks to schedule vaccines for all who currently qualify.

### **Will I be able to receive my second dose?**

Currently, the RCAHD allotment of vaccines automatically includes orders for second doses. Going forward, most will be registered for second doses onsite when you receive your first dose.

### **Why are other health districts vaccinating more people/ other Phase 1b priorities?**

While all health districts in the Commonwealth follow the vaccine phases outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and State of Virginia, different health districts have varying vaccine allotments, resources, partners, and unique populations and communities. For example, a district with fewer police and health care workers may have been able to begin vaccinating teachers more quickly than other districts.

### **Actions for the public to take?**

Help us help you. If you are interested in receiving information, please take our survey and stay tuned into local media, our website, and our Facebook page for updates.

The COVID-19 vaccine is just one tool in our public health tool box. We must continue to be vigilant in practicing social distancing, wearing a mask, washing our hands, covering our cough, and staying home when feeling unwell. Using all of these public health tools even after you receive your COVID-19 vaccine will help our community recover more quickly.

Please note that RCAHD staff are not able to project when you will be able to be vaccinated.

Community members without access to the internet or a computer or modest computer literacy skills may call their local health department office for assistance. Our offices are open Monday-Fridays, 8:00 AM- 4:30 PM.