



Panhandle Health District

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Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Katherine Hoyer

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208-415-5108

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Begins in Panhandle Health District Area

Idaho Panhandle — With the first COVID-19 vaccine shipments having arrived in the Panhandle Health District (PHD) region earlier this week, PHD continues to coordinate the vaccine distribution throughout Kootenai, Bonner, Boundary, Benewah, and Shoshone counties.

The first vaccine shipments sent to PHD's region included 1,950 doses of the [Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#), which are being divided between healthcare entities that have enrolled as COVID-19 vaccine providers who are taking care of positive COVID -19 patients.

“This is the moment we’ve all been waiting for and it’s important to take a minute to celebrate this momentous accomplishment for our country and our region,” said Lora Whalen, District Director for PHD. “There is light at the end of this pandemic. We expect that the vaccine will be widely available to the general public by spring 2021, so it’s important to continue to practice the preventative measures we have available to us; wear a mask in public, keep your distance from others, wash your hands frequently, and stay home if you are sick.”

With an anticipated upcoming shipment of the 4,000 Moderna vaccines to PHD's jurisdiction, pending the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization, PHD staff have been actively planning for the allocation of doses with various healthcare entities and providers. Though shipments of the Moderna vaccine are anticipated soon, PHD's jurisdiction will continue receiving regular shipments of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

The vaccine is in limited supply right now, so the Idaho COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (CVAC) has recommended priority groups that should receive the vaccine first. In the first shipment, the Panhandle area will be following the CVAC guidance and

vaccinating frontline health care workers that are caring for COVID-19 patients and home healthcare workers who are caring for COVID-19 patients.

Additional shipments are expected this month, so we can continue to follow the CVAC plan on distribution.

Phase 1a includes healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities. Skilled nurses and those working in assisted living and intermediate care facilities are counted as healthcare workers in this phase. More specifically, the initial shipment of vaccine is destined for hospital staff and outpatient clinic staff who provide care for COVID-19 patients. The facilities will determine a schedule for their workers.

Specifically, Phase 1a individuals include the following:

- Hospital staff essential for care of COVID-19 patients and maintaining hospital capacity
- Outpatients clinic staff essential for care of COVID-19 patients and maintaining hospital capacity
- Long-term care facility staff
- Home care providers for adults 65 years of age and older or for other adults or children with high-risk medical conditions
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Outpatient and inpatient medical staff not already included above who are unable to telework
- Dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants
- Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy aides
- Public health and emergency management response workers who are unable to telework

The federal government has set up a pharmacy partnership program that will deploy strike teams to ensure long-term care facility residents and staff are vaccinated.

CVAC has made recommendations on which populations should be prioritized for Phase 1b. The decision will ultimately be made by Gov. Brad Little. CVAC is recommending that Phase 1b of the vaccination plan include essential workers not included in Phase 1a. CVAC is recommending the following types of essential workers be prioritized for vaccination in Phase 1b in the following order:

- First responders, including fire, police, protective services and community support personnel.
- Pre-K-12 school staff and teachers and daycare workers
- Correctional and detention facility staff, except medical staff already in Phase 1a
- Food processing workers
- Grocery and convenience store workers
- Idaho National Guard

- Other essential workers not already included and unable to telework or social distance at work

Panhandle Health District will continue to communicate with the community as greater supply of the vaccine becomes available. If you are a part of the priority groups listed above, the health district and community partners enrolled to administer the vaccine will coordinate with your employer as vaccine is made available.

Once there is enough supply, COVID-19 vaccination providers may choose to make their location visible on VaccineFinder, making it easier for the general public to find provider locations that have COVID-19 vaccine available. CDC will direct the public to use VaccineFinder to find locations offering COVID-19 vaccine. Panhandle Health District will continue to communicate with the community as greater supply of the vaccine becomes available. If you are a part of the priority groups listed above, the health district and community partners enrolled to administer the vaccine will coordinate with your employer as vaccine is made available.

If you are a healthcare provider and fit within the priority group in Phase 1 and you would like to provide vaccine through your facility, please contact the [Idaho Immunization Program](#) for enrollment information.

More information on COVID-19 vaccine

Panhandle Health District | Visit PHD's COVID-19 webpage where information on the vaccine can be found under the Frequently Asked Questions section and is being updated as information becomes available. <https://panhandlehealthdistrict.org/covid-19/>

State of Idaho | COVID-19 vaccine information – including a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/covid-19-vaccine/>

Idaho's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee (CVAC) | meetings are open to the public and can be viewed online at <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/idaho-covid-19-vaccine-advisory-committee/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) | <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

Food & Drug Administration (FDA) | <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>

If you have questions about COVID-19 in our area, call PHD's COVID-19 hotline Monday – Friday, 8am-5pm, 877-415-5225.

Panhandle Health District provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.

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