
CLEVELAND COUNTY

PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

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Cleveland County Government Shares Updated Rollout Plan for COVID-19 Vaccinations

SHELBY, NC – The Cleveland County Health Department today announces it has updated its vaccination plan to align with a new North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) prioritization framework issued last week. The State’s framework is the guiding document used by local health departments to determine citizen vaccination eligibility and timing. Because vaccine supplies are currently limited, the vaccine distribution is being rolled out in phases. According to NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, limited supplies mean that it is going to be several months before vaccines will be widely available to everyone.

At their December 15 meeting, the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners was presented with a vaccination plan, which included use of the Moderna vaccine. Following approval of that plan, the County immediately began implementing phase 1A — which is dedicated to healthcare providers, senior living facilities, and first responders. To date, the Health Department has been allotted a total of 1,100 vaccine doses from the NCDHHS. According to Cleveland County Health Director Tiffany Hanson, the County has been conducting two (2) vaccine clinics per week and will have allocated all 1,100 doses that will conclude Phase 1A by January 8.

Under the updated framework, Phase 1B is now adjusted to focus on prioritizing residents’ age versus those with chronic conditions. In Phase 1B, the vaccine will be made available first to **Group 1**, which are adults 75 years or older regardless of medical condition or living situation.

The County will be vaccinating a limited number of group 1 the week of January 11. All available doses have been allocated through calls to the COVID helpline.

The timing of Phase 1B, Group 1's (> 75) mass vaccination rollout is primarily dependent on the weekly dosage allocation received from NCDHHS. There are approximately 8,000 residents in Cleveland County that qualify for Phase 1B, Group 1, and the County is preparing to begin a Point of Distribution (POD) regional mass vaccination drive through plan the week of January 18.

“The mass vaccination plan remains fluid, with many unknown variables including citizen engagement rate, vaccine dose availability, and any other changes that may be communicated from the CDC or NCDHHS as we move forward,” Cleveland County Health Director Tiffany Hansen said.

Based on a vaccine efficiency impact analysis, migration patterns, and general logistics, there will be up to four (4) POD locations – with only one being utilized at a time:

1. Burns Middle School
2. Kings Mountain Intermediate School
3. Crest High School
4. The LeGrand Center

County officials believe that there is capacity to hold three (3) mass drive through vaccination clinics per week. The LeGrand Center would be a standing site that is used weekly, and the other school sites will be utilized on Wednesdays and Saturdays on a rotating basis.

For the initial rollout of Phase 1B, the County has compartmentalized residents based on age, demographics, and physical address into geographic regions of the County. The county receives vaccine dosages on a weekly basis. Once the Health Department confirms adequate vaccine inventory for that week, that number of Phase 1B, Group 1 members will receive a letter in the mail confirming their eligibility and their personal designated vaccination site and timing – which could begin as early as January 18, 2021. The mailed letters will discuss registration requirements, daily drive through logistics, and call-in information for scheduling conflicts.

Instructions regarding the second dose appointment will be provided when they receive their first dose.

As more vaccines become available, guidance for the following Phase 1B groups will be released:

- Group 2: Health care and frontline essential workers who are 50 years of age or older.
- Group 3: Frontline workers of any age and health care workers of any age, regardless of whether they work directly with COVID-19 patients.

Below is a summary of the vaccination phases per NCDHHS:

Phase 1A (current phase): Health care workers working closely with COVID-19; long-term care staff and residents.

- Hospitals and local health departments are vaccinating health care workers caring for and working directly with patients with COVID-19 and those giving vaccines. In addition, the federal government is vaccinating long-term care residents and staff.

Phase 1B: Adults 75 years or older; frontline essential workers.

- **Group 1:** Anyone at least 75 years old regardless of medical condition or living situation. People do not have to have a chronic health condition.
- **Group 2:** Health care and frontline essential workers who are 50 years of age or older.
- **Group 3:** Frontline workers of any age and health care workers of any age, regardless of whether they work directly with COVID-19 patients. This phase is anticipated to begin in early January.

The CDC defines frontline essential workers as first responders (firefighters, police), education (child care, teachers, support staff), manufacturing, corrections officers, public transit, grocery store, food and agriculture, and United States Postal Service employees.

Phase 2: Adults at high risk for exposure and at increased risk of severe illness.

- **Group 1:** Anyone ages 65-74 years old, regardless of medical condition or living situation.
- **Group 2:** Anyone 16-64 years with a medical condition that increases risk of severe disease from COVID-19.
- **Group 3:** Anyone who is incarcerated or living in other close group living settings who has not already been vaccinated.
- **Group 4:** Essential workers, as defined by the CDC, who have not yet been vaccinated.

Phase 3: Students.

- College, university, and high school students at least 16 years old.
- Children under 16 will only be vaccinated when the vaccine is approved for them.

Phase 4: Anyone else who wants a COVID-19 vaccine.

All vaccine providers are expected to ensure that vaccine is administered equitably within each group.

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