

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE

DATE: February 3, 2021

TO: Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Kelly McKone, Director of Organizational Performance, Office of the County Executive

SUBJECT: **An informational report from the Office of the County Executive, providing an update on the vaccine rollout for Milwaukee County Government**

Background

Shortly after the vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna were approved for emergency use authorization, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided its first guidance to states on what groups of individuals should be included in the first phase of vaccinations. Administering the vaccine in phases is widely considered necessary by public health professionals due to the demand for the vaccine greatly outstripping the supply – meaning that public health professionals needed to decide whom to administer the vaccine to first to most promote public health. ACIP recommended a 3-phase approach that has been widely accepted and is in use by many of the states.

Though the CDC’s ACIP guidance is considered heavily persuasive on state vaccination decisions, the states make a final call on who is included in their vaccine phases. In Wisconsin, the state analog of ACIP – the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee (SDMAC) Vaccine Advisory Committee – provides a recommendation, which is then acted on by the State Department of Health Services (DHS). The Vaccine Advisory Committee is made up of 16 members who are either medical practitioners or medical administrative professionals. This group makes their decisions based on epidemiologic science, ethics, and administration feasibility.

This group has twice-weekly, open-to-the-public meetings to discuss the groups to be included of each vaccination phase. They most recently announced their recommendations for Phase 1b, which was formally adopted wholesale by the DHS and included first responders, some essential workers, and staff and residents in congregate living facilities, among others. SDMAC received over 5,000 public comments on their draft recommendations and discussed them at length before finalizing the recommendations. Detailed minutes of their proceedings, as well as complete recordings of each of their meetings, can be found at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/sdmac/index.htm>

The State DHS is also not opening eligibility to Phase 1b groups all at once, but rather has rank-ordered future eligible populations and is expected to expand eligibility to each group in turn as vaccine supplies allow. Instead of talking about phases 1a, 1b, and so on, the language has shifted more to “Currently Eligible Populations” and “Next Eligible Groups.”

Discussion

It is a policy priority for County Executive Crowley to keep critical services running as safely as possible for our employees, service providers, and the public during the pandemic. There are many strategies to achieving this goal, one of which is the efficient, equitable rollout of the vaccine. Below are key aspects of Milwaukee County's strategy for vaccine rollout:

- **Our Role as a Vaccinator:** Milwaukee County has two approved vaccinators. One is the Behavioral Health Division (BHD), which has a fairly narrowly defined target population in its employee base. The larger vaccinator is the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Community Oriented Regional EMS Team ("CORE Team"), which is operating the County's vaccine clinic.
- **County Vaccination Clinic Overview:** OEM runs the vaccination clinic for the County and will likely continue running the clinic at least into summer 2021.
 - *Who can access the site?* The County's site is a "closed POD," meaning it is invite-only and is not open to the general public. This allows us to make sure target populations have easy, efficient access to the vaccine and enables us to target more-vulnerable populations with our supplies, thereby advancing our vision of promoting equity and health in the community we serve. Eligible employees, eligible employees of affiliated organizations, and eligible service users from vulnerable groups are the primary groups targeted for inclusion in the County's closed POD. The prioritization of who is vaccinated at the closed POD is as follows; note that it is extremely rare to have to go beyond Priority Group 2 in any substantial numbers:
 - **Priority 1 Group:** Prescheduled, [state-approved](#) county employees/affiliates.
 - **Priority 2 Group:** Prescheduled, [state-approved](#) healthymke.com or local health dept unaffiliated groups/persons.
 - **Priority 3 Group:** Should there be vacancies identified on the same day of operations with the need to fill less than 10 spots with more than 2 hours open – contacts from OEM CORE Team that are known to be within the state approved phase guidelines. If more than 10 spots are open, the extra vial(s) should be conserved and stored for future clinical days.
 - **Priority 4 Group:** Readily available employees or community members who can respond on short notice.
 - **Priority 5 Group:** If all options have been exhausted, any eligible person that meets state guideline and is able to consent to the screening may be considered.
 - *Where is the site located?* The current clinic is located at a site near the airport, but the location is being moved this month. The tentative plan is to move to the Kosciuszko ("Kozy") Community Center mid-February so the site can be more-easily accessed by users and so OEM can safely expand its vaccination capacity while accommodating physical distancing requirements.
- **OEM Vaccination Efforts to Date:** As of February 1, 2021, OEM has administered 964 first doses and 16 second doses of the vaccine. OEM has been receiving Moderna vaccine to date. The bulk

of these vaccines have gone to emergency medical services (EMS) and law enforcement personnel working in Milwaukee County. OEM has also started vaccinating healthcare workers in affiliated organizations and other eligible groups connected to them through the UEOC's Connector Tool.

- **Process for Determining Eligibility:** Milwaukee County strictly follows State DHS guidelines when determining whether a person is eligible for the vaccine or not. However, there is still a lot of gray area with State guidance. In instances where we are unsure of eligibility, OEM and the County Executive's Office consult public health and medical professionals to make a determination. The OEM consent and scheduling process includes another layer of quality assurance for affiliate organizations and employees trying to get vaccinated. While robust quality assurance measures are in place, managers in the County and affiliated organizations are still the best experts for determining where their employees fit into State DHS guidelines and we ask these stakeholders to be honest and fair when assigning employees to a given group. This is critical to the success of the County's vaccination efforts, as going outside of DHS guidelines is extremely frowned upon and can result in decreased vaccine supplies or, in extreme cases, revocation of a vaccinator's status.
- **Process for Vaccinating Employees:** The County vaccination team uses its position control employee list to guide decision making around eligibility, as appropriate. This is an ongoing effort as State DHS determines future eligible groups. The vaccination team sends a department their employee list and asks them to crosswalk their employees to defined DHS vaccine categories based on job duties. Some categories are based on demographic information (e.g., people age 65+), in which case employees are notified to volunteer this information to their managers to get them invited to the clinic. Once departments crosswalk their lists, public health experts perform quality assurance on the assignments to be sure managers were understanding the guidance in a similar way. Once an employee group is eligible to receive the vaccine:
 - Department leadership and/or management will be notified that their eligible employees are invited to sign up at the OEM vaccination clinic.
 - **Invitations to employees will come from their management.** Employees should never invite other employees and therefore should never accept an invitation from someone other than their manager. This helps ensure that only eligible individuals are being vaccinated and that the County's POD is servicing the target populations.
 - Managers send a standard PDF to their eligible employees who have been invited to the OEM clinic. The PDF includes read-ahead materials about the vaccine (including the Moderna EUA Fact Sheet), a consent form, instructions about how to schedule an appointment, and directions to the clinic. Departments may have local policies for when employees can sign up for the vaccine to accommodate operational needs.

The process works similarly for affiliated organizations, though the management from the affiliate group handles communications with their organization with little involvement from the County. The process for vaccinating service users from vulnerable populations is still being worked out, as we need to be sensitive to technology barriers that exist for many of these individuals. The County vaccination team, along with the support of the Department of Health

and Human Services (DHHS), is confident that we will be able to meet the needs of this group in order to get them connected to the vaccine efficiently and safely.

- **Communications:** We have a newly established communications team to support communication and change management efforts across the workforce. The primary objective of this team is to help improve the acceptance rate of the vaccine by implementing best practices from the CDC, State DHS, and other organizations that are timely and relevant to different employee groups. They also support messaging to service users who we anticipate including in the County's closed POD. Their efforts to date have largely focused on employee groups who are currently eligible or who will be eligible soon; more broad-based efforts and focused planning for future eligible groups will expand over time so all employees have the information they need to make an informed decision about getting the vaccine.

Next Steps

- The OEM team is actively working to move its location from the airport building to the Kozy Community Center. This will require IT enhancements and engineering controls in the facility, which will be supported by the Department of Administrative Services. The tentative open date for the new location is February 22, 2021. Capacity at this site will be 1,000 doses per week (includes both first and second doses).
- Departments and elected officials will conduct another crosswalk of their employee lists to the newly-issued guidance for upcoming eligible lists so the Vaccination Team can invite groups to get vaccinated as soon as they become eligible.
- The Vaccination Team will continue to work with the City Health Department and DHHS to break down access barriers to vaccination clinics to promote the equitable distribution of the vaccine in our community.
- The Vaccination Team will continue to work with affiliate organizations to determine their eligible employees and invite them to the County's POD when they become eligible.
- The County Executive's Office will continue to support the work of the Unified Emergency Operations Center (UEOC) to identify and pursue local and regional solutions that increase vaccination capacity for the community.

Kelly McKone

Kelly McKone, Director of Organizational Performance
Office of the County Executive