



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

City of New Bedford
Office of the Mayor
Contact: Jonathan Carvalho
(508) 979-1410
jcarvalho@newbedford-ma.gov

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

City of New Bedford provides update on COVID-19 vaccination efforts

Access to vaccine supplies remains a challenge

New Bedford, Massachusetts— Ongoing vaccine supply shortages continue to impede the City of New Bedford's multi-pronged vaccination effort. Despite the challenge, last month, the City was able to begin vaccinating its 600+ first responders and nursing/health staff with the first dose of the Moderna vaccine. Administration of a second dose to first responders including EMS, Police, Fire, and nursing/health staff continues this month at the established vaccination clinic at the Andrea McCoy Recreation Center. More than 400 first responders and essential employees have received their first dose at McCoy, with nearly 200 receiving their second dose to date.

Massachusetts entered Phase 2 of its vaccination distribution plan on February 1. Under the current stage of Phase 2, all adults 75 years and older are eligible for vaccination. For its part, the City's Health Department has chosen to target the majority of its limited vaccine resources to the city's major senior housing facilities, including several high-rise complexes dedicated to seniors. Residents in these facilities are particularly vulnerable as the facilities often contain common areas with transmission potential and residents have high rates of medical conditions making them susceptible to the COVID-19 virus. Statistics show that just under 80% of the city's COVID-19 fatalities to date have been among those age 70 and over.

To date, the Health Department has administered 492 vaccines at senior living facilities. New Bedford has more than 20 senior housing complexes, and clinics are being scheduled with the management of each facility so that residents can be signed up automatically and vaccinated at a designated time.

A separate federal program using private healthcare companies is vaccinating the city's nursing home residents.

In total the City's Health Department is currently receiving 400 vaccine doses per week, with an additional allocation for second doses. 300 of the 400 are distributed through the mobile vaccination clinics at senior apartments described above. The remaining 100 continue to be administered to first responders and nursing/health staff needing first or second doses, as well as a small number of eligible seniors age 75 or older who have inquired about vaccine availability with the city's Health Department, Community Services Department, or Council on Aging (COA).

New Bedford residents over the age of 75 are encouraged to contact their primary health care provider or doctor's office to schedule a vaccination appointment. Because of the short supply, the Council on Aging is only able to schedule a very limited amount of vaccinations. About 400 residents over 75 have been scheduled to be vaccinated over the course of the next month at the McCoy vaccination site, with more than 100 currently on a COA waiting list.

The City's Council on Aging continues to receive hundreds of calls inquiring about local vaccination opportunities. The COA staff are pleased to discuss vaccine options and receive contact information from eligible seniors who would be interested in obtaining a vaccine from a city-run clinic in the future. Residents are advised that city-run clinics are not currently listed on the state's regional vaccination site due to their very limited scale. It is hoped that, as the city obtains greater access to vaccine supplies, perhaps in the coming weeks, listings for city-run clinics will be posted on state and city websites.

In the interim, residents 75 and above may call the Council on Aging at 508-991-6250 but again are advised that the current wait time for scheduling a vaccine with the city-run clinics is more than a month due to the supply shortage. Due to high call volume, residents are encouraged to call once; messages will be returned and residents will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which their calls are received.

Given the limitations on city-run clinics due to the supply shortage, residents 75 and above are encouraged, as a first step, to contact their primary health care provider or doctor's office, as local health systems are also beginning to vaccinate under Phase 2. Residents 75 and above may also sign up for non-city-run clinics through the state's regional vaccination sites, mass.gov/covidvaccine or by dialing 211 by telephone.

A new state-run site was recently announced by the state for Greater New Bedford, located at the former Circuit City store on State Road (Route 6) in Dartmouth, and appointments can be made for that site beginning February 18 on the state sign-up website.

The City will continue to provide new information as its vaccine access increases and opportunities for vaccination through city-run clinics is expanded. Residents should monitor local media outlets and the City's social media accounts for these developments.

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