



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
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December 22, 2020

**TO:** All DOC Staff

**FROM:** Dan Johnson, Assistant Secretary, Health Services  
Frank Longano, Deputy Chief Medical Officer

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 Vaccine Information and Update

On December 16, 2020, we shared initial information with you on our ongoing communication with the [Washington State Department of Health](#) (DOH) regarding distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. We also shared this brief survey, [available here](#), seeking information about your current state of readiness to accept the COVID-19 vaccination.

While we cannot yet provide specific dates, we hope to receive our first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines soon. The Washington State Department of Corrections is currently developing a priority list to ensure those who need it most are vaccinated first. This prioritization applies to both staff and incarcerated individuals. While we would prefer to vaccinate all of the Department's employees and incarcerated individuals as soon as possible, vaccine doses will initially be very limited so we must prioritize doses to the highest risk individuals. Corrections has developed a COVID-19 vaccine team with representatives from all Department divisions, who are currently working on a plan for prioritization, receipt, distribution, and administration of the vaccine.

The Department's priority list is based on the [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) and DOH's phased recommendations for vaccine dosing prioritization. The recommendation for phase 1A is that workers in high risk health care settings and patients in long term care facilities be offered the first available doses of vaccine. This is to ensure that patients with the highest risk for severe COVID-19 disease and workers with the highest risk of being infected are vaccinated first, particularly at those facilities currently in outbreak status. The vaccine team has identified staff working in inpatient units, Regional Care Facilities, and isolation units as our staff with the highest risk of infection. Additionally, staff and all incarcerated individuals working or residing in Coyote Ridge Corrections Center, Sage East unit have been identified for priority vaccination. If you have been identified as a candidate for vaccination, your vaccine coordinator will contact you in the coming weeks as vaccine

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shipments begin to arrive.

In the coming weeks and months, as we receive doses and further prioritization guidelines are issued by the CDC and DOH, all Corrections staff and incarcerated individuals will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine. While COVID-19 vaccination is not required, we are strongly recommending that all Corrections staff and incarcerated individuals get vaccinated. Getting vaccinated will help maintain a safe living and work environment and prevent COVID-19 outbreaks that threaten the health and well-being of all that live and work in Corrections facilities. While declining the vaccine is an option, the Department's goal is 100% vaccine coverage among staff and incarcerated individuals. Choosing to decline will not prevent you from working or receiving the vaccine in the future. If you initially decline the vaccine and then change your mind, notify your facility's COVID-19 Vaccine Coordinator via email. Contact information will be provided when it is available.

There is a lot of misinformation out there about COVID-19 vaccines. Please ensure you review [trusted sources](#) such as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the Washington State Department of Health for information related to COVID-19 immunizations.

Here are some important facts [about the vaccine](#) and how it works:

- You cannot get COVID-19 from any of the vaccines available as none of them contain whole virus.
- The vaccines are very safe and effective in preventing symptoms of COVID-19 infection.
- The vaccine helps get your immune system activated so if you are exposed to the virus, your body is prepared. This process can cause mild symptoms, such as muscle aches and fever, but this does not mean you have the virus.
- The vaccine helps your body make a plan to fight off the virus. After the vaccine, your body begins to make antibodies that will stay in your blood as protection in case the virus tries to invade. This allows your body to fight off the virus without you having to get sick first.
- When enough people have enough antibodies to fight off the virus, it has nowhere to go. This slows the spread. The more people who get the vaccine give us a greater chance of stopping the virus and getting closer to ending this pandemic.

Please remember to continue physically distancing, washing your hands, wearing a face mask, and using appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), these are the best methods, in addition to a vaccine, to ensure our coworkers and those in our custody remain safe and healthy.

Thank you again for the incredible hard work and sacrifice you have demonstrated since the pandemic began. We appreciate your efforts in keeping yourselves, your colleagues, and the lives entrusted to us, healthy.