Jan. 19 Update on COVID-19 Vaccinations in Delaware County

On Jan. 19, the Pennsylvania Department of Health announced 2 additional categories of eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccination as part of Phase 1A. Under the state’s new categories, all individuals 65 and older, and individuals ages 16-64 with certain medical conditions, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that increase the risk of severe illness from the virus, are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination. The Department’s updated Interim Vaccine Plan can be found here.

Those conditions are outlined by the CDC here and include: cancer; chronic kidney disease; COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease); Down Syndrome; heart conditions such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies; immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant, blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines; obesity; severe obesity; pregnancy; Sickle Cell Disease; smoking; and Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus.

The Chester County Health Department has adjusted its Phase 1A populations to include individuals 65 and older and those ages 16-64 with certain underlying medical conditions, to align with the recent announcement by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the recommendation from U.S. Health and Human Services Operation Warp Speed on January 12, 2021. The Health Department is currently working through the impact of this change on existing vaccination plans, operations and available vaccine supply, in coordination with other vaccine providers. Please be patient as we continue to vaccinate individuals as quickly as possible, given the current limited vaccine supply.

The Chester County Health Department will be updating its home page and vaccine webpage to include information and links for residents to learn more about the vaccine phases and to indicate interest in receiving a vaccine: https://chesco.org/4822/COVID19Vaccine

As of Jan. 19, 13,836 COVID-19 vaccines were administered in Delaware County, which is a similar rate compared to neighboring counties. Delaware County is committed to ensuring a safe and timely distribution of the COVID-19 vaccination and continues to work with the County’s hospitals and the Chester County Health Department to administer the vaccine as quickly as possible. Vaccine remains very limited.
Once Phase 1A is complete, the County will vaccinate **Phase 1B priority groups**. Phase 1B includes Childcare Staff, Corrections Staff, County, and Municipal Administration Staff, Educators/Education Staff, Firefighters, Food and Agriculture Staff, Grocery Store Staff, Law Enforcement, Manufacturing Staff, Transit Staff, and U.S. Postal Service Staff.

While we do not have a definitive time for advancing into Phase 1B, we are eager to move into that phase once we confirm that Phase 1A is well enough underway, and we are not limited in our vaccine supply. Phase 1B groups are encouraged to educate their workforce about the importance of receiving the vaccine.

The County continues to plan for wider vaccination. Vaccination efforts remain very complex and fluid and rely on the availability of vaccine. The County will open the Delaware County Wellness Center next week. The Delaware County Wellness Center, located in Yeadon will serve as a storage and vaccination site. Additional vaccine sites will also be located in Aston and Chester, as well as other locations in the county. More information will be released in the future.

Currently, there are two authorized and recommended vaccines to prevent COVID-19 which are being distributed throughout Pennsylvania, including in Delaware County. Both vaccines require two doses for full effectiveness. A second shot is given three weeks after the first shot in order to provide the most protection against COVID-19.

Vaccines are safe, effective, and a key strategy to protect all residents from serious illness. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has ensured the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines. The requirements to show that the vaccines are functional and safe have been met, with a quicker process and an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). More information on the vaccine approval process can be found here: [www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines/emergency-use-authorization-vaccines-explained](http://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines/emergency-use-authorization-vaccines-explained)

The COVID-19 vaccine will not be a cure for the virus. It is another tool in the fight against COVID-19. Residents must continue to practice other proven mitigation efforts, including wearing a mask, hand washing, and physical distancing.