



Meeting Notes Summary: 2/10/2021

Kim Toevs, Director, Communicable Disease, Harm Reduction, Youth Sexual Health Equity Programs for the County's Public Health Division provided an overview of the vaccine rollout, which was followed by a Q&A and discussion with providers.

Updates on COVID-19 vaccinations in Multnomah County:

- Public Health - working since December to get people vaccinated, starting with those in the 1A group vaccinated (the eligible categories are determined by the State). Over time, additional groups of people have become eligible for vaccination, including teachers and those over 80 years of age among others.
- Multnomah County receives only 20% of the State's vaccine supply for allocation.
- For the 80% distributed to other health systems, the decision was made to centralize vaccinations. Locally that is being done at the Oregon Convention Center.
- The Federal government has also been making some doses available to pharmacies directly. That should increase over the coming weeks, with doses to be made available to the 80+ cohort through pharmacies.
- As new categories of people become eligible for vaccination, the County faces additional difficulties in allocating the doses that it administers.
- The county Public Health is on racial health equity in vaccine-related decisions. This has included making it easier for vulnerable populations, including the BIPOC community, to access vaccines at community vaccination sites, for example. Those sites have been staffed by student nurses and paramedics, and the County has been involving community health workers and community partners.
- Public Health is mindful that, especially in communities of color, there is reluctance to take the vaccine, so information must be made available to these communities through trusted partners. Public Health will continue to help create dialogue about vaccine safety and efficacy. Information will be made available without creating pressure on community members.

Topics Discussed:

- Providers shared personal experiences and noted that particularly in the Black community, the history of racism and mistrust of the medical system, is causing community members to hesitate to get vaccinated. Providers noted the need to get correct information from trusted community members and leaders about the vaccine. This getting accurate information from trusted sources is especially needed to counter the misinformation that is spreading within the community, including over social

media. It is also important for members of the black community to see their community leaders getting vaccinated – acting as role models.

- Public Health acknowledged the need for more and better access to education around vaccines within the black community and other communities in which it is challenging to reach the vulnerable. More work needs to be done to share information to SUD providers and with the Behavioral Health sector. Anthony and the Addiction's Team are willing to work with Public Health to make sure information gets out to these communities.
- Public health has liaisons that connect with a variety of service providers. These liaisons help providers get information out to their clients. It sounds like the liaison is not as connected with this community of providers. Lindsay and Anthony will send names to people within this provider network that should receive this information and be on the calls with the liaisons.
- Public Health can train behavioral health staff in vaccine education. There are also community forums for dialogue on testing and vaccines. Several are coming up, one of which will include faith leaders and one for African immigrants. Public Health will share this information.
- Public Health is also looking to make some vaccine doses available to faith or community leaders that can serve as role-models for their community in order to reduce vaccine hesitancy and increase uptake.

Q&A

- *Q: What does the overall shortage of doses mean for the administration of second doses?*

A: So far, second doses have been reserved and available for those that had received first doses and that should remain the case. The state has been making sure that second doses are reserved before they release new first doses. The main issue is that there is not enough vaccine to cover the newly eligible.

- *Q: There is a lack of outreach, particularly to communities of color, for both vaccination and testing. What is being doing about that? Can the County come out to make testing available directly in the community?*

A: After initial difficulties with accessing testing in the spring, when testing was offered primarily through hospital systems, things started to improve. The County was able to hire enough staff to start doing BIPOC-focused, lower-barrier testing in neighborhoods. There are currently several sites including in East County, Gresham, and North East, that provide free testing five days a week for people with symptoms and/or who are contacts of a COVID-19 case. Beginning later in February/ March, the State will offer testing once a week for testing without symptoms.

- *Q: For vulnerable communities, including the Latinx community where many are likely to be essential workers, the hours available for vaccine appointments are problematic because they conflict with work. How is this being addressed? Would like to advocate for different hours for both testing and vaccines, including evenings and weekends.*

A: Vaccine clinics that are being set up for seniors will start on February 16th and the County is working with community partners and volunteer support to make have those clinics open on Saturdays and Sundays. Doses will be set aside at three clinics so that it is available during times – afternoon and early evening - that are more convenient for those who cannot make it during typical business hours. Public Health will share this concern to the State and other health systems that are currently controlling the rollout of 80% of vaccine doses.

- *Q: For people that miss their second dose, what is the recourse?*

A: It depends on where the person got the first dose. If it was administered at the convention center, the person could probably sign up for a second dose at some point. If it was at a special clinic, then the person may need to be slotted in elsewhere. The county is working on a smooth pathway to address this latter situation as more people will move during the period between their first and second doses. It is likely that those people likely to fall through will be the more vulnerable.

- *Q: Where can people get a second dose and what is the ideal time to get the second dose? What is ideal waiting time?*

A: It is likely that the easiest way to get the second dose is to go to the place where the first dose was administered. The wait time between doses for Pfizer-BioNTech is three weeks and the wait between doses of the Moderna vaccine is four weeks. There is a two week window for both vaccines.

- *Q: Where can people sign up for appointments to get first doses?*

A: Most of the doses will be provided at the convention center. There are still questions about when to sign up for appointments. Appointments are currently being released weekly on Monday mornings. That may change. Currently, signing up can be done online or by phone. The website is: <https://covidvaccine.oregon.gov/>. To schedule by phone, you can always have folks call 211 and they will be transferred to make the appointment. Those helping clients sign up can call 971-268-5550 directly for the convention center.