

Adam Crum
Commissioner

dhss.alaska.gov



**Department of Health
and Social Services**

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Clinton Bennett, DHSS, 907-269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov

Alaska Pioneer Homes begin vaccinating residents and staff

Dec. 18, 2020 ANCHORAGE – Vaccinations of the first Alaska Pioneer Homes residents and staff to protect against COVID-19 are beginning today, Dec. 18. As the first vaccines arrive in Alaska and are distributed across the state, the limited supplies are being prioritized for those most at risk, including residents and staff at long-term care facilities.

The Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes Director Heidi Hamilton and each of the homes' administrators have been planning and preparing for the vaccine's arrival so they could start vaccinating residents and staff as soon as possible. "We are all very excited to begin offering the vaccines at the state's Pioneer Homes so our elders can be protected and get back to their normal lives," said Director Hamilton.

Vaccines will be available to Pioneer Home residents in these ways:

- The Pioneer Homes' centralized pharmacy, which serves all six homes, has signed up to be a provider through the Department of Health and Social Services' Vaccine Distribution program allowing them to directly order vaccines for the homes.
- Carrs/Safeway has been identified as the partner pharmacy for the Alaska Pioneer Homes so they can come into the homes to provide vaccinations, which is anticipated to begin later this month.
- Points of dispensing (POD) agreements with the Division of Public Health in each of the homes' communities have been set up so PODs can be used to offer vaccinations, if needed.

While specific amounts and dates of availability are still being determined, the first group of residents and staff are starting to receive vaccinations at the Anchorage, Ketchikan and Palmer Homes today. Fairbanks will begin next week, and Sitka and Juneau will conduct vaccinations the last week of December.

Lana Bell, lead pharmacist for the Pioneer Homes pharmacy who is responsible for receiving the vaccines said, "We're grateful that our elders and staff are some of the first to be getting vaccinated. It

means we can all start to move toward a more normal life and stop living in fear. The vaccine is the best Christmas gift ever.”

Before they can receive the vaccine, residents – or their authorized representative – and staff must agree to be vaccinated and sign an informed consent form. All protocols required by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention for [administering the vaccine](#) will be followed, including monitoring everyone receiving a vaccine for any adverse reactions and reporting any incidents to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#).

The current identified groups to receive vaccine during Tier I and II of Phase 1a of the vaccine distribution plan include the following:

- Hospital-based front-line healthcare workers at highest risk for COVID-19 infection;
- Long-term care facility residents and staff (includes skilled nursing facilities, assisted living homes, and Department of Corrections infirmaries providing care that is similar to assisted living);
- EMS/fire personnel providing emergency medical services;
- Community Health Aide/Practitioners (CHA/Ps); and
- Individuals who are required to perform vaccinations.

Additional groups will be included as vaccine allocations are determined.

###