DPH Announces Plans to Distribute Moderna Vaccine

DOVER (Dec. 19, 2020) – As of Saturday, Dec. 19, Delaware has administered 2,061 doses of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to health care workers at six health care systems statewide and three long-term care facilities owned by Genesis HealthCare, Inc.

Additionally, the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing plans to distribute the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine that was granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration on Friday, Dec. 18, 2020.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee Immunization Practices (ACIP) also voted Saturday, Dec. 19, to recommend the EUA of the vaccine for individuals 18 and older. The Pfizer BioNTech vaccine is approved for use in persons 16 and older. CDC Director Robert Redfield must still approve the advisory committee's recommendations, but this is expected to occur this weekend as well. The ACIP recommendation and CDC sign-off are the final steps in the approval process before states can begin vaccinating residents.

Delaware is expected to receive 16,700 doses of the Moderna vaccine within the next few days, along with 2,925 doses of Pfizer. Most of the vaccines will be shipped directly to enrolled vaccine providers such as hospitals and Health Centers such as Henrietta Johnson Medical Center, Westside Family Healthcare and La Red Health Center. The remainder will be sent to DPH for distribution to EMS agencies and other settings. High-risk health care, long-term care, EMS and other health care personnel are part of those eligible to receive the vaccine in Phase 1a of distribution.

"We are excited about the approval of a second vaccine that is shown to be effective in preventing COVID-19," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "This will expand our ability to vaccinate more people in our state and increase protection from this deadly virus."

The Moderna vaccine, which has a 94.1 percent efficacy rate, does not contain the live virus and cannot give someone the coronavirus.

The potential side effects from the Moderna vaccine are similar to those experienced by people who receive the shingles vaccine: fever, headaches, and muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes in the same arm as the injection, nausea and vomiting. Of note, more people experienced these side effects after the second dose than after the first dose, so it is important for vaccination providers and recipients to expect that there may be some side effects after either dose, but even more so after the second dose. Side effects are reported to go away within one to three days, and although not dangerous, may feel unpleasant. Unless symptoms worsen or linger, there is no need to seek medical care. Moderna reported no serious side effects from the vaccine.

The Moderna vaccine does require two doses spaced about four weeks apart to be effective. The same brand of vaccine must be administered for both doses. DPH and providers plan to remind individuals to get their second dose of the vaccine by sending reminder letters, providing automated phone calls and text messages and through patient record cards. Second dose reminders will begin to go out from DPH just prior to or after the Christmas holiday.

Moderna has set up a call center for questions from the public and providers. The Moderna call center is operational 24 hours per day, seven days per week at: **1-866-MODERNA (1-866-663-3762).** Moderna is advising high volumes of calls between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

DPH has set up a Delaware-specific Vaccine Call Center; the number is 302-672-6150. Those who are deaf or hard of hearing should call 2-1-1 or text their ZIP code to 898-211. **DPH's Vaccine Call Center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday.** Individuals can email their questions concerning the vaccine to Vaccine@Delaware.gov. Individuals can also visit de.gov/covidvaccine for up-to-date information.

The Division of Public Health is responsible for providing the framework for acquiring and distributing the vaccine. DPH has devised a three-tier strategy for distribution:

Phase 1a: Health care personnel, emergency medical services agencies, and long-term care staff and residents will receive the vaccine first.

Remainder of Phase 1: In early 2021, those who work in high-risk and critical infrastructure industries such as food processing, utilities, education, police and fire, those who work and live in congregate settings such as correctional facilities and homeless shelters, those with certain underlying health conditions and those who are aged 65 and older are likely to receive the vaccine.

Phase 2: (March 2021) Those with more moderate risk for getting COVID-19 are eligible for receiving the vaccine. More details about specific groups in this phase will be provided as we get closer.

Phase 3: (Spring/Summer 2021) The general public can expect to receive vaccines through their primary health care providers, health centers and pharmacies as the vaccine becomes more widely available.