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NDCS to begin vaccinating teammates

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January 4, 2021 (Lincoln, Neb.) – Today, Director Scott R. Frakes announced that an initial box of the Moderna vaccine for COVID-19 has been received by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS). Later this week, the first 50 doses will be given to health staff members who wish to be vaccinated.

“They are the individuals who work directly and most consistently with members of the inmate population,” noted Dir. Frakes. “As in the community, our health care workers are at the top of the priority list.”

After health care staff, NDCS has identified other priority groups who will receive the vaccine as it arrives.

“To ensure optimum vaccine coverage, staff members are prioritized based on the jobs they hold and their level of contact with the inmate population. That would include those in protective service positions,” explained Dir. Frakes.

The agency expects to receive shipments of vaccine over the coming months, enough to provide two doses to staff members and inmates, as prescribed. Inmates are part of the first phase of the state vaccination plan. Like staff members, they will also be prioritized.

“It is very similar to how we first approached testing for the coronavirus,” said Dr. Harbans Deol, NDCS medical director. “We started with those inmates who were at highest risk for becoming sick due to age, medical condition and other factors. We will follow the same process when it comes to administering the vaccine. As more vaccine becomes available, we will be able to vaccinate more individuals.”

Vaccinations are voluntary. As the rollout continues, emphasis will remain on following the guidelines that have been in place since early last year to control the spread of the coronavirus.

“Those things include wearing of masks, social distancing, frequent disinfection, handwashing and self-assessment and reporting of symptoms. The vaccine does not constitute a pass when it comes to adhering to all the protections that are central to reducing transmission of COVID-19,” said Dir. Frakes. “The vaccine is a promising next step to managing this illness, but adherence to best practices remains an essential component to keeping our facilities healthy.”

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