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NEWS RELEASE #146

December 22, 2020  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTERS FIRST DOSES OF COVID-19 VACCINE**

Elizabeth City, NC - Albemarle Regional Health Services (ARHS) has received the first doses of the COVID -19 vaccine within the region. Vaccine supplies will be limited at first; therefore, a targeted approach focusing on those at highest risk will be implemented. To kick off the vaccination campaign, health care workers at highest risk for COVID-19 exposure. In addition, vaccine will be offered to Long-term care staff and residents. The federal government manages vaccinations for long-term care facilities. Most of these facilities will be vaccinated under the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program with CVS and Walgreens.

“We have truly reached a turning point in this pandemic response,” said R. Battle Betts, Jr., MPA, ARHS Health Director. “Vaccines have saved countless lives and are a primary public health strategy for disease prevention. I am extremely thankful for the efforts of our public and private partners and this vaccine that is proving to be well over 90% effective. It’s time to roll up our sleeves so we can turn the tide on this pandemic.”

During this initial Phase, ARHS is coordinating directly with agencies and providers who meet the Phase 1 criteria. The CDC and NCDHHS have outlined the criteria as listed below:

#### **Phase 1a**

- Health care workers at high risk for exposure to COVID-19 - doctors, nurses, and all who interact and care for patients with COVID-19, including those who clean areas used by patients, and those giving vaccines to these workers.
- Long-Term Care staff and residents— people in skilled nursing facilities and in adult, family and group homes.

#### **Phase 1b.**

- Adults with two or more chronic conditions that put them at risk of severe illness as defined by the CDC, including conditions like cancer, COPD, serious heart conditions, sickle cell disease and Type 2 diabetes, among others.
- Adults at high risk of exposure including essential frontline workers (police, food processing, teachers, child care), health care workers, and those living in prisons, homeless shelters, migrant and fishery housing with 2+ chronic conditions.
- Those working in prisons, jails and homeless shelters (no chronic conditions requirement).

ARHS will focus on the Phase 1A recipients and once the demand has been met, will move to the Phase 1B recipients. By working directly with the partner agencies, we are able to continue to meet local testing and case investigation needs, along with other clinical needs, while establishing focused vaccination clinics.

As the vaccine supply increases and we move to the remaining phases, additional community clinics will be established. As a reminder, the remaining phases are outlined below:

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**Phase 2**

- Essential frontline workers, health care workers, and those living in prisons, homeless shelters or migrant and fishery housing.
- Adults 65
- Adults under 65 with one chronic condition that puts them at risk of severe illness as defined by the CDC.

**Phase 3**

- College and university students.
- K-12 students when there is an approved vaccine for children.
- Those employed in jobs that are critical to society and at lower risk of exposure.

**Phase 4**

- Everyone who wants a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination

“Vaccine distribution will adjust over time as the number of available doses increases, moving from limited to broader populations in a phased approach,” states Betts. “At this point, we don’t know how long it will take to move through the phases of distribution or what quantities of vaccine will be received at what time, therefore we will provide updates throughout this campaign and provide additional information on how to receive the vaccine when it is your turn. We thank you all in advance for your patience and for your efforts in this pandemic response.”

While appointments are not currently being accepted for Phases 2-4, if you believe you or your agency qualifies for Phase 1A or 1B, please contact your local health department. All vaccinations must be registered and approved through the COVID Vaccine Management System or CVMS which has been developed by NCDHHS, therefore coordination with the local health department as a Phase 1A or 1B recipient is crucial. The registration process for Phases 2-4 will be communicated as we approach those phases.

Please note that once vaccinated, protection is NOT immediate. The two-dose series is needed then it will take 1 to 2 weeks following the second dose to be considered fully vaccinated. CDC also notes that no vaccine is 100% effective. Given this information, vaccinated persons should continue to follow all guidance including:

- Wearing a mask
- Staying at least 6 ft away from others
- Avoiding crowds
- Washing hands often
- Following CDC Travel Guidance
- Following isolation guidance if sick
- Following quarantine guidance if exposed
- Following workplace and school guidance if applicable

If you have any questions, please contact your local health department:

Pasquotank County Health Department 252-338-4400	Perquimans County Health Department 252-426-2100	Camden County Health Department 252-338-4460	Chowan County Health Department 252-482-6003
Currituck County Health Department 252-232-2271	Bertie County Health Department 252-794-5322	Gates County Health Department 252-357-1380	Hertford County Health Department 252-862-4054

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For more information about COVID-19, visit these sites:

Albemarle Regional Health Services - <http://www.arhs-nc.org/> or call **252-338-WELL**

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services - <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>

Center for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/>

*For more information, please contact Amy Underhill, at 252-338-4448 or [aunderhill@arhs-nc.org](mailto:aunderhill@arhs-nc.org).*

*Albemarle Regional Health Services is dedicated to disease prevention and the promotion of a healthy environment to reduce morbidity, mortality, and disability through quality service, education, and advocacy.*

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