



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2021

Unified Government Public Health Department Announces Phase 2 COVID-19 Vaccine Priorities for Wyandotte County

The Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD) announced details today on Phase 2 of Wyandotte County's COVID-19 vaccine roll out plan. These details were announced after Governor Laura Kelly announced that the state of Kansas will move into Phase 2 of the vaccine roll out, meaning that thousands of Kansas residents and workers will be able to get their first vaccine doses as vaccine availability allows.

"Phase two of our county's COVID-19 roll out will expand eligibility to more key segments of workers in Wyandotte County," said Juliann Van Liew, Director of the UGPHD. "Unfortunately, vaccines supplies are still very limited, so we do not have enough vaccines to open this up to everyone in Phase 2 at once. This means we'll be going through Phase 2 in stages. We have made our prioritization decisions based upon who in our community have the most contact with the public, where we have seen the most COVID-19 outbreaks, and who is most at risk of exposure to the virus or serious illness. It will take some time, but as we get more vaccines, everyone in Phase 2 will get the opportunity to get vaccinated. We encourage everyone who is interested in getting the vaccine to go ahead and sign up through our online form."

Who is eligible now:

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment includes some "high contact critical workers" in Phase 2, and certain workers in this group are eligible to get vaccinated in Wyandotte County right now. These are workers who come into more contact with the public and may be at higher risk both for being exposed to and spreading the virus. The UGPHD has already begun vaccinating some of these groups. Employers are encouraged to sign up their employees as a group for vaccinations, prioritizing older employees when possible. Eligible workers include:

- Public safety workers such as police, fire department, EMS and Sheriff's department
- Workers in K-12 education, including teachers, custodians, bus drivers, administrators, etc.
- Childcare providers – both licensed, in-home childcare providers and center childcare providers and their support staff
- Public transit workers
- United States Postal Service workers
- Department of Motor Vehicle workers
- Grocery, food service and food processing workers
 - The UGPHD strongly encourages employers in these industries to sign up their workers right away, due not only to how essential these services are, but also due to the impact on COVID-19 spread in Wyandotte County

- More than 20% of outbreaks in Wyandotte County have been in grocery, food services, and food processing settings

“We’ve already begun getting our first responders in for vaccinations, as well as workers in K-12 schools and childcare settings,” said Van Liew. “We really want to see employers in all of these critical services getting their employees signed up as soon as possible. In particular, we are going to be doing a lot of outreach to grocery, food service, and food processing workplaces. These of course offer services that are essential to our entire community. On top of that, we know that more than one in five outbreaks in our county have occurred in these settings, so it’s critical to vaccinate these workers to protect them and the community members they serve.

In order for workers in these segments to get vaccinated, their employers must register eligible workers using a form available at ughealth.info/Vaccine. The form can be filled out by employers, organizations, and individuals. Anyone eligible for a vaccine must register first and will be contacted to make an appointment. Van Liew emphasized that people should not go to the UGPHD vaccine facility without an appointment, as walk-in vaccinations are not available.

Who is eligible in the coming weeks:

Once more vaccine supplies become available, the UGPHD will move on to vaccinating additional people who fall under Phase 2, including people residing in congregate facilities¹, people age 65 and older, and some additional groups of critical workers. People who will be eligible in this stage and who are interested in getting vaccinated are encouraged to fill out the Vaccine Interest Form now so they can be notified when the vaccine is available to them. Again, that form is available at ughealth.info/Vaccine.

Van Liew noted that there may be changes to the order of prioritization, depending upon the availability of vaccine doses, future outbreaks and other factors related to the pandemic.

For more information about COVID-19 vaccines and updates on the pandemic in Wyandotte County, visit wycokck.org/COVID-19. If you would like to get updates on when you are eligible to receive a vaccine, go to ughealth.info/Vaccine, or visit wycokck.org/COVID-19 and click on the “WyCo Vaccine Interest Form” button. That takes you to a simple survey you can fill out. Once your survey is complete, you will receive updates from the UGPHD about vaccine availability and other news regarding getting vaccinated. Those who do not have internet access may call 3-1-1 for assistance in filling out the form.

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¹*Congregate living for older adults refers to senior living communities, not long-term care facilities such as nursing homes. Residents of long-term healthcare facilities were included in the first Phase of the vaccine roll out. Those patients are receiving vaccinations from pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens as part of the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program. The Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program is overseen by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).*