



Hays County News

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County Health Department Discusses Vaccinations

Hays County Courthouse, San Marcos, TX – Hays County Local Health Department (HCLHD) and the Office of Emergency Services has been preparing for COVID-19 vaccination distribution for weeks, but for now, residents will be directed to either their personal medical providers or vaccine hubs in Travis or Bexar Counties.

According to HCLHD Director Tammy Crumley, the department was approved by the Texas Department of State Health Service (DSHS) to receive the vaccine. She said she expects a small allotment of doses to be sent to Hays County in the very near future, which will be used to vaccinate individuals per state health department guidelines.

Crumley said residents currently have two options to get the vaccine: The first is to talk with their personal medical providers and determine if they can get a vaccine at one of the companies in Hays County that already have the vaccine, including local pharmacies such as H-E-B. Another option is to pre-register to get a vaccine through the state's new hub system.

“We are coordinating with Austin Public Health in Travis County, which is a hub, to in order to dispense the vaccine to Hays County residents in the Phase 1B category,” she said. “Bexar County is also a hub.”

According to DSHS, in Texas, Phase 1B of vaccination will focus on people for whom there is strong and consistent evidence that COVID-19 makes them more likely to become very sick or die. Preventing the disease among people who have these risk factors will dramatically reduce the number of Texans who die from the disease and relieve pressure on the healthcare system by reducing hospital and ICU admissions. Vaccination will also reduce absenteeism among the front-line workers at the greatest risk of severe disease and protect individuals at risk for health inequities.

As stated in the DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Phase 1B Definition: Because Phase 1B provides vaccine to higher-risk people regardless of their work sector or status, it will provide protection for a number of critical populations at an increased risk of getting COVID-19: communities that are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and other chronic diseases; teachers and school staff who ensure that Texas children can learn in a safe environment; social services workers who ensure that those in need receive care and support; workers who maintain critical infrastructure to support the Texas economy; and other front-line workers who are unable to work remotely and so are more likely to be exposed.

Texas DSHS defines 1B candidates as people who are 65 and older or have the medical conditions listed below and who also work in front-line and critical industries. Those who may be eligible for a vaccine under the DSHS 1B list include those age 65 and over and those who are 16 years of age and older with at least one chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19, including but not limited to:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
- Solid organ transplantation
- Obesity and severe obesity (body mass index of 30 kg/m² or higher)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Crumley said anyone who believes they would qualify under the 1B list can visit the Austin Public Health (APH) website to pre-register, but cautioned that, according to APH, completing pre-registration does not guarantee you will receive the vaccine or be guaranteed a scheduled appointment.

“Because the vaccine supply is still limited, we’re asking the public to be patient and understand that we want everyone who wants the vaccine to get it, but it may be days or weeks before an appointment is available,” she said.

In the meantime, public health experts like Crumley strongly urge all residents to continue the simple protective measures that have been encouraged for nearly a year.

“Stay home when possible,” she said. “By avoiding public places, particularly if you are in a higher risk category, we can begin to slow the spread of the virus and protect those who are most vulnerable.”

Other recommendations include frequently hand washing, wearing masks, and staying distanced from others outside your household if you need to go out into public.

Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra said the County is prepared to begin implementing its vaccination plan for the general public but understands that it will take time to get the doses needed to begin that process. Until then, he urged all Hays County residents to continue working together to slow the spread of the coronavirus. He added that he hopes everyone will offer kindness and compassion to all those impacted by COVID-19.

“Trauma affects everyone and COVID has certainly brought trauma to our community,” he said. “No one is immune, and the effects of the virus can hit any family or business. Please be kind to each other.”

More information from DSHS is available at the following websites:

Austin Public Health Vaccine Pre-registration:

<http://austintexas.gov/aph-vaccine-reg>

NOTE: Austin Public Health and DSHS are instructing people to go through the pre-registration process and not to show up at a location trying to get a vaccine.

COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Guiding Principles:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/immunize/vaccine/COVIDVaccine-AllocationPrinciples.pdf>

San Antonio Metro Health Vaccine Info:

<https://covid19.sanantonio.gov/Services/Vaccination-for-COVID-19>

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