





## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Director   
Dr. Mark Escott, Interim Health Authority 

**DATE:** January 18, 2021

**SUBJECT:** **COVID-19 Vaccine Update #2**

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On Monday, January 11, 2021, Austin Public Health (APH) received a shipment of 12,000 vaccines from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). Upon receiving this shipment, APH immediately executed our plan for vaccine distribution to the community. As of January 16, 2021, we distributed all 12,000 vaccines. We know we have a long way to go with providing vaccines so we need everyone to be patient with us over the next several months.

We recognize you have heard concerns and frustrations from our residents about the vaccination process this week. Overall, while we experienced several challenges, we are very pleased with how many people we were able to receive the vaccine, how eager people are to register for an appointment, and how quickly we were able to mobilize such an important effort with less than three days' notice. It would have been impossible to make both the Alternate Care Site and the vaccination sites operational on the same day without the support of our partners and the hard work of City staff including members of Austin Public Health, the Emergency Operations Center, Joint Information System, Austin Fire Department, Austin Parks & Recreation Department, Austin Transportation Department, Austin/Travis County Emergency Management, Austin Police Department, Communications & Technology Management, Communications & Public Information Office, Travis County Medical Society, Seton Ascension and countless others. Our teams were able to stand up an operation to vaccinate 12,000 people in under a week with a focus on safety, equity, and efficiency. We are grateful for their help as this has been an enormous task for our teams to undertake while also managing the biggest surge in COVID-19 cases in the pandemic. We are proud of what has been accomplished so far, and we are well-positioned to make improvements based on what we have learned from this pilot effort.

At this time, we are vaccinating individuals who fall under the Texas DSHS-outlined [Phase 1A](#) and [Phase 1B](#). As of 5:00 pm Saturday, 137,000 individuals have pre-registered through APH, and we received 18,900 calls to the nurse hotline alone. We filled all appointments this week.



Throughout the week, we have been making process improvements. We have implemented efficiencies on-site that help manage throughput and reduced wait times, including systems improvements that increase efficiency in the sign-in process and that allow individuals to wait in their car instead of standing in line for a significant amount of time. Improvements are also being made to the registration system, which experienced technical issues due to incredibly high demand earlier this week and attempts to undercut the systems in place to ensure that 1A and 1B individuals received their vaccines first. These issues are known, and we are actively working with the vendor to clear up any issue's individuals are facing.

Currently, we are uncertain about future allocation or distribution from the Texas Department of State Health Services. This "hub" model was a pilot, and we do not know their plans for distribution to us or the more than 350 other providers Austin-Travis County moving forward. After successfully administering the vaccines allocated this week, we hope to have illustrated our ability to vaccinate many people and are hopeful that DSHS will allocate additional vaccine to us in the future.

Our focus is still on serving as a safety net for individuals who may not otherwise have access to the vaccine, and we take seriously the historical deficiencies in our healthcare system that have disadvantaged certain groups. Considerations have been made in the location of the vaccine sites, the availability of interpreters, non-digital sign-ups, accessibility accommodations, and the pre-registration system in order to help those who otherwise might not be well-served by the healthcare system.

Based on questions that have been asked by your offices, we want to make clear that elderly individuals and those who have mobility issues will not be required to stand in line. Their place will be saved, an accommodation is made on site for them. Additionally, interpretation services are provided at all our sites.

Information about the process, from pre-registration, to qualifications, to the availability of the vaccine and our role, is being shared with the public on an hourly basis. Our teams are answering questions through Austin 3-1-1, social media, our nurse hotline, emails, on-site at the facilities, and via the media to ensure that the public has the most up-to-date information. We encourage you to share information from APH accounts on your own accounts to reach your constituents.

We also want to thank the volunteers with the Travis County Medical Society who have signed up to serve as vaccinators in the coming weeks, as well as Austin Community College and the University of Texas, who have signed up their nursing and medical students as well. Additional capacity of medical staff will allow us to increase the number of vaccines we can provide.

Thank you all again for your patience as we work to respond to the threat of COVID-19 in our community while also giving the community hope and faith in an effective vaccine distribution. Please encourage your constituents to continue wearing a mask, watching their distance, washing



their hands and avoiding gatherings outside of their household. These simple actions save lives. This vaccine will not end the serious spike in COVID-19 cases, and we need the public to hold on a little longer before we can get back to normal.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Deputy City Manager  
Shannon Jones, Interim Assistant City Manager