



For Immediate Release

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Vaccine Supply Shortages Prompt Public Health Leaders Throughout the Bay Area to Urge Prioritization of Older Adults for Vaccination

Bay Area, CA – For the time being, the scarcity of COVID-19 vaccination doses throughout the San Francisco Bay Area has led health officials in eight jurisdictions to urge all health systems to prioritize shots for patients aged 65 and older because of the virus’ high mortality rate within that group.

County health departments and collaborating health care partners are coordinating efforts to streamline vaccine distribution and administration, moving as quickly as possible to provide shots to the most vulnerable residents. Marin, Napa, Santa Cruz, and Solano counties are prioritizing residents age 75 and older. Similarly, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties are prioritizing people age 65 and older. This is in addition to continuing vaccine Phase 1A-eligible health care workers, many of whom are now expecting their second doses.

Across the region, most COVID-19 deaths have been in the 65-and-up age group. Thus, focusing vaccination efforts on those at greatest risk of death will have the biggest immediate impact on saving lives.

Jurisdiction	Proportion of COVID-19 related deaths of county residents 65+ as of 1/28/2021
Contra Costa	82%
Marin	92%
Napa	79%
San Francisco	83%
San Mateo	84%
Santa Clara	81%
Santa Cruz	90%
Solano	78%

“Three out of four COVID-19 deaths in Marin are among residents age 75 or older,” said Dr. Matt Willis, Public Health Officer for Marin County, which has the highest per capita older adult population of any county in California. “A vaccine offered to a



resident above age 75 is 300 times more likely to save a life than a vaccine offered to someone under the age of 50.”

The Bay Area continues to receive only a small fraction of the vaccines needed to vaccinate residents aged 65 and older, much less the broader occupation-based groups the state has included in Phase 1B Tier 1, including educators, food and agricultural workers, and emergency services personnel. Across the Bay Area, weekly dose allocations from the State of California – based on a formula designed to ensure fair distribution statewide – have slowed compared to shipments in December and early January. With the current pace of supply, it will take several weeks to offer a first dose to all older adults who would like to be vaccinated.

“There is an imbalance of supply, demand and expectation,” said Dr. Gail Newel, Santa Cruz County Health Officer. “The demand for vaccine is high, which is good for the long-term health of our community, but the expectation that vaccines will be provided right now far outweighs the number of doses we’ve been given. The infrastructure for giving the vaccine is ready. We just need the supply.”

Limited vaccine supply is resulting in a widespread inability to make new appointments, and in some cases, can lead to cancellations of existing appointments. In addition, administering Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccine requires a parallel effort to provide a second dose a few weeks after the first. The need for second doses limits the number of people who can be newly vaccinated each week.

Multi-county entities (Dignity Health, Sutter Health and Kaiser Permanente) receive their own allocation of vaccine from the State and can distribute further down prioritization list.

Santa Cruz County residents can find updated vaccine eligibility and availability by visiting www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirusvaccine for English and www.santacruzsalud.org/coronavirusvacuna for Spanish or call the Santa Cruz County Call Center at 831-454-4242 Monday – Friday, 8am- 5pm.

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