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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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For Immediate Release

With a historic vaccine campaign unfolding and with increased anticipation and expectations building in our community, it is a good time to offer the public some information about the monumental efforts and undertakings conducted by our health department since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, almost 11 months ago. Since March, there has been a tremendous, sustained effort underway in all health departments throughout the country and as much of this pandemic has been a disaster, it most certainly would be a catastrophe without public health systems.

Since we are operating in the context of a pandemic, we had to organize a clinic safely while balancing our responsibilities of managing Covid-19 case investigations and outbreaks in our community and businesses. Regarding the vaccine rollout, health departments have had supply chain uncertainties, logistical obstacles, and organizational challenges. Concurrently, we have focused much of our attention to working with our school's systems for direct consultation, recommendations, and to assist in conducting public health investigations. This collaboration between the schools and health departments is providing the best opportunity to keep schools open, which everyone likely can agree, from a societal standpoint, to be of great importance.

The Health Department had organized vaccine appointments based on a systematic throughput. There are many factors to consider when distributing Covid-19 vaccine that are unique from other vaccination clinics we have done in the past. Moderna mRNA vaccine is unique in its storage and administration methods as well. The Covid-19 vaccination clinic would need to be appointment based and limited to what we would receive on a week-by-week basis. We required time to address any clinical questions and input accurate information for a permanent record in an immunization database. Vaccination for a socially distanced space for a 15-minute post vaccination observation period, 30-minute observation for persons with a history of immediate allergic reaction of any severity to a vaccine or injectable therapy and persons with a history of anaphylaxis due to any cause. After some continued refinement we were happy when clinics started to run smoothly with essentially no line. We would like to thank Surf City Volunteer Fire, EMT's and Police who were all present to help.

The question of receiving the second dose at the first clinics was initially uncertain for several reasons. The federal and state governments had been working off a weekly allotment model, so health departments did not have confirmation from week to week if we would be receiving vaccine and how much. For us to plan and schedule 1 week out was proving quite difficult, let alone 4 weeks out within this model. Some encouraging news is that we have been informed that second doses will automatically ship to the Health Dept weekly according to what we administered in first doses. We have begun to schedule those who have received their first dose.

On Wednesday, January 13th, Governor Murphy made an announcement that allowed a significant jump in vaccine eligibility to individuals 65 and older and any age adult with pre-existing conditions that may put them at risk for severe illness. This announced mostly upended the original phased rollout. I would have opened eligibility based more closely

to include the most at risk based on age, health status and occupation, clearly knowing the vaccine supply and logistical limitations at that time and our still very much present. That immediate decision to significantly open eligibility overwhelmed health departments and gave the public a false sense that they would be receiving the vaccine immediately. Also, we are already seeing it had a consequence of reducing the availability to first vaccinate the most at risk in both in demographic, health status and occupation.

In terms of our satellite clinic to our office at the Surf City Fire Hall, we hope to have a regular schedule at that location of a first dose and second doses on separate days weekly. We are still experiencing significant vaccine supply uncertainties. We expect within two weeks we are going to launch an appointment booking through our webpage. Until then, for those that have left messages at the Health Department, we are working through those in the order in which we received them until we switch over to online booking. Unfortunately, there will be much more demand than availability in at least the short term and we share in your frustration.

In the face of much adversity, I can assure you that the LBI Health Department commitment and mission has never been more resolved to protect and promote the health of our community. My hope is to look back to the start of the vaccination campaign as the turning of the tide. In the interim until Covid-19 cases are well below where they are now and critical mass fully immunized, I reinforce social distancing, avoiding gatherings, practicing good hand hygiene, and staying home when you are sick, are profound tools to reducing your risk of acquiring and spreading Covid-19.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Krupinski, Health Officer