



East Central

District Health Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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East Central Holds Mass COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic

[Columbus]—Ag Park in Columbus was the site of East Central District Health Department’s (ECDHD) first mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic, held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 21. The clinic was focused on immunizing persons 65 years and older, and according to Libby Finochiaro, ECDHD’s Emergency Response Coordinator, it was a big success due to the planning and collaboration of several area partners.

“We have been partnering since December 28 with Good Neighbor Community Health Center (GNCHC) to immunize people, but we knew we would have to rely on help from other agencies to reach our goal of vaccinating more than 400 area residents in one day,” Finochiaro said. “Thanks to the community spirit and commitment of everyone involved, it all came together even more smoothly than I anticipated.”

Other agencies and partners helping with the mass vaccination event included:

- Members of the Nebraska National Guard. Guard members assisted in setting up the space at Ag Park, and monitored people receiving vaccines. One Guard member also assisted the five GNCHC providers in performing immunizations, so six persons could be vaccinated at one time.
- Centro Hispano Comunitario de Nebraska. Centro Hispano provided interpreters for the clinic, and also helped monitor those who had received the vaccine for the required 15 minutes post-immunization.
- Tim Hofbauer and Platte County Emergency Management who helped with event security.
- Ag Park, which provided the space for the clinic at no charge.

To date, ECDHD has immunized more than 1,000 persons in its four-county jurisdiction. All, as Finochiaro noted proudly, without wasting any vaccine. “We are committed to making certain that every dose of vaccine we are sent is used as a shot in the arm of an area resident,” said Finochiaro. “Our immunization team is focused on safety, and efficiency, so if we have 100 doses of vaccine, we want to make sure we give 100 shots. No waste,” she emphasized.

Following Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services guidelines, Finochiaro and the team from GNCHC, including Beth Miller, Director of Clinic Operations, Sally Vetro, Director of Nursing, APRN Crystal Christie, and RN Amy Leick, have immunized several sectors within the Nebraska Phase I Allocation recommendation, including:

- Community-based physicians.
- Community-based pharmacists.
- Developmentally disabled persons.
- Long-term care staff and residents.
- Dentists.
- Veterinarians.
- Persons 65 years and older.
- Area first responders and emergency service personnel.
- Law enforcement.
- Critical infrastructure.

Because State and CDC guidelines regularly change, and ECDHD is given only a week-to-week vaccine allocation to plan with, Finochiaro noted that it is difficult to put absolute time-frames on exactly which sector will get vaccinated when, or how long it will take to get through each phase of the State plan, but she promises that the vaccination team is actively planning and preparing for the future. “Our internal (ECDHD/GNCHC) team meets twice a week to plan. Our goal is to immunize as many people as quickly as we can, based on the amount of vaccine we are sent each week. We know people are anxiously waiting for their turn, and we appreciate their patience as we work through the process.”

Later this winter the NE Dept. of Health and Human Services anticipates launching a portal where people can sign up to receive the vaccine in their county. For now, ECDHD has a sign-up form on their website, at <https://ecdhd.ne.gov/covid-2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines.html>

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