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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Release: IMMEDIATE**

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**COVID Positivity Rates and Dial Position**

The Kit Carson County COVID positivity rate for January 1 – January 26, 2021 is 13.8%. 355 people have been tested and 49 were positive. The good news is that for the last two weeks, the positivity rate has dropped to 8.6%! There were 197 tested and 17 were positive. This is the first time we have been that low for positivity since the summer. Kit Carson County must maintain an overall positivity rate of 10% or less for two consecutive weeks in order to “pass” that metric and be considered to drop down to Dial Level Yellow. It looks like we are on the right track, and hopefully will achieve that by February 6<sup>th</sup>. If we can stay below 10% for one more week, and the Cumulative Incident Rate also shows improvement, KCCDPHE will submit a request to the State Health Department to change from Orange to Yellow. There is also another metric that is considered, and that is the burden on the local hospital. Thus far, we have also “passed” those requirements.

**Hospital Data:**

**1/11/2021 to 1/25/2021 COVID-19 Utilization**

Emergency Department 22%, down 3% from the previous 2 weeks.

Acute Care 14%, up 5% from the previous 2 weeks.

Transfers-0

The County continues to operate under the Orange Level of the Dial for now, but has made tremendous strides in positivity reduction since October when the numbers were soaring above 20%. Thank you to the entire community for doing your part!

**Orange Level Youth and Adult Indoor Sporting Events Restrictions Continue**

Under the Orange Level of the Dial, adult sporting leagues are not allowed (such as bowling, darts, etc). CHSAA guidelines for spectators are closely aligned with the State-issued public health order and restrict spectators for indoor youth sporting activities to 50, or – based on a square footage calculator, up to 75 spectators (large sized gym). These restrictions do not include the players or their coaching staff.

The purpose of these restrictions is to continue to keep positivity rates down and to protect the public, the schools, and the community. The indoor mask mandate continues to be in place as well in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. With the new variant present in Colorado, it is as important now as ever to not let our guard down which could cause the County to go backwards in our effort to stop COVID from spreading at a high rate again in the county.

### **Vaccine Availability for Kit Carson County**

Dose by dose, COVID-19 vaccines are bringing Coloradans closer to the life we all miss. The COVID-19 pandemic has been tough on all of us. While the COVID-19 vaccine won't end the crisis caused by the pandemic overnight, and we will all still have to follow public health protocols for a while longer, each vaccine will move Colorado closer to doing the things we miss most. Imagine that day when you can return to doing the things that matter to you. Getting vaccinated is one of the major things you can do to get you and your loved ones closer to that day. Get the facts today so you can make an informed decision when it's your turn for the vaccine.

Because of a limited federal supply, it may be several months before everyone who wants a vaccine can get one. Kit Carson County vaccine providers are moving as quickly as supplies allow. Currently, it is not permissible to move forward to give the vaccine beyond front line healthcare workers and people who are 70 or older. Even if we wanted to, KCCDPHE would not be given an allotment of vaccine for anyone falling outside of those rules. The vaccine is tightly controlled by State and Federal authorities and is not controlled by local public health authorities or Boards of Health.

When it's your turn, and you choose to get the vaccine, you'll know you've helped protect yourself and others -- and that you're doing your part to help end the crisis caused by the pandemic, to save lives, and to help our state recover. We need everyone to keep following public health protocols until the vaccine is widely available and used, and we achieve community immunity. Wear masks, avoid gatherings, stay home when you're sick, wash your hands, and maintain physical distance when you must go out. Taking all the safety steps together helps better protect both those closest to us and our entire community from COVID-19.

### **Vaccine Distribution Thus Far**

So far, 300 doses of first-dose vaccine have been received and administered. This represents 100% of the allotment that was given to Kit Carson County up until January 17<sup>th</sup>. On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, the first of those to receive their second dose began. Second doses are guaranteed to be available for all of those who have received their first dose of the vaccine. An additional 400 doses have been received for the mass vaccination point of dispensing that is now scheduled for Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>.

An online registration system is available for qualified individuals to reserve their vaccine. This is the preferred method for people to schedule their vaccine. To register please go to: <https://novelhealth.ai/practice/kit-carson-county-dept.-of-public-health-and-environment-301981> If you cannot get scheduled on line, please call 719-346-7158, ext. 432 and someone will help you to schedule your shot. ***You must reserve a spot to receive vaccine – no one will receive the vaccine if they have not first received an appointment. No walk-ins will be accepted at any distribution clinics or points of dispensing – no exceptions.***

As stated above, the State of Colorado continues to reserve vaccine for those who are in Phase 1A and 1B which includes people 70 years of age and older. If you were born in or before 1951, you qualify to receive the vaccine.

Once it is determined that all who fit the current approved criteria are complete, plans will be put into place to begin vaccinating those in 1B who are considered essential workers including teachers. It is unclear when the State will allow local public health departments in rural communities to move to the next group.

In the most recent prioritization schedule that the Governor's office released, it is anticipated that Phase 2 will not be allowed to begin until the middle or end of March now due to the slow roll-out of vaccine from the Feds to the States. Phase 2 will include essential workers such as grocery workers, people with underlying chronic health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, etc. A full list of the Phases and which portion of the population is included in each phase is available at [Vaccine for Coloradans | Colorado COVID-19 Updates](#). Kit Carson County will follow the Phases as they are outlined and developed for the State of Colorado.

**During Phase 2**, people will be asked to make a reservation for the vaccine so none is wasted. Instructions on how to make a reservation will be given to the public. The registration process for Phase 2 **will be done on-line as much as possible. Please do not inquire about Phase 2 at this time. Please wait until the health department announces that they are ready to start that Phase.** The announcement and how to make a reservation has been posted in print media, on local radio stations, on the KCC website and on various Facebook pages.

#### **REMEMBER – SOCIAL DISTANCING IS STILL REQUIRED UNTIL HERD IMMUNITY IS ATTAINED**

Even if you receive a vaccine, you still need to use caution around others. The first dose of the vaccine provides about 40% protection. After the second dose, an individual has about 95% protection from COVID. You do not reach full protection until 15 days after receiving the second dose (the body takes that long to mount immunity). For Moderna recipients, the second dose is given 28 days after the first, so it will take about two months to be considered 95% "safe" from getting COVID. So, yes, masks will still be needed for a while longer after receiving the vaccine!

Local public health and the Kit Carson County Health Services District are partnering to get the vaccine to everyone who wants it. We are striving towards at least 70% of our eligible residents to be immunized in order to achieve the all-important herd immunity. We encourage everyone who is eligible to consider being immunized to help get this virus behind us. (Currently, no Moderna COVID vaccine will be given to anyone under 18 years old). Please consider being immunized against COVID when it is your turn.

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