



Remarks for Rear Adm. Francis Frazier
Media briefing - IHS COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution
December 11, 2020 | 2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. ET | Teleconference

Hello. Welcome to the Indian Health Service media call on the IHS COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution plan. Thank you for joining us and for your interest today. I am Rear Admiral Francis Frazier, lead for the IHS Vaccine Task Force. The task force has led the Agency's COVID-19 vaccine activities.

While we anticipate the FDA authorization of the COVID-19 vaccine soon, we wanted to assure you that we have been preparing and planning to distribute and administer initial and subsequent allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine to Indian Country. We have worked in close coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Operation Warp Speed, and local, state, and tribal governments to plan for COVID-19 vaccination of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The IHS has been a consistent voice and advocate for vaccine allocation across the Indian health system and tribal communities.

Recently, we released the IHS COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan November 2020. It details how the IHS health care system will prepare for and operationalize the vaccine. It also provides important guidance for all IHS federal, tribal health programs, and urban Indian organizations that choose to receive COVID-19 vaccine coordinated through IHS.

The IHS recognizes the sovereign authority of tribal nations to provide for the welfare of their people, and we reached out to tribes and urban Indian organizations for their involvement in planning efforts through tribal consultation and urban confer. All tribal health programs and urban Indian organizations have chosen their preferred distribution channel for a COVID-19 vaccine. Tribes were provided the option of receiving it either through the IHS or their respective state. 338 IHS direct, tribal health programs, and urban Indian organizations have chosen to receive COVID-19 vaccine from IHS. Once available, COVID-19 vaccine will be allocated to jurisdictions, including the IHS, and also distributed to federal, tribal health programs and urban Indian organizations to ensure the vaccine is effectively delivered to Indian Country.

We continue to make progress toward the impending rollout of safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19. The IHS will allocate COVID-19 vaccines to 11 IHS Areas based on the number of individuals in the first priority group, which includes health care personnel and long-term-care residents as determined by the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. During phase 1A, the Indian Health Service is expecting to receive 46,000 doses of Moderna and more than 22,400 doses of Pfizer. This would allow IHS to vaccinate 100% of its health care work force and residents of long term care facilities not accounted for by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The IHS anticipates that vaccines will be shipped to IHS within 24 hours of a vaccine receiving emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration. Health facilities will use the remainder of the Pfizer and Moderna doses to vaccinate the next priority populations based on ACIP guidelines. Early protection of health care personnel is critical to preserving capacity to care for patients with and without COVID-19.

The distribution of the allocated COVID-19 vaccines will begin once the Food and Drug Administration authorizes the COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use and in accordance with Operation Warp Speed guidance. The Indian Health Service

National Supply Service Center will ensure the direct shipment from the manufacturer of the COVID-19 vaccine to our IHS direct service facilities, tribal health programs and urban Indian organizations that chose IHS for distribution. The National Supply Service Center has a long and successful history of coordinating and managing the distribution of pharmaceuticals, medical, and other health care related supply items to IHS, tribal and urban health care facilities and programs nationwide and will continue in their coordination of the COVID-19 vaccine. Since the pandemic started, they have moved over 80 million units of PPE, COVID-19 testing supplies, and disinfectant products across the Indian Health System.

As the vaccine supply increases, IHS, tribal health programs and urban Indian organizations will be able to prioritize their local populations based on factors such as age, existing health problems and other considerations that increase the risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19.

The IHS is well prepared and positioned to begin COVID-19 vaccinations, our ultimate goal is to ensure that safe and effective vaccines can reach Indian Country as quickly and equitably as possible.

Thank you again for joining us. I want to introduce two of our task force members who are here to answer questions on our activities. Commander Kailee Fretland, the IHS COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force deputy co-lead and Commander Andrea Klimo, the IHS COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force distribution and allocation team lead.