

North Country Responds
COVID-19



North Country
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

NORTH COUNTRY
Public Health
NETWORK



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North Country Responds: Regional COVID19 Update 1/15/21

REGION— “Up here, we take care of each other.” This phrase not only launched a successful recruitment effort for Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers to help with COVID-19 vaccine distribution in Northern NH, but it is also a local source of pride at how the North Country gets things done.

At the forefront of the vaccine distribution efforts is the Regional Public Health Network (RPHN). Lead by the North Country Health Consortium (NCHC), a local nonprofit public health organization, the North Country RPHN represents the northernmost of 13 networks that cover the State of New Hampshire.

“The purpose of the Regional PHN is to bring services from the state to the local level by collaborating and coordinating with many partners in the region,” says Kris van Bergen, Public Health Senior Program Manager at NCHC. “These partners range from municipalities (towns), schools, and law enforcement agencies to hospitals and other health and social service providers. The North Country RPHN is a great example of the North Country way to come together, and that’s really where our region shines.”

Through the month of January, thanks to the efforts across community partners, five different clinic sites have been established around the region to provide COVID-19 vaccination to the population eligible for the State’s distribution plan Tier 1A (high-risk



health workers, first responders, older adults in residential care settings like nursing homes). Northern NH clinics are being hosted in Colebrook, Gorham, Lancaster, Littleton, and Woodsville.

Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital in Colebrook is collaborating with 45th Parallel EMS to provide a clinic for Tier 1A to ensure that North Country first responders didn't have to leave the area to receive the vaccine. Gorham EMS, Lancaster EMS, Littleton Fire Department, and Woodsville EMS teams are running the clinics in their respective areas. NCHC is also increasing capacity to assist partners with the operation of their clinics. Recruitment of Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers falls under its purview and a campaign is underway. Additionally, NCHC has recently welcomed AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer Thomas Kwiatkowski, Colby-Sawyer Intern Emily Barton, and COVID Response Coordinator Adam Cloutier, to the RPHN team to work expressly on this effort.

The North Country region is working in lockstep with the State of NH's Phased vaccine distribution plan. "We are in Phase 1A right now, with the plan for offering the vaccine to Phase 1b in the works," notes Jim Richardson, Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Coordinator of the North Country Health Consortium. "The plan for 1B, although subject to change, is to line up the following for vaccination starting January 26th through March: People 65 years old or older, medically vulnerable at significantly higher risk, including family caregivers for medically vulnerable children under 16, staff and residents of facilities for the intellectually and developmentally disabled, and Corrections Officers and prison staff."

Many factors are outside the control of local health officials. What we do know is that providing vaccines to all phases will take many months. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities of vaccine is widely available, with several thousand vaccination providers offering COVID-19 vaccines



in doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers across the state. In the meantime, Mask-Up, maintain physical distance, wash those hands, and get accurate vaccine information from places like NCHC, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and NH.gov.

It's not too late to volunteer to participate in a medical or non-medical role for vaccine distribution. To learn more about how to volunteer through the Northern NH MRC, visit NCHCNH.org for more information.

The North Country Health Consortium (NCHC) is a non-profit public health organization based in Littleton that collaborates with health and human services providers serving northern New Hampshire. Please direct any questions regarding the regional response to COVID-19 to COVID19@NCHCNH.org.

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CAPTION: Staffed at the clinic at the Littleton Fire Department on January 11th to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to the Tier 1a group of first responders and at-risk healthcare workers, Intern at the North Country Health Consortium (NCHC) from Colby-Sawyer College, Emily Barton, provides vaccine information to a local first responder before he receives his vaccine.