

Hi, there, my name's Kevin Hall and the Communications Officer for the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department. We're getting ready to talk about the COVID-19 vaccination rollout in terms of what the health department is doing and to answer some of your questions.

Now first, I'm going to take this mask off. I'm going to take this off, because I'm in a room with one other person who is well more than six feet away and want to make sure that you're able to hear me clearly, see my lips for people who need to be able to see that for the communication piece. But we are following the guidelines with the distance the other person has their mask on. So, we just wanted to reinforce that.

Today we get it, we're not going to be able to answer all your questions, because there are so many questions, but we wanted to hit the main ones that we're seeing about the vaccine rollout here in Lexington. And what the health department's role in that is. We can't speak for every place that's getting that vaccine. But we're hoping that by hearing me talk directly as a representative of this department, we can make you feel at least a little better about what's happening or have an understanding of what we're doing.

So many people who don't fully understand what our role is, what we're doing what's happening, what's next and want to just take a little bit of time to do that. Christina King is on the other side of the camera, filming and watching what's coming in through Facebook, and also has a list of some of our frequently asked questions that we're getting. And we'll jump into those in just a minute. I want to give it a little bit of time, though, for people to get logged in here to tag your friends and share this with people because we know you're hungry for this information. When we posted this at 1:15, people were sharing this immediately. I've done lot's of interviews today, so forgive me while I take a few sips here and there to stay hydrated.

Again, I'm Kevin Hall the Communications Officer, have been doing a lot of interviews about this, and this is our first Facebook Live to talk directly to you.

First thing I want to tell you though, before we start getting these questions that are coming in, and the questions we've seen is just to remind you, if you can, please be kind, please be patient.

I can't stress enough that the people who are out there giving the shots, who gave the shots today, the people who are working on this response - are working so hard on this, I've never before seen the hours and the effort like what's been put into this. It's also difficult to tell people to wait for the next phase of the vaccine.

I want to just speak directly to you on that because I am the person who is most often answering your questions on social media, Christina does as well. We have a call center who gets calls throughout the day, on a typical busy day, in October, for instance, a busy day was 250 calls. On Monday we had 1000 calls. So, you can see the interest is there, which is great. But we need to ask you to be patient and to be kind and try to be understanding about our role in this. And where I was going with it is that the people that I most often interact with on our social media, I'm getting questions people who are in their 70s people often have underlying

health conditions. And these, these people, these are like parents, it reminds me of my mom and dad, it reminds me of my grandmother, they are interested in the vaccine. These are people who want the vaccine and we want to help you. But the issue right now, and we do empathize with the fact that you're not getting the vaccine that you're desperately wanting. You've been following these guidelines for months now. The people who want this vaccine the most, the people who have been physically distant, the people who are wearing their masks, the people who aren't going places, we want you to have it. We understand it is hard to say wait. But it is not a matter of demand. It's a matter of supply. And in the health department, we are not getting mass quantities of the vaccine every week, what we are getting, we're using almost immediately with no doses going to waste. There are no doses at all, from the likes of a county health department going to waste on this. So, understand that if we tell you to wait that it honestly, we've talked about this internally and is that it's heartbreaking because we know you want this so badly and we want you to have it.

So, let me just tell you a little bit about the rollout and where we are. Again, I'm Kevin Hall, Lexington-Fayette County Health Department. The vaccine distribution began in terms of the health department on December 23, two days before Christmas, we received 200-300 doses of the vaccine to provide to health care workers phase 1A as identified at that time by the CDC, the federal government and our State Department of Public Health identified health care workers as the primary target.

Why is that, people ask; is because our goal is not to get shots to all 330,000 people in Lexington, it is to vaccinate the vaccinators. If we can keep our healthcare workers healthy, then they can continue taking care of you for COVID-19, the flu, a broken arm, heart surgery, whatever it is that you had and that you need. And then also they can give the shots. They're capable of giving shots on a regular basis. And by getting those nurses, doctors, pharmacies, all of those people who can give shots, getting them protected allows them to give you the shot in the future. Phase 1A, so healthcare workers in Lexington, this boggles the mind, we have more than 20,000 health care workers just here in Lexington. So it takes a while to move through that because it's not just first dose, there's a second dose, it's two pieces to that.

Also, the reason we want them to be protected is because the next group, phase 1b, just looking at 70 and older, that comes out to around 30,000, about 10% of the population will be in 1b, that's not counting the K through 12 faculty and staff that's not County, the first responders or anybody in that category. So, 30,000 plus people who are 70 or older. That's why we need those health care workers in this assistance.

So, back to December 23 is a Wednesday, we received the shipment of the vaccine early that week. By the end of that Wednesday, two days before Christmas, we had it in the arms of all the health care workers that registered, without any doses going to waste. We started small in part, because that's all we got. We didn't ask for a lot and we didn't get a lot. We didn't get a lot because there were staffing issues, there weren't people available, there were people who we also didn't know what it would be like to bring people in. Were people going to be available because it was so close to the Christmas holiday? It's also a chance to learn and to grow. We have we went from 300 to around 900 to around 1500 last week, and we just finished roughly 1800 to 2000 shots today. I don't know what the final count was. But it was very active, very busy. No shots were gone to waste, were able to register people in advance.

Health care workers, they can go to our website, LFCHD.org. There's a link on there to help you get notified, you can sign up to be notified on future clinics for healthcare workers. Because we allow you to register, we know how many people to expect and we plan accordingly. And we give the doses to those people. That's where we are. And now Christina is going to ask me some of the most common questions we're getting. I'm sure there are questions coming in. And Christina are people sending them as we're watching? So, we're going to try to hit the ones who are getting the most. And again, look through some of our previous Facebook posts, you're going to see a lot of information on there. And to know also we can't speak on behalf of any other agency.

Well, I forgot this part, it's an important piece. We're not the only place in town giving the vaccine. Hospitals are taking care of their staff members, large practices are taking care of their workers. We're trying to help those health care workers who aren't affiliated with a hospital, who aren't part of a large clinic to get vaccinated. So it's the medium to small size places that need that shot. So that's who we're working on and who we're working with. So Christina, we've got a list of some questions. If you want to go ahead and start asking those I'll answer the best I can.

Absolutely, Kevin, you have already gone over these answers. But I want to clarify for our watchers. One of the main questions we're being asked is why are you still in phase 1A?

That's a great question. It's why are we in phase 1A. So we have 20,000 plus health care workers in Lexington, we've got to take care of them. Now a common thing that we hear from our call center is well, the CDC changed to this. The CDC has said Dr. Redfield has said and Dr. Sennett, our state Commissioner that those are guidelines, they're not regulations, they don't have to be followed on that. And it's to help people plan because in Kentucky Fayette County is different from Scott County from Powell County and from Clark County, whatever county, we're all different. We have different makeups we have different amount of staff, different amount of health care workers. So it's to give you a guideline on it so that no vaccine goes to waste. So if you're in a place that has taken care of everybody in 1A, they don't want you just sitting and waiting, they want you going ahead and giving that to those other categories and to the people who need it. We're not seeing that in Lexington. When we find out, we put the link out to register healthcare workers. And then open it when it opens. Let's say it opens at 10am, by noon or 1, probably 50 to 100 percent of the people have already signed up. There's so much demand there. There's not the ability to go to other categories and it's because we're not getting an overwhelming amount. I get the most we've had so far as for this week, about 1800 to 2000 doses. The good news is the governor has said they're going to start allocating more to these larger populated areas. So that should be coming soon. And hopefully that will help. So that's why we're still in phase 1A here in Lexington, in terms of the health department.

And this next question is a very frequent question we get and it kind of goes along with your answer to the last question. But why isn't this going faster?

We understand that it's easy for people to sit on the outside and say, why isn't this going faster, but ask anybody who's come through our clinic, it couldn't go any faster for the people who are here. As far as clinics themselves are going, they're very swift, they're very efficient, people are

getting in and out in a matter of minutes. But the rollout itself, it's limited to the doses we receive. Kentucky only receives a certain amount from the federal government, the federal government's the one who decides how much each state gets and then that gets sent out from the state to all the different counties in Kentucky. And remember, there are 120 counties in Kentucky. It's not just Fayette County, as much as we love that Fayette County is number one, there's still 119 other counties that have to be taken care of in Kentucky. So on one hand, we can recognize that it's slower than what you might anticipate. But keep in mind, think back to earlier this year. Testing also started slow, it was hard to get opportunities for testing. But the more people who got brought on board, the more labs that got trained, the wider and more available it was for the general public is the same thing with the vaccine. This isn't something that just a nurse can pick up the syringe and start giving a shot, there is a very involved test and a training session that they have to take, an online course that they have to take, it's about two and a half to three hours. And the nurses I've talked to said this isn't the sort of thing, you skip ahead, take the test and you pass. You have to pay attention to this. It's tough, and they're doing the best they can in that. So on one hand, we understand why it's slower than what you would like. But people are moving through it as quickly as they can. Fortunately, the hospitals who have many, many, many more staff than the health department has been able to give at a pretty high clip the backseat to their staff that frees them up to provide it to more healthcare workers. This is what we're seeing here in Lexington, the hospitals are taking care of their staff and they start filling in the gaps elsewhere. Can't say enough good things of those people who are helping with that.

And another question, why are we not letting other people have the extra doses?

And it's a hard one to explain because there are no such things in Lexington as an extra dose. There are no extra doses. I went over that on Facebook the other day. And I had to laugh because somebody said, "Well, what are you doing with extra doses are there no extra doses? Yes. But what are you doing with that?" It's that they don't exist. We use the vaccine we have, we draw up. If we know 10 people are coming in, we draw that, we use that, the fact that there are 10 doses in that vial, if at the end of a clinic, like today, at the most we've ever had, we have like two or three doses, usually at the end of it that have been drawn up. And we make sure they go to people who need them, whether it is members of our staff, or if it's the volunteers who are working here. We're doing these at a church here in Lexington, if they've got people who fall into the categories who need those, they're not wasted.

Now, another question, that's not what Christina just asked, but it falls into that hole. What about county x who's doing a waiting list?

That's great. That's great for that county, but it's more likely it's a smaller county. And they don't have 300,000 people who would be on the list waiting to be told, that's a little complicated. Because it was explained to me this way: If once you open the bottle, once it's ready, you have a limited amount of time that they can be given, the shot to be given. So at the end of our clinic, if we've got four doses left, we don't have the ability to go down the waitlist for 200-300 people to find out who could be here in a matter of five minutes because we have to close up we have to get out of here. On behalf of the church, you can't be here all night. But I can assure you and it's up to you to choose whether you believe it or not, and I hope you do,

because it's the truth and there's nothing more than the vaccines not going to waste. It is not going to waste it is being used effectively and efficiently to the people who need it in phase 1A.

And why can't other phases sign up for notifications?

It's a great question. We understand that. There's really a couple of reasons for that. First of all, the honest answer for the health department is we aren't sure what phase 1B will look like with our involvement. Our plan from all along was to take care of health care workers to get them involved in phases, one B, one C and beyond. So we don't want people coming in to the health department signing up on a notification form like health care workers. And then we aren't the ones contacting them, because it would cause some confusion, mass confusion. Perhaps the good news is the city, the mayor, Mayor Gorton, who is a nurse, first and foremost, in addition to becoming mayor, she's created the vaccine Task Force. So all these different groups are coming together, there should be information coming very soon. And one of the things they're working on is that registration piece, they want to get this out to the public. And the reason that will be so great coming from this group is that if you call in or you get notified that there's a vaccine, you need to find out, you want to get the shot, but the one on x road is unavailable, they can point you to the one over, it's going to be a lot more efficient, the communication is going to be better, so that everybody knows the partners who are working on this and know what's going on. And there's just more staffing and ability to take care of it for the community. So, we understand where you're coming from on it, we're just not equipped to be able to do that yet. Not because we don't want to, we just don't want you to sign up for something and then have to go to another place.

And why are other counties already in phase 1B?

They have fewer people, they have, if you think about it, I use Powell County a lot as an example, because I grew up there. Only has maybe 10,000 to 11,000 people. So that's half the amount of health care workers that we have here in Lexington. So it's just by itself going to take longer to take care of our health care workers. It's great that those other places can move on. But it works both ways. We get told, I get told from the director of these other places or friends that these other places get asked "Well, why aren't you doing what Lexington is doing?" There's a plus and a minus to be as large as Lexington is. On one hand, we do have more resources to do things. But on the other hand, we have more people, so it takes longer. We also have a question that came in, it was "why don't you quit doing testing or pull back from testing to do more of the of the vaccine," we're not doing the testing. The testing is through private labs that are being run. And we don't have a hand in that. So we're putting our resources into this to try to help take care of people at the same time while still operating our health department because we still have to inspect restaurants and we still have to make sure we have our WIC program for mothers and infants and children, we have to make sure that we have our our STD program or testing program or harm reduction program to make sure we are giving flu shots still to make sure that there isn't an outbreak of that. We're still doing all of that in addition to this limited amount of vaccine that we're able to give.

We have a Facebook viewer right now, who is curious how those who get the first vaccine can be assured that the second one that will complete the process will be available.

Okay, great question. So the question is, if you've gotten the first vaccine, and I'm assuming this is through the health department, I'm going to just for the sake of clarity, say the health department. And the reason I'm going to do that is because if you've got it somewhere else, you need to contact that place on how to get the second dose. If you received your first dose through us, we will contact you on how to get your second dose, you had to sign up there for our registration form. We have your phone number or will shoot you a text to let you know, here's how you sign up for the second dose. And that's going to be coming soon. The people who got their shot on December 23 will be able to get the shot next week. So we'll be having that announcement out very soon to those people. The advice that has been given out to departments is not to hold back vaccine on second doses. So people getting a second dose will be worked into the first dose, now all of that could change tomorrow. That's another wrinkle and all of this, everything that we talked about today, it's an evolving situation. It's very fluid. It could change tomorrow, guidelines could change tomorrow, regulations could change tomorrow. The plan is right now though, you'll get that vaccine, you'll get notified by us now if anything changes. We'll let you know, we'll post it on our Facebook, social media. On our Twitter, it's probably not an Instagram ad. I'll be on our website LFCHD.org. We'll do interviews. We'll get the word out. And again, if you signed up through us and got our shot, got your shot through us, we're going to notify you.

Another question we have on Facebook is there a process to get more vaccine from the feds? That's at the state level. The state makes the request to the federal government the federal government gives it to the state. There are a lot of issues that are happening with the state and they are doing everything they can to protect everybody and all 120 counties and not just the two large ones of Jefferson and Fayette County, it's making sure that the smallest county gets treated as fairly and equitable as everyone else because they're just as important. As you watching here in Fayette County. If you've, you know, there's always what we like to say if you've got questions, direct it to our representatives for it's what our elected officials, of course, talk to your elected officials. We work very closely with the City Council here in Lexington to try to keep them updated on information. And I know they're a great resource. Now they are not the ones opposite the state level. So talk to your state representatives. But let them know that this is what my concerns are, what we need, so they can make sure that gets passed along. But it's the federal government to the state government to all the different counties and health districts in Kentucky.

Miss Ridgeway just asked us with people of color suffering from COVID-19 deaths at a rapid rate. What are your goals and ways that you will reach out to those populations to ensure that health equity is considered?

Well, first, let me put a plug in for an interview that we're doing. So if you didn't hear the question is why are we doing for people of color, particularly with African Americans who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19? With the cases and deaths as compared to other races and ethnicities? I believe I captured that. Is that right? Christina? Yes. First, Casey O'Brien is a public health professional and nurse here in Lexington and a member of our Board of Health, she's going to be doing a radio interview. Tomorrow. 6pm on Thursday, it's live on RadioLex. So if you're in Lexington, you can listen live on 93.9 FM, or stream at Radiolox.us. So

that's us Radioplex.us. And Casey talks very openly about the historical issues that minority populations have faced to build the distrust about vaccines. And she is very well versed in this and doesn't shy away from some of these really ugly historical topics. So that's one thing I wanted to go ahead and put out there. We're going to talk about it in every interview possibility we can, we're going to talk about it like this. I'm going to go back to that task force, the communication education piece is going to be launching a campaign coming out soon, hopefully end of the month, maybe in February to target people that have questions about the vaccine. And that very audience that Mr. Ridgeway mentioned. That's one of the goals in that is to try to talk directly to you about those, those really tragic things that happened in the past and to build that trust up again as well. So hopefully that answers your question. And if you do, if you have any, if you want to be a part of sharing that message, please reach out to us because we would love to have as many people who believe in this vaccine. If you believe in it, we want you to help share the Word to others. That's another part. Let me just back up is we've been at this a long time. And when people talk about COVID-19, I can promise you are not as tired of it as our public health workers or doctors or nurses. We've been going at this nonstop for almost 10, over 10 months since March of last year. We've had a lot of people who've been very hateful to us that the anti vaxxers the people who don't believe in the masks, the people who think we're taking away their rights and what have you. And that's an easier group for us to handle some of the negativity from than it is the people who support what we're doing, or the people who believe in what we're doing, or the people who believe that this is real and is as bad as it actually is. And have been doing all the things the right way. Which is why if you have a question, ask us, we try to answer the questions on our social media or the 1000 calls that we get in the call center. So don't sit and think and just attack. We want to educate you. We want to inform you because the people who are asking these questions now are the people who want the vaccine the most. And we want you to have that information, because we want you to feel good about this whole process. So when you do get it, you tell your friends, neighbors family, Hey, I got it. It's important.

Grace Bates would like to know what the current estimation on what level of vaccination we need in order to see a significant reduction in transmission or herd immunity. Okay, great question, but not one that I'm able to answer because I'm not going to be able to talk about the science or the medical piece of that. That's not my specialty. I wanted to talk today about the actual rollout and what we're doing with the phases and license so great question, Grace, but not something that I'm able to answer right now. But you can probably direct that if you want to direct it to the call center? Or to the COVID? Email address? COVID-19 at LFCHD.org. To get that answered, I want to just let everybody again know, we're going. I'll answer the questions as long as I'm on here. We're going on 30 minutes now, Kevin Hall with the health department, I'm the communications officer, you can get a lot of questions answered through our Facebook or on our website, lfchd.org. About the phases, about why we're doing it the way we're doing it. We're going to lead to the Kentucky plan. The Kentucky plan has been great about this the State Department for public health, their entire plan is on the website. And every day, the governor Dr. Stack, talk directly to you with that information. So go to those sites to learn more, and tell people about how they can use that opportunity or use those tools to learn more.

A viewer would like to know what group transplant recipients might be in?

I honestly, I don't know the answer to that. I'm not trying to give you the runaround. I'm sorry that you don't have the answer to that. We follow what the CDC list as a health care worker. And right now, if you're not a healthcare worker, we can't give you that shot. If you are, I would just as soon as we get information about other places or other phases, we'll have it on our website on our social media, you can call or I would advise you to just check with the state website that it's kyCOVID-19.ky.gov. That site links on our site LFCHD.org. It's got the plan. You have the definitions on there.

We'll get some more questions coming through there loading bear with me just a second, I apologize viewers, the frequently asked questions from our first list.

We've gotten a couple of repeats again asking that have joined late, asking again for clarification on why people not in phase 1A can't go ahead and sign up for notifications.

We're going hit this again. And it's a great question. We understand the shortage of trying to shorten the answer this time. They're asking if we can start some sort of standby list.

We don't have the ability to do the standby because there is nothing to stand by for. There are no vaccines that are wasted. There are no extra vaccines available, then what about the other counties, the smaller counties that we're hearing the reports of when we when we have the vaccine clinics that it gets used? There's nothing really more that I can say, to explain and explain that. In terms of other phases signing up. There's going to be pieces to that coming up very soon. I know you don't like hearing Wait, nobody likes hearing wait. We don't like telling you wait, but there are more pieces at play to bring everybody together. Because it's not just the health department initiative. So many people of Lexington are coming together to make this happen to help protect people.

And it that seems to be all of the new questions. I would like to say we are getting lots of thank you's. From our viewers right now. We've got over 119 viewers, and quite a few of them are telling us Thank you. And I would like to say you are very most welcome.

Yeah, if you didn't hear that we do. We thank you for being on this. We hope we answered your questions. It's one of the things we're going to try to do, we'll go through and edit the questions that are on there, we'll try to put some of the written responses in there for people so that they're able to they don't have to watch this whole 30 minutes. It's great viewing, I think, but we'll try to put it in the comments. Hopefully our goal from this, if you've learned something from this today, share it with your friends, share it with your family, share it with anybody who needs to learn about this, because we want to be out in front of this, we want to talk directly to you. And this is a great way to reach as many people as possible. So I'm going to go ahead and wrap it up, it's been 30 minutes. If you have questions we do try to answer them as much as we can on Facebook. We're not on there 24/7, so be patient on there. Try to look through some of the comments to see some of the things we've already answered on some of the previous posts that go to if you're a healthcare worker go to our site to get signed up for notification on future clinics doesn't mean that you're guaranteed a shot and be mindful that it overwhelms our system. It crashed this last time because too many people were signing up as soon as it came open. That's all I have. Thank you Lexington, and thank you for listening again. I'm Kevin Hall. Thank you for letting us help Lexington be well we'll talk to you very soon.