



PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

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Ashtabula City Health Department Transitions to The Ohio Department of Health's Online Registration System for COVID-19 Vaccine

Ohio's COVID-19 Vaccine Management Solution (VMS) is a state-supported system which will allow residents to find available vaccine, schedule appointments and access care. This tool is being offered to vaccine providers, including local health departments, with the primary objective of removing the burden of scheduling and managing clinics to allow staff to focus on vaccine administration. The VMS system is being provided by the State of Ohio free of charge.

"Monitoring our phone lines and voicemails as well as the time put into scheduling clinics and reminder calls has been burdensome on our small staff," said City Health Commissioner Christine Hill. "When fully implemented, this system will help our residents determine their eligibility, schedule an appointment, send reminder emails, calls or text messages and it can also update citizens about Ohio's phases of distribution so that when they are eligible, they can schedule their vaccine."

Currently, the Ashtabula City Health Department has a pre-registration list of over 2,000 people who are eligible to receive the vaccine when the vaccine supply becomes available. "Although the State wants us to implement this system immediately, we are not willing to ask those who have already pre-registered to start over and use this system," said Jim Timonere, City Manager. "Our staff has been working with representatives from VMS to ensure those already pre-registered receive their vaccination first before the system goes 'live' for our clinics."

The Health Department has determined based on the current rate of vaccines being received it could take up to 10 weeks to vaccinate those who have already pre-registered. "The availability of vaccine is crucial for any system to work. At this time, we are scheduling our clinics based on what we are told we will receive with the goal of administering them as soon as possible after delivery," said Hill.

Due to this transition to VMS and the need to vaccinate those already pre-registered with the City Health Department, the City will suspend telephone pre-registrations through its registration hotline starting March 1st. "This will allow us to work through the list of those already pre-registered while familiarizing our staff with the new software. When we are able to schedule all of our pre-registered patients we will transition to the live VMS system, which will show available vaccine appointments in real time. If we do not feel the system is a good fit for us, we will return to the current registration process," said Timonere.

More information will be forthcoming in the next few weeks about the VMS system. The Ashtabula City Health Department will offer assistance to those city residents who need support navigating and registering in the VMS system.

The hotline will still be monitored by employees from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and residents can call with questions concerning the vaccine, however as of March 1st, pre-registrations will not be taken. When VMS is implemented, the hotline will be utilized to assist residents who are unable to access the online registration system.
