



INTRA-AGENCY COMMUNICATION

By now I'm sure most Coarc employees have heard varying amounts of information regarding the roll-out of the Covid-19 Vaccine. I wanted to share some information that we have learned with all employees. First, I must emphasize that this situation is fluid and can change at any time. Nonetheless, we thought it prudent to share the information that we've received to date.

The ARC NY and many other disability associations have advocated strongly that OPWDD facilities be included in Phase 1A of the New York State Covid-19 Vaccination program. I am pleased to share that indeed, OPWDD provider agencies, including the people we support and the DSP and clinical staff that work directly with the people we support, will be included in Phase 1A of the Covid-19 Vaccination program. Phase 1A includes primarily health care workers and long-term care facilities residents and staff and will continue for several months.

Here's what we know right now (again, this could be subject to change at any time). NYS has received 170,000 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines. Included in this number is an allotment for approximately 414 OPWDD IRAs state-wide. These IRAs are IRAs with an average age of people being supported of 65 years or more. We understand that the following IRAs are initially included for Coarc: Lake Street, Shasta Drive, German-Church Road, and Imperial Lane. Individuals and employees of these four IRAs will be the first people at Coarc to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Again, these IRAs were determined by NYS DOH and OPWDD. We are currently waiting for information on when the vaccines will arrive, but we expect them this week. Consent will be required for all people being supported as well as staff. The vaccine is not mandatory, but it is **STRONGLY ENCOURGED** that all people being supported and staff receive the vaccine.

The vaccine will be administered by CVS and Walgreen pharmacies, who will schedule appointments with Coarc to administer the vaccine at the IRA. Affected Coarc employees will be informed when we receive more information.

We expect that shortly thereafter, additional doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine as well as doses of the Moderna vaccine will become available as Phase 1A of the Vaccination Program continues. Both the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine require two shots, approximately 3 weeks apart. The Moderna vaccine will be administered by NYS Department of Health authorized facilities (not by CVS or Walgreens). Currently, we do not have any information on where those facilities will be in Columbia County, but we expect that Columbia Memorial Hospital will be involved.

I'm sure there will be many questions regarding the vaccine roll-out. Please contact a member of the Leadership Team or your Program Manager with your questions. We will do our best to answer them. We will also have up-to-date information on the Coarc website at www.coarc.org.

Finally, it is very important for all Coarc employees to understand that the vaccine roll-out DOES NOT change any of the existing precautions and requirements that are currently in place, like social distancing, mask wearing, hand washing, and environmental disinfection. These will all remain in place indefinitely.

There is light at the end of the tunnel! Please continue to be vigilant and respectful of others. The Board of Directors and Leadership team wishes everyone a very Happy Holiday Season as we look forward to a much improved 2021!

Stay Well and Best Wishes,

Kenneth R. Stall
Chief Executive Officer