



# MEDIA RELEASE

## San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 18, 2021

### **PLEA to the COMMUNITY REGARDING VACCINE ELIGIBILITY**

Though the number of vaccine doses available is slowly increasing, it is still important that our community members do all they can to follow vaccine eligibility guidance.

While the system isn't perfect, it is a necessary tool that helps ensure those who are highest at risk receive the vaccine first. While the rules may appear arbitrary, they help to ensure a smooth and equitable distribution.

We ask that those who are not eligible refrain from signing up for a vaccine registration slot. If you have signed up for a slot and are not eligible, please cancel your appointment so that it may be filled appropriately. The definitions can easily be confusing. Below are some simple explanations of current eligibility requirements ([full details are available here](#)):

#### **PHASE 1a - Tiers 1 & 2**

Workers in healthcare settings and emergency responders. To be eligible as a worker in a healthcare setting, direct care must be delivered via close proximity in-person care of a human patient, or work must support healthcare that provides close proximity in-person care.

#### **PHASE 1b – Tier 1**

-Anyone over the age of 65

-People who are (a) over the age of 50 AND (b) are not able to live independently who either: a. are receiving long-term care from a paid or unpaid caregiver, or b. are living with someone who works outside the home

-People who are over the age of 50 AND are living with and caring full time for a child who is not your own.

For now, those are the only groups that are eligible. If you are under the age of 65 and are receiving the vaccine, you need to either be a healthcare provider, be over 50 and living with and caring for a child who is not your own, or be over 50 and unable to live on your own and are receiving care from a paid caregiver or someone who lives outside of your home.

#### **WHO ISN'T ELIGIBLE?**

There many good arguments to be made about who is or isn't included in the current eligibility groups, but for now these guidelines are what we are working with. The County is attempting to screen registration lists and

ensure eligibility, but the hope is that members of the community will thoughtfully assess their eligibility before registering. While the WA State Phase Finder tool is a helpful means of assessing eligibility, it does not replace common sense and thoughtfulness (nor does it prevent deception).

**Here are some examples of cases that are NOT currently eligible:**

- Someone under 65 who is an essential worker or who works in a critical industry (other than healthcare)
- School staff, teachers, or childcare workers under 65 (other than those providing direct healthcare)
- Someone under 65 with a high-risk medical condition (unless over 50 and eligible for Phase 1b Tier 1)
- Someone living with and/or caring for a partner who is significantly older (or younger) than them.
- Someone whose partner/spouse/child is eligible for the vaccine.
- A licensed or trained healthcare provider who is not currently practicing or interacting in close proximity to clients/patients.

When in doubt, the County will always err on the side of vaccinating, but as a provider of precious vaccine, there is a responsibility on the part of the County to ensure the doses are being administered fairly and in alignment with WA State DOH guidelines. Please be patient if we ask you more detailed questions about your eligibility.

We all are eager for eligibility to expand, and the hope is that the vaccine supply will increase fast enough that we can get there soon. Until then, please do the right thing for your neighbors, friends, and co-workers, and save precious doses for our highest risk islanders.

Thanks islands, as always.