



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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**LISA PIERCEY, MD, MBA, FAAP**  
COMMISSIONER

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January 4, 2020

Dear hospital partners:

We are grateful for your ongoing efforts in the rapid deployment of COVID-19 vaccination across the state. At TDH, we are committed to you, your staff, and your mission.

While we have given permission to hospital systems to use their discretion in assessing risk to their staff and vaccinating appropriately, we applaud those who have moved from their frontline staff to meet community 1a1 and 1a2 needs. Some have also reached out to their own 75+ populations to begin those vaccination efforts. We believe that these decisions to vaccinate the most vulnerable will result in more rapid impact on rising death rates in the state as well as the strain on hospital capacity that you know too well.

Over 50% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 are over age 70, and over 70% of Tennessee's deaths due to COVID-19 are over 70 years old. For this reason, county health departments have added 75 and older to the populations being vaccinated. As you consider the logistics of second doses and how to maximize the impact of the remaining first doses, we hope that you will prioritize your own senior patient populations. Vaccine supply will be very limited for the foreseeable future, and it is increasingly important that we all work together to assure that the doses we have are used for those most likely to be impacted the most.

Please continue to reach out to us as questions arise. Local health departments and Regional Healthcare Coalitions are facilitating local ongoing coordination regarding vaccine phase implementation. RHC contact information can be found here <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/cedep-emergency-preparedness/healthcare-coalitions.html>

Thank you again for your partnership.

With appreciation,

  
Lisa Piercey, MD MBA FAAP  
Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Health