

# Vaccines

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There is no central state registry or appointment line.

Allen said the fragmented system is necessary so that vaccination distribution matches the needs of local communities, not a “one-size-fits-all Portland” solution.

Brown acknowledged the beginning of an exasperating stretch as seniors and their families try to navigate the growing chasm between government’s promise and delivery.

“I want to thank our seniors for their patience thus far, and for their continued patience in the coming days and weeks,” Brown said. “We are still managing a scarce resource. There will be hiccups in this process, but we are going to get through them.”

More than 350,000 people in Oregon — about 8.8% of the population — have received at least one shot of vaccine, ranking Oregon 12th in the nation.

Oregon’s vaccine priority system is already straining to get shots for groups already eligible. Medical and health workers were in group 1a, which has been largely but not wholly completed.

The other group in the top priority were residents of nursing homes, who received some of the first shots that became available late last year.

Seniors in long-term care facilities were vaccinated, but those living independently or with their families have had to wait.

In a controversial move to



Karla Toms, a registered nurse with St. Charles Health System, administers a vaccine in the arm of Suzi Smith, of Bend, during a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center in Redmond in January.

try to jump-start the reopening of schools, the governor decided to place more than 150,000 educators, school employees and day care workers ahead of any age group. The decision went against recommendations by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that age should be the primary factor in deciding vaccine priority. But states are given the right to make the final decision.

The schools group became eligible in January, but is only partially vaccinated.

The state’s plans were upended when a court order required the state to prioritize prisoners and staff in correctional facilities, which have had

some of the highest infection rates in the state. Brown said about 5,000 shots per week from the state’s pool of doses will go to an estimated 12,000 inmates and staff at state correctional institutions.

Allen said all eligible groups will start receiving vaccinations on the date listed by the state, but will be sharing the limited supply with uncompleted priority groups ahead of them and eventually new ones behind.

Allen said OHA is aiming to have 75% of seniors receive their first shots by April, with second shots by May.

That’s actually about a month earlier than OHA’s most recent timelines. Allen said the state has twice as many work-

ers ready to give shots than doses allocated to the state each week. The Biden administration has promised a 20% increase in vaccine shipments to Oregon.

“That’s good news for seniors,” Allen said.

Brown is also assigning 200 National Guard troops to operate a new phone bank to handle questions on vaccines. National Guard troops have already been called to duty inoculating residents at vaccine centers.

Brown and OHA officials also said Friday that they did not have statistics on the number of people who are not yet eligible who have been vaccinated.

While some have received shots because of the need to use up the fragile bottles of vaccine before they expired, reports of doses intentionally offered to people not in a priority group have been made public. Board members of Providence Health & Services in Portland were offered vaccinations in December and January, according to news reports this week.

“We all hate people who butt in line,” Brown said.

The state also has no statistics on the number of people in the top priority groups that are declining to be vaccinated or no-shows on scheduled appointments that leave doses unused.

“We don’t know who didn’t show up or why they didn’t show up,” Allen said.

The next priority group sequence is still being worked out by Brown and the OHA. An advisory committee created by Brown has suggested people of any age with an underlying medical condition that makes them vulnerable to a severe infection or death should be at the top of the list.

The state also wants to target “essential workers,” a category yet to be completely defined by the state.

There are an estimated 3.2 million adults in Oregon’s projected 2021 population. Allen reiterated that barring a major increase in the amount of vaccine available, many Oregonians will not be vaccinated until autumn. No vaccine has yet been developed that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration says can be used on

anyone under 16.

Brown said Oregon remains one of the safest spots in the nation. Infection and death rates are the fourth lowest in a country where over 450,000 people have died. Though it accounts for just 4% of the world population, the U.S. accounts for more than 20% of COVID-19 deaths. Worldwide, there have been over 105 million infections and 2.2 million deaths.

The current Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two shots spaced about a month apart. Once administered, they are 95% effective in preventing infection.

There are some other hopeful signs: After surging in November and December, COVID-19 infections have dropped off sharply, though are still above most levels seen in the spring and summer.

Johnson & Johnson on Thursday asked the FDA for emergency approval of its vaccine. If approved by late February, the vaccine could arrive in states in early March.

The upside on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is it only requires one shot. It has a lower efficiency rate of 72% in a sample U.S. population, but it can be shipped and used more rapidly than the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.

More information is available at covidvaccine.oregon.gov. The state is also providing information through its 211 phone system, texting ORCOVID to 898211 and by emailing ORCOVID@211info.org

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# Anderson

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“It’s something I’ve been thinking about for awhile,” Anderson said Tuesday. “It’s the right time in my personal life.”

A longtime county employee, Anderson was first hired to work as a senior management analyst in the Community Development Department in 1998. He was promoted to the director of the department in 2005 before accepting the job as county administrator in 2013.

Commission Chair Tony DeBone, who was on the commission eight years ago and helped hire Anderson, praised Anderson for his ability to adapt to challenging situations and manage the county through dynamic times, including coming out of a recession and a pandemic.

“We’ve worked together very well,” DeBone said. “He’s very professional.”

The commission is in the early stages of planning the recruitment process to fill Anderson’s seat. It is an unusual

process for the county, which has only had three administrators since 1978, said DeBone.

Nick LeLack, who succeeded Anderson as the director of the Community Development Department, said Anderson’s departure will be hard for him and several of his colleagues.

“I’ve never had a boss I’ve respected more and worked more closely with,” LeLack said.

LeLack credits the county’s strong financial position and high morale more to Anderson’s leadership skills, and said

Anderson over time has instilled a love for public service throughout the organization.

Anderson was a good leader with a “calm, steady demeanor,” LeLack said, and made sure to support individual departments while letting department heads lead.

“He’s been a tremendous mentor to me, and he will have very big shoes to fill,” LeLack said.

Over the course of his tenure as administrator, Anderson said he wasn’t proud of any one particular achievement, but instead was proud of being a leader who got departments to work together and to think outside their organizational boundaries.

“My job is to create an environment or a culture where good things can happen,” Anderson said.

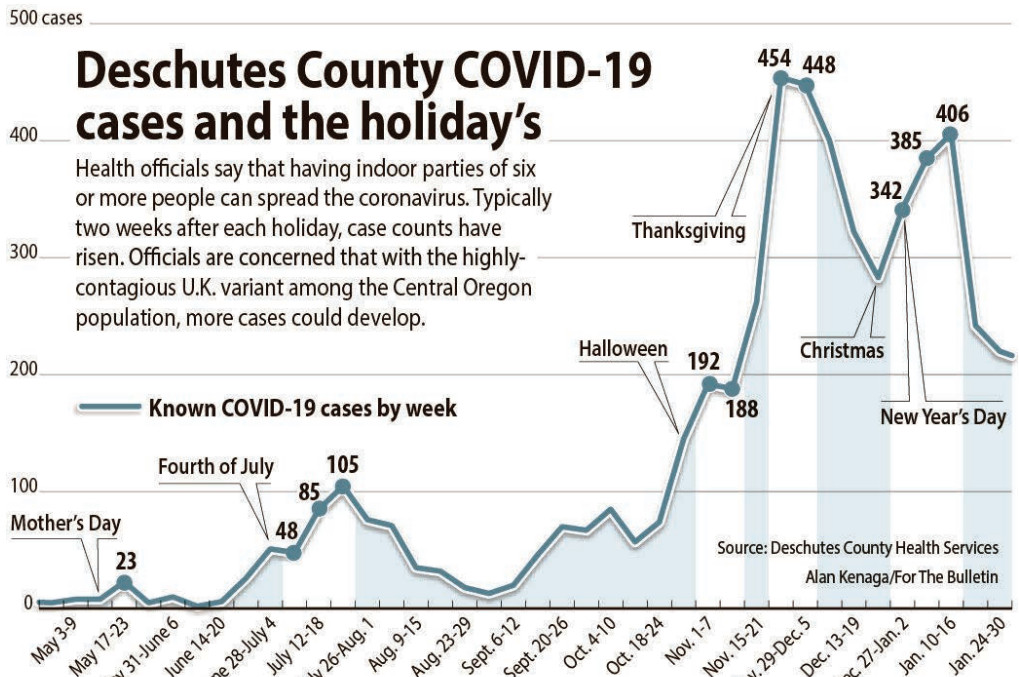
The biggest challenge of

the job is to adapt to different kinds of people and respond, rather than force his own will upon any issue, Anderson said.

But even the challenges he will miss.

“I’m going to miss the people first and foremost,” he said. “And even after all this time, I get a daily rush coming into work.”

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# Super Bowl

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“That’s all we’re doing special for the Super Bowl,” said Mackenzie Miller, a manager. “It’s kind of a bummer. Typically we’re packed.”

State health officials are worried too about Super Bowl Sunday, which traditionally means gatherings of people outside a household, said Jonathan Modie, Oregon Health

Authority spokesman. It’s particularly worrisome with four cases of the highly contagious U.K. variant being detected in Bend wastewater, Portland and in Yamhill County.

“That we now have variants that make the virus more contagious makes indoor gatherings extremely risky,” Modie said.

The state suggests instead:

- Wear team logo or decorate your house with the team colors.

- Make appetizers or snacks with people you live with to enjoy while watching the game and share the recipes with family and friends outside the household.

- Start a group text with other fans while watching the game.

- If you must gather, do it outdoors where you can be 6 feet apart.

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