

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wolf Administration Extends Regional Congregate Care Assistance Teams to Continue Support to Long-Term Care Facilities Facing COVID-19, Highlights Progress Vaccinating Long-Term Care Residents and Staff

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration today announced an extension of the Regional Congregate Care Assistance Teams (RCATs) to support long-term care facilities as they continue to face COVID-19 and the challenges it creates for congregate care settings. The RCATs will continue providing support with testing, staffing assistance, and rapid response in the event of an outbreak at a long-term care facility, which can still be dangerous for staff and residents at these facilities as COVID-19 remains a threat. The support network originally was set to lapse February 28, 2021, but it will now be available through May 2021.

“From the onset of the COVID-19 public health crisis, the Wolf Administration has made resources available to help long-term care facilities both prepare for potential COVID-19 outbreaks and provide hands-on support if an outbreak occurs so these facilities know that they do not have to face this crisis alone,” said Department of Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller. “As Pennsylvania and the nation make progress in this fight, we must all do what we can to stop the spread by wearing masks and following mitigation guidance to reduce community transmission and protect our most vulnerable.”

“Our fight against COVID-19 is not done and neither is our work to support long-term care facilities,” Department of Health Acting Secretary Beam said. “To strengthen our COVID-19 response, the Wolf Administration and the vaccine providers share a mutual mission of getting vaccine into arms – especially those living in congregate settings who are susceptible to the COVID-19 virus. We are making good progress to get those Pennsylvanians vaccinated. We must stay the course to ensure residents and staff have the resources they need and keep our fellow Pennsylvanians safe.”

The RCATs were established in early January 2021 to continue some of the support previously offered by the Regional Response Health Collaborative (RRHC) program when its funding lapsed at the end of 2020. Through the RCATs, more limited services are provided by health systems previously affiliated with the RRHC and are coordinated and deployed through DHS, the Department of Health (DOH), and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Extending this program will cost \$6 million dollars per month which will be funded by a combination of state general funds as well as federal funds available to PEMA through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). State funds included in this effort are reimbursable through FEMA.

“While the flow of vaccines into Pennsylvania is a positive step in the process to fight COVID-19, we cannot let down our guard,” said PEMA Director Randy Padfield. “Continued efforts to support staff and residents at long-term care facilities is a critical element in that fight.”

The following services are available to long-term care facilities through the RCAT:

- Call centers previously utilized under the RRHC program are available for facilities to engage participating health systems for infection control and prevention technical assistance and education;
- Rapid response continues through onsite assessment teams assisting with infection control practices, identifying staffing needs, testing, cohorting, finding alternate care sites, and training needs, as necessary;

- Staffing assistance will continue to be provided by contracted agencies, as well as the PA National Guard, but is more limited than what was available through the RRHC;
- Testing assistance is available as resources permit through the DOH vendors; and,
- The Jewish Healthcare Foundation's Tomorrow's Healthcare portal will still be accessible; webinars will be scheduled as needed.

Since transitioning to this model in January, the RCATs have engaged in nearly 3,500 missions covering facility consultations, PPE requests, testing assistance, staffing needs, and rapid response. 53 rapid response deployments have occurred, with 28 to skilled nursing facilities and 25 to personal care homes.

Even as Pennsylvania makes significant progress with vaccinating residents and staff of long-term care facilities, COVID-19 may still challenge these facilities as those who decline a vaccine can still be vulnerable to the virus. While COVID-19 remains a threat and we continue to see community transmission of new variants, the RCAT will be available in the event outbreaks occur so that we can help facilities that need staffing or rapid response assistance. The Wolf Administration will continue to do all we can to support our long-term care facilities so they are not alone through this crisis.

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Every day tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians are receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. [Vaccination numbers for Pennsylvania do not include Philadelphia, which is its own jurisdiction, or federal facilities, which are working directly with the federal government.](#)

- This week, a total of 3,699,180 doses will have been allocated through March 6:
 - 336,870 first doses will have been allocated this week.
 - 189,410 second doses will have been allocated this week.
- To date, of the 3,699,180 doses allocated through March 6, we have administered 2,553,518 doses total through March 2:
 - First doses, 81 percent (1,761,703 administered of 2,172,935 allocated)
 - Second doses, 52 percent (791,815 administered of 1,526,245 allocated)

Vaccine Order signed Feb. 12

Last week, Sec. Beam signed an [order](#) outlining appropriate steps and recognized best practices to ensure vaccine providers deliver 80 percent of doses within seven days of receipt, provide a phone number where people can speak to an individual to make an appointment and report race and ethnicity data for everyone vaccinated.

Your Turn tool

Last week, Pennsylvania launched the [Your Turn tool](#) to help everyone understand where they fall in the vaccination prioritization effort. The Your Turn tool directs eligible residents to the department's [vaccine provider map online to locate a trusted local provider](#) and schedule a vaccination appointment. Your Turn also allows people to register to receive updates about vaccine distribution and allows the department to let you know when it is your turn to get vaccinated.

In addition to the Your Turn tool and while vaccine supply from the federal government remains limited, the Department of Health is working to ensure the vaccine is provided in a way that is ethical, equitable and efficient.

- A [commonwealth COVID-19 vaccination guide](#) explains the current process for getting one. Pennsylvanians with questions about the vaccination process can call the Department of Health hotline at 1-877-724-3258.
- [Vaccine provider map](#) to find a COVID-19 vaccine provider near you.

- All of the locations that received vaccine and how much they have received can be found on the [COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution webpage](#).
- [Vaccine dashboard data](#) can also be found on the website to find more information on the doses administered and showcase demographic information.
- Pennsylvanians can provide feedback on the [Pennsylvania COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan](#) by clicking on the Plan Feedback Form square under Popular Vaccine Topics [here](#).
- Frequently asked questions can be found [here](#).

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.
- Download the COVID Alert PA app and make your phone part of the fight. The free app can be found in the [Google Play Store](#) and the [Apple App Store](#) by searching for “covid alert pa”.

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)
- [Photos of the state’s lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)

For more information about COVID-19 guidance for long-term care facilities, visit www.health.pa.gov and www.dhs.pa.gov.