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# Homeless San Diegans at Convention Center Receive COVID-19 Vaccine

## FIRST DOSE ADMINISTERED TO OPERATION SHELTER TO HOME RESIDENTS 65 OR OLDER

SAN DIEGO – As mass vaccination efforts countywide continue, today San Diegans experiencing homelessness residing at the San Diego Convention Center emergency shelter received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Operation Shelter to Home residents who are at least 65 years old and in the [County of San Diego's Phase 1B - Tier 1 category](#) in the vaccination plan received the Moderna vaccine on-site at the Convention Center. A second dose will be needed approximately four weeks after the initial round.

**“Rolling out the vaccine to those staying at Operation Shelter to Home is an important step forward in our vaccination efforts,” Mayor Todd Gloria said. “These residents can be some of the most vulnerable among us, so it’s encouraging to be able to offer them protection against the COVID-19 virus. I look forward to expanding these efforts to the rest of our shelter residents and all San Diegans as soon as possible.”**

The City of San Diego worked closely with the County, San Diego Housing Commission and homelessness service providers Alpha Project and Father Joe’s Villages to develop notification and scheduling processes ahead of the vaccinations coming to the shelter – allowing operation teams to manage the administration process and for residents to have access to information in advance.

The County’s on-site medical team, including Dr. Louis Gilleran, who serves as the operation’s medical director, and County public-health nurses who are on-site daily, have made themselves available as necessary for information sessions or individual questions from shelter residents and staff related to the COVID-19 vaccines during the past several weeks.

**“We’ve been patiently waiting and preparing for our turn to begin administering the vaccine to the residents here at Operation Shelter to Home,” Dr. Gilleran said. “Our public-health teams have worked diligently with all partners to ensure that we are following all guidelines for safely inoculating and monitoring those who are receiving it. The months of coordinating on this operation have prepared us well to take this next step in the COVID-19 crisis.”**

As the region's largest congregate shelter serving homeless individuals, the Convention Center currently provides shelter and services to more than 900 San Diegans experiencing homelessness. Of those, approximately 80 qualified under the current phase to receive the vaccination.

One hundred doses were made available to the shelter on Wednesday. And any additional doses that were not administered to shelter residents and would have otherwise expired were made available to operation staff who are eligible to receive the vaccine per tier guidelines. Vaccinations will be made available for all other residents and staff at the Convention Center in coordination with the County's vaccination phases.

In December, the County worked with the City to train San Diego Fire-Rescue Department personnel to administer the COVID-19 vaccines to assist in quickly inoculating more people throughout the San Diego region. San Diego Fire-Rescue now has 75 paramedics trained to fulfill this role and assisted in the vaccination efforts at the shelter.

In addition to the administration of vaccines, Operation Shelter to Home continued its regular mass testing of asymptomatic residents and staff on Monday and Tuesday this week. In December, the shelter experienced the same uptick in cases as the broader San Diego community. Since that time, COVID-19 detection has been reduced back down to a 2.3% positivity rate as of the last testing cycle on January 19, compared with the region-wide 14-day average rate, which was 11.9% for that same time period.

Individuals who are experiencing homelessness and fit into the current criteria for vaccination are able to make appointments via the County's online system or through their healthcare provider. For more information about COVID-19 vaccine distribution, visit [www.coronavirus-sd.com/vaccine](http://www.coronavirus-sd.com/vaccine).

## **BACKGROUND ON OPERATION SHELTER TO HOME**

Operation Shelter to Home launched on April 1 by moving individuals already in shelters into the San Diego Convention Center to allow for proper physical distancing to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Because the effects of the pandemic were creating staffing challenges at the City's various shelters, the program centralized staff in one place to ensure personnel could be efficient even with limited numbers.

One of the core missions of Operation Shelter to Home is to find permanent housing for individuals. So far, the agencies have housed more than 1,186 individuals and 43 families during the pandemic with more than 200 others in the process of finding a permanent or longer-term housing solution.

The emergency shelter is a collaborative effort between the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, San Diego Housing Commission, Regional Task Force on the Homeless, San Diego Convention Center and homeless service providers, Alpha Project and Father Joe's Villages.

Updates on the shelter are posted online at [sandiego.gov/coronavirus/shelkertohome](http://sandiego.gov/coronavirus/shelkertohome).

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