

## **PRESS RELEASE: St. Lawrence County Board of Health, Department of Health**

St. Lawrence County has worked in close partnership with NY State, St. Lawrence Health System, Claxton Hepburn Medical Center, Clifton Fine Hospital and our local pharmacies to create a safe, accessible, fair distribution process for the COVID 19 vaccine. Since there is a limited supply of vaccines, they are being distributed based on priority groups recommended by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and NYS Department of Health. NY State has announced that individuals in Phase 1b are now eligible to start scheduling vaccination. Group 1b extends the current population eligible for vaccine to include individuals 65 years and older, educators, law enforcement officers and a number of other categories of essential workers (the complete list can be accessed at: [covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/phased-distribution-vaccine](https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/phased-distribution-vaccine)).

There will be 5 main vaccination clinics in St. Lawrence County (referred to as P.O.D.s – Points of Distribution). These sites are located in Potsdam, Massena, Gouverneur, Ogdensburg and Star Lake. NY State has designated the Potsdam site – located at SUNY Potsdam’s Maxcy Hall, as a state vaccination clinic. This site will be one of two sites NY State designated sites in the entire North Country Region and will serve as a large scale vaccination location. Residents in NY State designated priority groups will be able to schedule appointments for the vaccination clinics. Appointments will be open to the public based on vaccine availability. All clinics require appointments, there are no options for walk-ins. In addition to the 5 established community based clinics, St. Lawrence County will coordinate with our hospital partners to create “site-specific” vaccination clinics to facilitate the vaccination of specific groups of people who are eligible for vaccine but have difficulty with transportation. Local pharmacies are offering appointments for vaccination only to those residents who are 65 years or older.

According to SLC Board of Health President, Dr. Andrew Williams, MD, FACP; “Vaccination is a critical next step in our efforts to mitigate the COVID 19 pandemic. Safe and effective vaccination is now available – our job is to implement a comprehensive, equitable and safe vaccine program for our entire community. By leveraging the expertise of SLC Department of Public Health, the local healthcare systems and the resources of NY State, I am certain we will achieve this goal.”

Dana McGuire, Director of the Public Health Department states “Vaccination gives us hope that we will be able to gain control of this pandemic. We have been working closely with the hospital systems in the county so that we may provide vaccines equitably to all. The public health department is trained and experienced in running community events and we look forward to the end result.”

Ruth Doyle, County Administrator said, “We are very encouraged to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to St. Lawrence County residents. The addition of a New York State sponsored site in Maxcy Hall at SUNY Potsdam will improve our ability to serve the North Country Region. The importance of making vaccine available is critical to interrupt the spread of COVID-19. We continue to await the arrival of distributable vaccine to the County. When it gets here, we will be ready.”

If you are interested in vaccination, you can either connect with the NYS Department of Health “Am I Eligible” website ([am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov](https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov)) or call the NYS Vaccination Hotline (1-833-NYS-4VAX). If you are in an eligible group, you will be given the opportunity to select a vaccination clinic that is convenient to you. The sites are constantly updated as vaccine becomes available – if you do not see an option, please check back frequently. At this time there is only a limited supply of vaccines due to national shortages, so appointments are currently limited. St. Lawrence County is committed to ensuring that our citizens have access to vaccine in a safe, efficient and equitable manner.