FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **1/18/2021**
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Central Shenandoah Health District Will Expand COVID-19 Vaccination to "Phase 1b" Recipients

(Staunton City, Augusta County, Va.) -- Beginning, Monday, January 18, the Central Shenandoah Health District (CSHD) will make available closed "point of dispensing" (POD) COVID-19 vaccination clinics specifically for "Phase 1b" priority groups. Phase 1b is the second group eligible to receive the vaccine, and includes police, fire and hazmat response personnel, those living and working in correctional facilities, homeless shelters and migrant labor camps, childcare/K-12 teachers and staff, food and agriculture workers, manufacturers, grocery store workers, public transit workers, mail carriers (USPS and private) and anyone age 65 or over.

These individuals will be required to bring a personal form of identification such as a driver's license, and may also be asked to show proof of qualification, such as a work ID, in order to verify eligibility. CSHD will continue to work with local healthcare partners to provide vaccine availability for those in Phase 1a. We anticipate completing the majority of Phase 1a health care workers by the end of the month. Efforts continue with staff and residents of skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities through a federal partnership with CVS and Walgreens.

Phase 1b essential worker groups include K-12 school and daycare staff, and we will begin vaccination efforts for this group the week of January 25. CSHD is also working with our healthcare partners such as hospital systems, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and 10 local pharmacies throughout the district to start vaccinating persons aged 65 and up. Given the limited supply of vaccines currently available, health department sponsored PODs and vaccine distribution by community partners will be by appointment only at this time.

Vaccination planning teams are reaching out to employers in Phase 1b. Phase 1b essential workers who wish to receive the vaccine or have questions should email cshd_esf8@vdh.virginia.gov. Any persons who are age 65 or older can email cshdinfo@vdh.virginia.gov to receive a secure survey to sign up for a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available. Once a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, the health department will reach out to individuals who signed up with instructions on how to register and make an appointment. Anyone interested in receiving updates about the district vaccine distribution efforts can also email cshdinfo@vdh.virginia.gov. Up to date information can also be found at the district COVID-19 vaccine website: www.vdh.virginia.gov/central-shenandoah/covid-19-vaccine-information.

"We are pleased to provide a safe and effective vaccine to individuals in Phase 1b," said CSHD Health District Director Dr. Laura Kornegay. "We will continue our Phase 1b vaccination efforts throughout the month of February, and we'll update the public on our progress with reaching this group and advancing into the next phase. While the vaccine provides hope on the horizon, it will still be months before the vaccine is widely available publicly. It's important to remember we are still very much in the trenches of this pandemic and we must continue to adhere to COVID-19 prevention practices, including mask wearing, washing hands and socially distancing.

As availability of the vaccine increases, Virginia will move to the other phases. **Phase 1c** will include other essential workers. The complete definitions of all phases, data and other information are on VDH's Vaccine Response website at www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/. Citizens can take this brief quiz to find out which vaccination phase they fall under.

Virginians who do not fall into priority phases will be offered the COVID-19 vaccine when it is more widely available. Once the vaccine is rolled out to the general public, distribution will be similar to the flu vaccine. People will be able to get the vaccine from a local pharmacy, primary care physician, Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)/free clinic, local health department or other clinic that is participating as a COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider.

In the meantime, it is important to remain vigilant in COVID-19 prevention. Continue to protect yourself and others: cover your mouth and nose with a mask, wash your hands often and well, stay at least six feet away from others, avoid gatherings with anyone who is not a member of your household and get a flu shot.

You can learn more about the vaccine, its safety and answers to frequently asked questions at VDH's website and CDC's website.

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