



Dear NDCS Teammates,

Members of the NDCS health services team are currently in the process of holding vaccination clinics in the facilities for our team members. This is the group now slated as part of Phase 1B. Every staff person is included. For those of you in the facilities, you are likely hearing from your wardens as they identify staff ready for inoculation. This is the time to speak up. If you are interested in being vaccinated, let your supervisor know. We do not want to leave anyone behind.

I wish I could tell you that a shot in the arm was all that it took to ditch the masks, resume eating meals together, and eliminate the term “social distancing” from our vocabulary. I wish I could say that. Today, I am reminding you that the guidelines we have lived by, remain very much in place.

Here are some of the concerns:

- **A vaccination is not a guarantee.** Experts advise it may still be possible to develop and transmit COVID-19, even after both doses of vaccine. The vaccine will prevent you from suffering the most serious symptoms and potentially, being hospitalized. But it is still possible to be infected.
- **Immunity to COVID is not immediate.** It takes almost two weeks for your body to respond fully to the vaccine and provide adequate immunity. We have heard of at least one case in which the teammate tested positive days after getting the first shot. It can happen.
- **Variants are on the move.** Nebraska is already tracking mutations of the coronavirus and it is expected that new variants will continue to emerge going forward. Experts suspect that the current vaccines protect against these variants, but the exact impact has not been fully studied yet.
- **Lasting immunity from the vaccine.** Unfortunately, there is no study at this time that can accurately pinpoint how long the effects of each vaccine will last. It is very likely that it varies from person to person.
- **Herd immunity.** The primary reason for being vaccinated is to protect the population. If enough people develop an immunity, then it should become safer for people to be around each other. With a vaccine, the odds of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 are greatly reduced. At this point in the vaccination process, we are not there yet.

As an agency that is committed to public safety, we must continue to do everything we can to mitigate the transmission and impact of COVID-19. That means the following:

- Wearing your mask
- Social distancing
- Washing your hands – often
- Not sitting and eating food with others at work
- Directing the inmate population to wear their masks and socially distance

We all must continue to follow these strategies, even those who are already vaccinated.

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I realize that depending on where you are in Nebraska and even surrounding states, mandates to wear masks and socially distance may be falling by the wayside. As I shared last fall, my expectation of ALL staff members and ALL inmates is to continue to follow the health precautions outlined above. They are not optional.

I would hate to see us take a big step forward, only to take two more backward. Staff members are still testing positive, as are inmates. Complacency will be our biggest undoing if we are not careful.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Frakes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott R. Frakes