



Chautauqua County Office for the Aging

Paul M. Wendel, Jr.
County Executive

Dr. Mary Ann Spanos
Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office for Aging Services Director Urges Seniors Seeking COVID-19 Vaccination Appointments to Please be Patient

MAYVILLE, N.Y.:—Although adults aged 65 and up are a part of the 7.1 million residents in New York State who are eligible for the COVID-19 Vaccine, many of these folks need assistance to navigate the vaccination scheduling system.

“Office for Aging Services (OFAS) is already working to help Chautauqua County seniors make their vaccination appointments but we are urging people to please be patient,” said Dr Mary Ann Spanos, Director of the Chautauqua County Offices for Aging Services. “There are close to 27,000 people in Chautauqua County who are over the age of 65 and everyone wants to be vaccinated first.”

“Protecting the health of our seniors is critically important, but we ask for patience as it may take months to get everyone vaccinated,” said PJ Wendel, Chautauqua County Executive. “The supply of vaccine is very limited however we are hopeful that more vaccine will become available each week.”

One of the biggest frustrations for older adults has been the State’s conflicting messages about vaccine appointments. The New York State [Am I Eligible](#) site recently shifted to only scheduling appointments at State run vaccination sites. The closest of these sites is in Buffalo, N.Y.

Never fear, Chautauqua County OFAS is stepping up to help our oldest residents receive the COVID-19 vaccination. For people over the age of 65 who do not have computer access or need assistance to make an online vaccination appointment, they can call the NY Connects helpline at (716) 753-4582 to be placed on OFAS’ list. Being on the list does not guarantee an appointment but the department is making appointments as vaccine becomes available.

In the last few days, the NY Connects helpline has received messages from over 1,500 people so callers are urged to please be patient as it may take a few days or even a week to return your call. When you leave a message, please speak slowly and clearly, leave your name, telephone number, and that you are calling for vaccine assistance. OFAS staff will call you back and get you on its list as soon as possible. Everyone who leaves a message will be contacted. Please do not call back several times or



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leave a duplicate message with the health department since all calls about vaccine appointments are being forwarded to the NY Connects helpline.

Once on the list, OFAS is sorting oldest to youngest and offering appointments as they become available. When it schedules the oldest person in the house, it will also schedule the spouse or caregiver who is over 65. Unless designated as eligible in Phase 1A or Phase 1B, those under 65 years of age are not eligible yet for vaccine according to the State's vaccine distribution plan. OFAS is unable to schedule anyone under 65 at this time and is not putting people who are under 65 on the list.

If you are 65 and over and want to try to get an appointment on your own, please visit the following websites to check for appointment availability:

- Chautauqua County Department of Health: <https://chqgov.com/public-health/covid-19-vaccine-information>
- Rite Aid Pharmacy: <https://www.riteaid.com/Covid-19>
- Tops Pharmacy: <https://www.topsmarkets.com/covid19>
- Wegmans Pharmacy: <https://www.wegmans.com/pharmacy/>

Links to these pharmacies and other COVID-19 information, can also be found on the County website at chqgov.com by visiting its COVID-19 Information page.

DO NOT CALL these pharmacies or the County Health Department to schedule an appointment as they are unable to give you an appointment over the phone. In addition, in general, these pharmacies are the only places allowed to vaccinate the over 65 population in our county at this time.

Many pharmacies are only vaccinating 10 people a day because the vaccine supply is so limited. Also note that CVS and Walgreen pharmacies are contracted to vaccinate people in nursing homes and assisted living residences.

Although the information being shared with county government has not been consistent, Chautauqua County OFAS and Health Department are trying to coordinate efforts with all vaccinators. OFAS and



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the Health Department will continue to reach out to state, regional and corporate pharmacy contacts to improve our communication so we can direct people to the best information.

“The bottom line is there is not much vaccine right now so we all need to take a breath and continue to wear our masks, socially distance, and wash our hands or sanitize frequently,” said Christine Schuyler, Public Health Director.

For more information call the NY Connects at (716) 716-753-4582 or e-mail us at ccnyc@co.chautauqua.ny.us

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