

From: [Mayor](#)
To: [Mayor](#)
Subject: COVID-19 Update: Stay Resilient
Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:31:15 PM



A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Valerie Woodward".

The City of Spokane **COVID-19 News Update for Jan. 26**

Information about Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) is evolving rapidly. We want to make sure our City employees have up-to-date information. We will provide this update, as needed, to communicate what you need to know, while we work to reduce the spread of this disease in our community and continue to provide critical public services.

A Message from Mayor Woodward

Sometimes when the challenge seems never ending or marked with setbacks, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture and the things you can control. From the get-go, our goal has been to slow the spread of illness in our community, particularly among our most vulnerable, and keep our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed. Both have been a story of fits and starts, of promising progress followed by doubling down on the challenge before us.

New cases and hospitalizations are trending in the right direction and have been for a few weeks. That is slowing the impact on critical care healthcare system resources. We have seen positive signs before only to be disappointed.

This time feels different.

A next phase of vaccine distribution will only help slow the spread of a virus that has had its grip on our community for nearly a year. Nearly 24,000 people have had at least one dose of the vaccine as of the end of last week. And, that was before Spokane became one of four mass vaccination sites statewide.

That number is certain to increase much more rapidly in the weeks ahead making us much healthier as a community. And that is while we continue to mask, watch our distance and gatherings, and practice good cough and sneeze etiquette.

We are close. So close.

We have to continue to push. Push for our most vulnerable. Push for our businesses who badly need to advance their business footprint. Push for our students and teachers who need to look across the desk from each other to get the most out of learning. Push for the health and sustainability of our community.

We have pushed for many, many months now. Never before has it been more important to focus on the big picture to get what we all want.

Stay resilient Spokane. We are close. So close.

Vaccine Eligibility

In Washington state, we are currently in Phase 1B tier 1 of vaccine distribution. Anyone 65 and older, and all people 50 and older who also live in a multigenerational household, are now eligible to receive the vaccine.

This is in addition to populations eligible during phase 1A including health care workers at high risk for COVID-19 infection, first responders, people who live or work in long-term care facilities, and all other workers in health settings who are at risk of COVID-19. [Learn more about who gets the vaccine and when.](#)

As a result, more of our employees are now eligible for the vaccine. A great way to find out when you are eligible to get the vaccine is to use the [state's "Phase Finder" tool](#). We will continue to monitor changes to vaccine eligibility to keep our employees updated.

Mass Vaccination Clinic

A large vaccine clinic will begin on Wednesday, Jan. 27, at the Spokane Arena. Here is [information on that clinic](#). Online phase-based [self-scheduling](#) also will open on Wednesday, Jan. 27.

CHAS Health will be the lead provider at the Arena vaccination clinic, working in collaboration with the Spokane Regional Health District, Washington State National Guard, Washington State Department of Health and the Spokane Arena.

Flexible Spending Account Extensions

In case you missed this last week, the City is offering greater flexibility for our employees to use up funds they contributed to Flexible Spending Accounts in 2020 for dependent care or health care. The City is, once again, making every effort to ease the financial burden on employees during the pandemic.

The City is offering an extension for you to use those 2020 monies beyond the above-mentioned deadlines. As a one-time exception, you can incur qualified Dependent Care and/or Health Care expenses by June 30, 2021. You must submit those expenses no later than July 15, 2021. As you know, under usual circumstances, if you have not incurred the Dependent Care expenses by December 31, 2020, those monies are forfeited, and if you have not incurred the Health Care expenses by March 15, 2021, those monies are forfeited.

If you participate in the 2021 FSA and you have monies left in your 2020 FSA, monies will be taken from the 2020 account first in an effort to bring your account(s) to a zero balance. If you have questions, please contact Employee Benefits at 625-6565 or eracb@spokanecity.org.

More Information to Assist Our Employees

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [Tips for Long-Distance Caregiving](#)

If you find your parent cannot handle his or her finances, get

- A *durable power of attorney*, which gives you the right to manage the money, enduring *power of attorney* is not applicable if your parent becomes incapacitated.
- Make a list of income and assets for your loved ones. You can protect more revenue from your parent's savings by moving money out of a *passbook account* into a *certificate of deposit* or

taking a loan against an insurance policy. A joint bank account with your parents is useful for paying the bills.

- Automated bill paying. Individual income, like social security benefits, can be wired directly into your parent's account. Many bills can be paid automatically—for instance, the mortgage, insurance, and utilities.
- [Social Apps to Keep Connected in Quarantine](#)
Social apps can help you keep connected while in quarantine. COVID-19 has many people across the globe quarantined in their own homes. Even where quarantine has been lifted, many people continue to minimize in-person interaction. With in-person social interaction limited, many are turning to social media applications on their mobile phones and websites to keep connected. This technology is new to some people

To access more topics related to COVID-19 visit: [EAPHelpLink.com](https://www.eaphelp.com), using company code: **CITSPO**

Employee Information Portal (covid19.spokanecity.org/)

Remember, this Employee Information Portal is a great resource for employees to stay current on what's happening with the COVID-19 response. The [Employee Information Portal](#) can be accessed from work or home, using a computer or mobile device. All of the emailed information we have sent to employees is archived here.