

Minister's Telephone Town Hall Follow-Up Information

COVID-19 Vaccine

[The Government of Alberta](#) is continuing to plan for the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine which will happen in phases. The preliminary rollout of the vaccine began on December 14, 2020.

Immunization will be phased, starting with Phase 1 in early January, once vaccines are received. Those vaccinated in Phase 1 include residents and staff in long-term care and designated supported living, First Nation individuals over age 65 who live on-reserve, seniors aged 75 and older, and front-line health-care workers. Most needed to ensure workforce capacity and who are most likely to transmit COVID-19 to those at greatest risk.

Phase 2 is expected to begin by April 2021 and will again be targeted to prioritized populations. Phase 3 will involve rolling out vaccinations to the general Alberta population, and is anticipated to start by fall 2021.

Throughout the pandemic, Albertans have come together to protect those most at risk. Albertans understand the need to prioritize specific groups during the [phased roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine](#). For more information and updates on the vaccine and rollout plans, please visit [COVID-19 info for Albertans](#).

COVID-19 Funding

Funding has been provided to over 430 charities, nonprofits, food banks and civil society organizations across the province. [Successful grant recipients](#) are providing services to address the social well-being of those most affected by COVID-19 and the measures implemented to limit the spread of the virus. The Government of Alberta has opened another opportunity to apply for funding through the [Civil Society Fund](#), applications are open until January 20, 2021.

The Healthy Aging Collaborative Online Resources and Education (CORE) Alberta knowledge hub has listings of relevant funding calls, granting criteria, and timelines. It also includes a variety of fundraising resources, as well as information on training, and tips and strategies for successfully securing funding. For more comprehensive information please visit [CORE Alberta funding information](#).

Additionally, the Government of Alberta provides emergency financial assistance for unexpected emergencies through the Emergency Needs Allowance. For further information please visit the [Alberta Emergency financial assistance web page](#). The Government of Canada is providing information for Canadians and businesses facing hardship as a result of

the COVID-19 outbreak and provides information on its [COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#) website.

Clarifications on New Restrictions

The Government of Alberta announced new restrictions to protect the health and safety of all Albertans. On December 8, 2020, the Government of Alberta announced additional public health measures, most of which became effective on December 13, 2020.

Gathering Restrictions

- All indoor and outdoor social gatherings – public and private – are prohibited
 - Close contacts are limited to household members only
 - People who live alone can have up to two close contacts:
 - must be the same two contacts throughout the duration of the restriction
 - if the close contacts do not live alone, visits cannot be held at their home
 - single parents who only live with their children under 18 are permitted to have up to two close contacts

This **does not apply** to:

- co-parenting arrangements
- ***service visits from caregivers, health or childcare providers***
- ***home maintenance and repairs***
- mutual support group meetings

Masks

- **Masks are mandatory in all indoor public places, places of worship, indoor workplaces and facilities outside the home**, except:
 - when working alone in an office or a safely distanced cubicle or a barrier is in place
 - rental accommodations used solely for the purposes of a private residence
 - farm operations (exempt)

This workplace requirement:

- **applies to all employees, customers, visitors, delivery personnel and contractors**
- includes any location where employees are present in-person
- includes all workplace locations where masks won't pose a safety risk
- does not change current student mask requirements in schools

Business and service restrictions

- Regulated health services can remain open by appointment only as long as public health orders and sector guidance is followed. Appointments should be limited to one-on-one services.
 - Professional services can remain open by appointment only, which includes lawyers, mediators, accountants, and photographers

Social services can remain open for in-person services including:

- **social, protective or emergency services**
- **shelters for vulnerable persons**
- **not-for-profit community kitchens, religious kitchens and soup kitchens**

Home-based businesses should follow the restrictions for the type of service they provide.

During each phase of re-launch, continue to follow the public health recommendations including hand washing, staying home when sick and maintaining physical distancing. Up to date information can be found on the [COVID-19 info for Albertans website](#). The Government of Alberta has posted enhanced public measures, and the orders are available [here](#).

Working from Home

As of December 13, 2020, working from home is mandatory ***unless the employer requires a physical presence for operational effectiveness***, in alignment with the [stronger public health measures](#) in place. The government of Alberta has information bulletins regarding best practices for working from home and provides updates on all COVID-19 related orders on the [COVID-19 info for Albertans website](#).

Caregivers Alberta

Founded in 2001, [Caregivers Alberta](#) provides resources, support, and education that helps people assisting family members or friends. Their wide range of services are designed to help caregivers find strength and resiliency to take care of themselves while helping others.

Over the next few weeks of holidays the [Caregiver Supports Line and the Caregiver Coaches](#) will be available Monday through Friday, with the exception of December 24 and 25 as well as December 31 and January 1.

[The Peer Support Programs](#) will run as usual and two special social events will be available on Dec 23 and 30 - especially to address social isolation. There will be music and games for caregivers to have a community to connect with over this period. To find more specific information, please visit [Caregivers Alberta](#) or call the toll free number at 1-877-453-5088.

Alberta Health Services Mental Health Supports

[Alberta Health Services \(AHS\) - Addiction and Mental Health](#) provides a variety of services to help support Albertans in these times of crisis. AHS has a number of services available including, community inpatient services to support those who may be in crisis, clinical support, outreach, rehabilitation, recovery programs, and specialized group and individual programs. These are delivered in partnership with primary care, community partners, and clinical teams throughout various locations in the province and the Zones.

AHS has launched a dedicated addiction and mental health helpline, with access to crisis support at 1-877-303-2642 available for anyone who may need assistance. Also launched is a [Togetherall program](#) which is a free online clinically supported peer-to-peer mental health support program offered 24 hours a day and seven days a week, and a [Text4Hope](#) program that provides daily text messages and resources to help keep connection for individuals who may feel isolated or are struggling during these difficult times. Text4Hope community members simply text COVID19HOPE to 393939 to subscribe to receive ongoing supportive content. There is no cost; however, standard message rates may apply. Please check with your mobile provider.

Alberta 211

[Alberta 211](#) is an essential service that helps Albertans find the right resources for whatever issues they need help with. The service is free, confidential, and available in over 170 languages over the phone. Albertans can access Alberta 211, 24 hours a day and seven days a week by phone, text, or chatting online. 211 is the number for people to know to access effective, timely, and appropriate information and referrals to community resources.

Additional Resources

A large amount of information is available through the Government of Alberta and other stakeholders; these resources are valuable in regards to COVID-19 and the safety and wellbeing of all Albertans.

- [Alberta COVID-19 info for Albertans](#) – Government of Alberta page to provide actions to protect Albertans and prevent the spread of novel coronavirus.
- [CORE Alberta](#) – Healthy Aging Collaborative Online Resources and Education (CORE) is a platform to connect community-based seniors-serving organizations and allied agencies and individuals in Alberta.
- [Alberta Biz Connect](#) – Workplace guidance and supports to help businesses and nonprofits affected by COVID-19 reopen and resume operations safely.

- [Workers' Compensation Board \(WCB\)](#) – WCB is contacting applicable organizations (e.g., small- and medium-sized private sector organizations) with a summary and update on their [Premium Relief for Employers](#).

It is important that Albertans continue to follow the existing public health measures to keep everyone safe.

- Stay two metres apart when you can, wear a mask when you can't.
- Practice good hygiene: wash your hands often and cover coughs and sneezes.
- [Monitor your symptoms](#) every day.
- If sick, stay home, get tested, and follow [mandatory isolation requirements](#) while waiting for results:
 - if positive, isolate from others for 10 days or until symptoms are gone, whichever is longer.
 - if negative, stay home until you are better.
- Avoid [non-essential travel](#).
- [Get the flu shot](#) to keep influenza cases low so health workers can focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Download and use the [ABTraceTogether](#) contact tracing app when out in public.