

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

APRIL 30, 2021

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska has, since March of 2020, engaged in aggressive mitigation efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 including, but not limited to, social mitigation strategies, widespread testing, and interstate/ intrastate travel protocols, which have proven effective in keeping the State of Alaska's COVID-19 infection rate low; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska has worked collaboratively with community and tribal health partners to meet the challenges posed by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska continues to make significant progress in the fight against COVID-19, as reflected in the number of active cases; positivity rates, and death rates that are the lowest in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Alaska led the nation for two months with the highest vaccination rates since December 2020; as of April 29, 2021, 49.2 percent of those 16+ years of age and 74.1 percent of those 65+ years of age have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine; fully-vaccinated Alaskans are reported at 42.4 percent for those 16+ years of age and at 69.7 percent for those 65+ years of age. The Department of Health and Social Services will continue to offer free COVID-19 vaccine to all Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, despite the progress that is continuing to be made, and the fact that the State of Alaska is one of the leaders in administering vaccines nationwide, COVID-19 continues to be a public health risk to the citizens of Alaska. The risks may be in part due to lower vaccination rates in certain areas of the state, the existence of variants that put Alaskans at risk while we work to improve our vaccination numbers, including the future vaccination of children under the age of 16, in an effort to minimize the impact of the spread of potentially more harmful and contagious variants of the novel coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, while Alaska continues to make progress on mitigating the impacts of COVID-19, the health risk to Alaskans persists and the need for coordinated efforts on the part of the Department of Health and Social Services and its partners, both governmental and private, must continue; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Adam Crum, as the COMMISSIONER OF THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES, based on the limited authorities provided by Chapter No. 2, SLA 2021, do hereby declare that a Public Health Emergency exists in Alaska and direct the Department of Health and Social Services to continue all necessary actions to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

1. Leading Alaska's COVID-19 vaccination efforts, to include facilitating cooperation between local health officers, state agencies, tribal health authorities, and the Federal Emergency Management Administration;
2. Procuring and providing COVID-19 testing supplies to communities throughout Alaska;
3. Assisting state, local, and tribal health officers with contact tracing;
4. Advising the public on best practices related to stopping the spread of COVID-19;
5. Conducting ongoing disease surveillance to inform the Department of Health and Social Services response to COVID-19;
6. Maintaining all federal benefits necessary to support these efforts, including
 - a. Emergency allotments under the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program;
 - b. Authorities granted and approved by the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services, including
 - i. Blanket Waivers
 - ii. 1135 Waivers
 - iii. Appendix K authorities
 - c. Non-congregate sheltering funding authorized under the Stafford Act.
7. Engaging with the Department of Administration to utilize emergency procurement authorities, when necessary, to meet the needs to effectuate the provision of 1-6, above.
8. This declaration of a Public Health Emergency goes into effect at 12:02 a.m. on May 1, 2021 and shall remain in effect until rescinded or until the federal public health emergency issued under Section 319 of the Public Health Service Act expires, whichever is sooner.

Dated April 30, 2021


ADAM CRUM,
COMMISSIONER