

Official Insights from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

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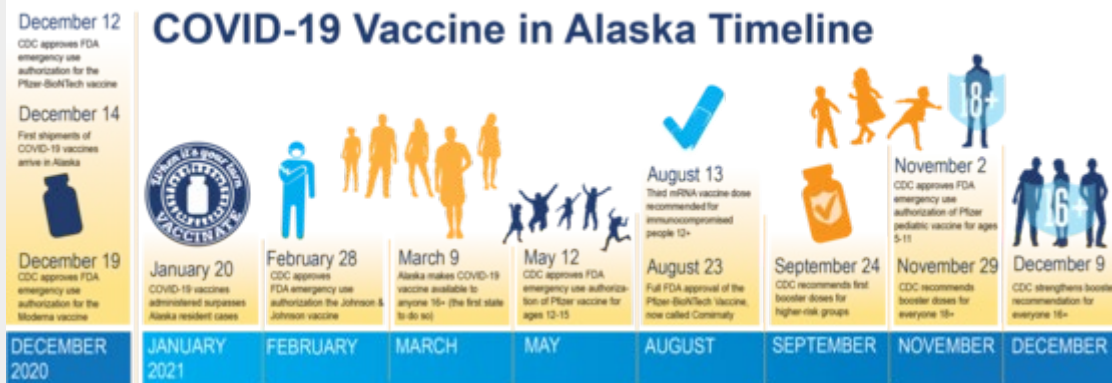
One-year anniversary of the COVID-19 vaccine: Alaska helped lead the nation in delivering vaccines quickly and equitably

One year ago today, on December 14, 2020, the first shipment of the COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Alaska.



[Watch Our One-Year Anniversary Video](#)

As we mark this pivotal anniversary, we can look back with pride at all we have accomplished together these past 12 months to stem the advance of this deadly virus in our state. While the emergence of [new variants](#) reminds us that we still have much work to do, we can reflect on lessons learned and apply them with renewed commitment to help keep Alaskans safe.



[Get Vaccinated and Get Boosted](#)

Over and over, we've been reminded of the importance — and power — of teamwork.

Each year in March, Alaskans cheer on mushers and their teams of sled dogs during the Iditarod. Pulling together to accomplish a shared goal is part of our culture in Alaska, and the Great Race is our annual celebration of endurance, persistence, courage, strategy and unity.

This past year, Alaskans saw the power of teamwork illustrated again and again during our vaccine rollout with strong partnerships across diverse sectors of Alaska, including our Tribal health care system, industry, business, schools, Alaska's university system, hospitals, clinics, pharmacies and many more statewide.

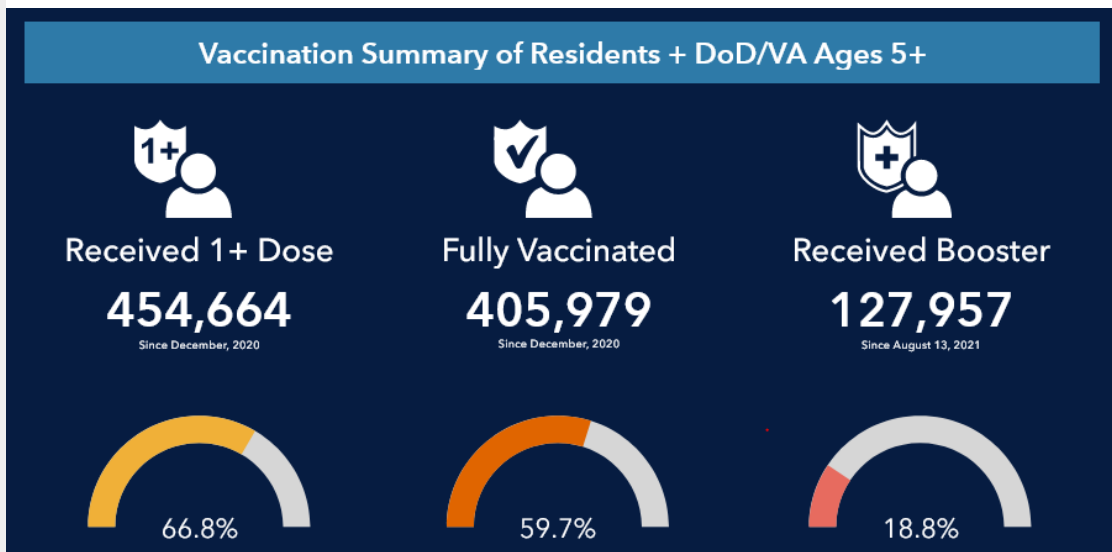
Alaska's Vaccine Task Force, co-led by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), ensured strong teamwork as we worked together to get vaccines distributed across a geographically vast state and offer vaccine to Alaskans as quickly as possible.



Together, we owe immense gratitude to hundreds of dedicated health care professionals and providers in all corners of our great state who have worked tirelessly to administer vaccinations to Alaskans. DHSS has more than 400 enrolled vaccine providers throughout the state. Since the first vaccinations were administered on December 15, 2020, Alaska's nurses, community health aides and practitioners, pharmacists, clinicians and physicians have administered an average of 2,700 shots a day for the past year. Think about that! That's a lot of "I Got My COVID-19 Vaccine" stickers.

We continually expanded the opportunities to get vaccinated, with Alaska often playing the “first in the nation” role. We were, for example, the first state in the U.S. to offer vaccines to all high-risk individuals, regardless of age, and the first to open eligibility to all. Alaska’s Tribal Health System, meanwhile, used its Tribal allocation and flexibility to broaden vaccine availability for all Alaskans.

Alaska’s speed and teamwork to get shots in arms was inspired in part by our past traumatic history with the 1918 influenza pandemic, which devastated many villages, orphaning many children and resulting in a lasting loss of language, culture and tradition. More recently, Alaska also suffered losses during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, when Alaska Native and American Indian people had four times the intensive care unit rates, hospitalization rates and mortality rates. Alaskans knew that history and didn’t want it to be repeated.



Today, nearly 60% of Alaskans five years of age and older are fully vaccinated. More than 127,957 have received one of the approved booster shots. And already, 19.2% of our young children between the ages of 5 to 11 have received the COVID-19 vaccine. That wouldn’t have been possible without our state’s pediatricians and parents working together.

Together, we worked with so many different partners this past year to get the word out and to get shots into the arms of Alaskans who want the protection vaccines offer. The partnerships were often unique to Alaska: vaccinators flying in small planes to villages where they gave shots to people who drove up to the plane by snow machine; shots provided aboard fishing vessels; public health nurses traveling door-to-door in smaller communities; and professional pharmacists teaming up with pharmacy students to deliver shots to homebound residents in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. With a shortage of ultra-cold freezers in the state, we partnered with others, including the

Alaska Department of Fish and Game, to use their freezers, moving aside research specimens in cold storage to make way for vaccines.

Often, we teamed with industry and the Alaska Chamber, who shared our desire to keep Alaska's economy ticking. In industries like fishing, tourism, service, energy, mining and timber, the COVID-19 vaccine has helped keep Alaskans on the job and contributed greatly to our prosperity.



Special thanks are due to our partners in far-flung communities, as well as to those who have helped us translate materials in other languages. Many of those materials can be found on the [DHSS multilingual COVID-19 resources page](#). Another special project worked with Alaska Native language panels to create culturally-relevant COVID-19 vaccine messages in eight Alaska Native languages. Partners included the Native Peoples Action Community Fund, Alaska Public Interest Research Group, ANTHC and DHSS. To order those materials for your community, please visit the [Alaska Native Language Panel webpage](#).

Another crucial partner has been the State Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Office. EMS personnel are often the first link in the health care chain. Their skillful work and the calming assurances they provide are appreciated by all of those they serve. EMS has provided support at numerous events around the state.

It has truly been an eventful year. We've come a long way together, and we will continue to band together to keep our state strong and healthy!

Resource Highlights

- [Find Your COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [Reasons To Get Vaccinated](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing](#)
- [COVID-19 Variants](#)
- [Multilingual Resources](#)

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