



STATEMENT

Recently appointed by Prime Minister the Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis, the National COVID-19 Vaccine Consultative Committee was formed to advise the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Health on the development of the strategy, policies and activities related to the National COVID-19 Vaccination Plan.

The Committee will also review and guide the vaccine implementation schedules developed by the Ministry of Health's technical team, as part of the monthly reports required for submission to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Committee members represent stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including community and religious leaders.

Members of the Committee include:

- **Dr. Merceline Dahl-Regis**, Special Health Adviser to the Prime Minister (Chair)
- **Mr. Ed Fields**, Director of Business Development, Nassau Cruise Port Ltd. (Deputy Chair)
- **Mrs. Stephanie Dean**, RN (Ret.)
- **Mr. Carrol Sands**, Lowe's Wholesale Drug Agency
- **Bishop Delton Fernander**, President, Bahamas Christian Council
- **Archdeacon Keith Cartwright**, St. Agnes Parish
- **Dr. Danny Davis**, PhD, Ministry of Health
- **Dr. Marcela Elliott-Ferguson**, PhD, University of The Bahamas
- **Mrs. Viana Gardiner**, COO, Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, Office of the Prime Minister
- **Ms. Erica Wells Cox**, Director of Communications, Office of the Prime Minister

Specific subcommittees made up of additional members of the public and private sectors will also be formed to provide for wider consultation and support where needed.

The Government is working on all fronts to secure COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccines are being made available through the World Health Organization's COVID-19 Global Access Facility (COVAX Facility). The Bahamas has already made a down payment to secure enough doses to vaccinate 20 percent of the population through the COVAX Facility, once available.

Direct contact has already been made with vaccine providers in an effort to secure additional doses.

It is anticipated that vaccines will become available in The Bahamas by the end of the first quarter of 2021.

The Government of The Bahamas wishes to inform citizens and residents that the vaccines selected will meet World Health Organization standards.

In preparation for the arrival of vaccines, the National COVID-19 Vaccine Consultative Committee is currently working to finalize the operational plan to distribute the vaccine to eligible residents in the shortest possible time across The Bahamas.

Baseline surveys have already been carried out amongst healthcare workers and the general public. The results are helping to inform the phased distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

Information on vaccine safety and the national plan will be shared with the public in regular communications across multiple platforms.

Recruitment of teams of vaccinators has already started. Training will begin shortly. Vaccinators will be among the first to receive vaccines once they are available in The Bahamas.

The policy of the Government of The Bahamas is that the decision on taking a COVID-19 vaccine will be entirely voluntary. Vaccines will be free of charge. Vaccines will be given to adults.

At this time, the two-dose regimen, which has not been approved for people under the age of 18, has met the required standards for distribution in The Bahamas.

It is anticipated that anyone receiving a vaccine will receive a COVID-19 vaccination certificate. The presentation of the certificate may be associated with travel in the future, a potential requirement being discussed internationally.

Adherence to public health measures, including wearing of masks, keeping a distance of six feet from others and frequent handwashing and sanitization, will still be required until the spread of COVID-19 has been eliminated.

Communication on the process for receiving the vaccine will begin after the vaccine arrival dates are confirmed.

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