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Subject: COVID-19 Update- December 23, 2020

Dear Baptist Health Family:

As we say goodbye to a very difficult year, we can welcome in a new one with a renewed sense of hope. Today marks our first full week of offering the COVID-19 vaccine to our frontline healthcare personnel. Within this week, we have vaccinated approximately 3,900 of our employees and caregivers, including medical staff. That is an incredible accomplishment that we can be very proud of as a healthcare system. While we carry out the important mission of caring for our community, we also now have a parallel mission of vaccinating our employees and caregivers so that we can continue caring for those who need us most. We are very encouraged by the response to the vaccine so far and continue to encourage everyone to take it when your priority group is eligible.

At this time, we continue to vaccinate our frontline personnel who are considered to be most likely to come into contact with a patient who has COVID-19 or with a patient who may have COVID-19. Today, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis issued an executive order limiting vaccination for the time being in Florida to “long-term care facility residents and staff, healthcare personnel with direct patient contact, seniors age 65 and older, and other extremely vulnerable populations.” At Baptist Health, we are making plans to be able to provide the vaccine to these groups in the coming weeks (with the exception of long-term care facilities, where vaccination is being coordinated by the State). We will communicate our plans for vaccinating our community, including seniors and vulnerable populations, as soon as we have additional information to share.

We know that there are many questions surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Mark Hauser, President of Medical Staff Affairs discusses the science behind the vaccine and addresses myths and facts in [this video](#). Please take a moment to watch it.

As a reminder, employees who are interested in receiving the vaccine and meet the phase 1A priority group criteria should notify your leader, who will compile a list of eligible employees. Leaders will work with their vaccine Entity Champions who will submit these lists to Occupational Health. Occupational Health will schedule appointments based on the information specified by leadership and will notify each employee by email of their appointment date, time and location. Members of the medical staff who are interested in receiving the vaccine and meet the phase 1A priority group criteria should notify their entity’s medical staff office.

We are currently caring for a total of 398 patients with COVID-19 across our entities. This is an increase of 5 percent from last week and an increase of 12 percent from two weeks ago. These numbers remind us that COVID-19 is still a very present threat to our community and we should continue to take all proper precautions and mitigation measures. As the Christmas and New Year’s holidays draw near, please remember to continue to wear masks, social distance, wash your hands often and keep your safety and the safety of those you love top of mind.

During this last week of the year, I hope you will take a moment to reflect on the extraordinary work that you have done this year. As our community needed us the most, you stepped up time and time again. You have been there for our patients when they are most vulnerable. You have been there for their families when they couldn't be there themselves. You have been there for our community. And, maybe most importantly- you have been there for each other so that the important work could continue. You have our deepest gratitude for your dedication, and our best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season.

Bo Boulenger

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