

**COVID-19 Tribal Leadership Session Minutes  
January 25, 2021**

Angie Gorn, NSHC	Reba Lean, NSHC	Mark Peterson, MD, Medical Director, NSHC
Kelly Bogart, NSHC	Megan MacKiernan, NSHC	Cameron Piscoya, NSHC
	Carol Charles, NSHC	Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle

\*Over 30 participants attended today's meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION
Introduction to Meeting – Angie Gorn, NSHC CEO	<p><b>Today's Reminder:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please keep phone muted unless speaking or asking a question</li> </ul> <p>Note- Any questions may be sent to Public Relations at <a href="mailto:pr@nshcorp.org">pr@nshcorp.org</a> anytime or text to 907-434-1927 and they will be answered during the 11:00 am call.</p>
Updates	<p><b>Angie gave the following update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 case on Friday, later in the evening, and I believe are staff here are still working on the press release on that situation.</li> <li>- Identified a case in the community of Gambell, which looks like it is community spread (NOT travel-related). We held a teleconference with the Gambell leadership on Saturday and developed a plan with increased testing as well as hunkering down for the community. At this point in time there are a total of 9 active cases, 7 in Nome, 1 in Gambell, 1 in Savoonga.</li> <li>- Later this week we have 2 focused calls for tomorrow or the day after. We want to update everyone on the village travel mandates for each community. PR is reaching out to village leadership for each community. Bobby from IT is reaching out to Kawerak regarding broadband and connectivity. NSHC has board meetings this week and Kelly, VP of Hospital Services will be leading those this week. The call will be taking place, but you might not hear from me (Angie).</li> </ul> <p><b>12:11pm updated:</b> 11 cases in the region, 9 in Nome 1 in Gambell, 1 in Savoonga</p>
Medical Staff Briefing – Dr. Mark Peterson, Medical Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9 active cases in NSHC region, 1 in Gambell, 1 in Savoonga, 7 active in Nome.</li> <li>- Not many close contacts testing positive so far.</li> <li>- Elim, Brevig, Gambell, Shaktoolik, Unalakleet, Wales, Stebbins, Shishmaref, Golovin, getting second dose next week. More and more health aides are certified to give vaccine in most villages. Vaccinators going out as well. If you're waiting for your second dose, you should be getting a call, however advocate for yourself and make an appt for your next dose if you have any concerns.</li> <li>- Next shipment of first doses waiting on from the state/IHS Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>. We're unsure if its going to be Pfizer or Moderna. We can have vaccinators going out, however health aides are able to give Moderna in some communities. Nome vaccine is available</li> <li>- State of Alaska is top for vaccine rollout in the country. We get a higher volume of vaccine but we also have an efficient process to get people to get their vaccine. There's a lot of people 65+ who haven't gotten their vaccine yet. Please encourage them to get their vaccine. NSHC is pretty top in the region</li> <li>- UK variant, Brazil has a variant. Best defense is to get everybody vaccinated.</li> </ul> <p>Village vaccine update on #s: On average, pretty similar to last week's numbers as we haven't gotten new 1<sup>st</sup> dose vaccine shipments in. Around 30% for most villages. WMO has a high of about 65% and a low of 15% in some villages.</p>
Question and Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <b>Amos, WMO:</b> The Nome Nugget article was helpful to read. <b>Reba:</b> Wrote article about travel restrictions and getting the word out. Getting updated mandates out tomorrow for latest rules and sharing that to the public. We'll be</li> </ul>

- posting which communities are updating their quarantine/travel requirements.
- **Debra, WAA:** Any updates on vaccine for children? **MP:** I think it's gonna be at least 3 months from now. Studies still happening. Maybe by May, at the earliest. **Debra:** Has a grandson that is 16, is he able to get the vaccine when it comes? **MP:** Wales get the Moderna vaccine, while there's Pfizer in Nome, Brevig. If he got into Nome, he'd be able to get the Pfizer vaccine, but that's also every 3 weeks. **Roy, OME:** Just a comment that it's preferable to call and set up an appt before going to the clinic. **MP:** In Nome appts are set up on: <https://picktime.com/NSHC> If your grandson wanted to get the vaccine, he can fly in and sign up and have an appt available. **Megan:** Still have appts today for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> dose vaccine today. **Amos:** Stay on track with our appts and make sure you get your second dose on time.
  - **Roy, OME:** I haven't heard anything publicly in Nome about getting vaccinations. I have gone to the store several times and haven't seen any posters put up. Maybe I'm missing something, but getting the word out to get as many people in Nome vaccinated as possible. **Reba:** On the radio & online, & Nome Nugget. Waiting to post around town visually until next shipment comes in so that people don't show up when their isn't vaccine available. **Megan:** This is pretty big, that we are offering vaccines to anyone 16+. Around the country it is a lot harder to get access to the vaccines. Many are still only at 65+.
  - **Jolene, UNK:** To promote the vaccines, to do a door prize drawing at the beginning of February and again for those vaccinated in March. **Reba:** This suggestion has been thought of as well here. We'll have more to share in a little while. **Jolene:** Would be willing to donate a parka to a door-prize drawing. **Reba:** Haven't started asking people for ideas like that.
  - **Lucy, TLA:** Are you supposed to get a test to go to Anchorage? **MP:** There's not a requirement to test before going into Nome from a village, and not from Nome to Anchorage. There's not a requirement to travel to Anchorage. So you should be fine. **Megan AS:** You can get testing at ANMC prior to flying back to Nome & Teller. **MP:** the main requirement is to test on your arrival in Nome and when you travel back to Teller (Bering Air).
  - **John, SVA:** What are the percentages of the villages of this week who have been vaccinated (up in MP's medical update). Of all the cases that have been positive in the region, how many of the cases in the region have been children. **Sarah:** Since the beginning of the pandemic, ages 0-18: 82/309, or about 25% of the region's cases have been children. **John:** What are the projected numbers of children from 16-17? Are you going to focus on getting children 16-17years old when you get new doses? **MP:** For villages that get Moderna, we can vaccinated down to 18, and for villages with Pfizer, anyone 16+ in those villages is available. Everyone 16+ will eventually get vaccinated. J&J and Oxford vaccine will be coming out. J&J will most likely vaccinate down to age 12+. At this point, limited to supply. Once there's more supply we will get everyone 16+ who wants vaccine tto get vaccine. As soon as it's possible to get J&J down to 12, and there's adequate supply. **John:** Children's populations in villages are pretty high and a good number of children. Let's hope J&J vaccine is out in a timely manner. 1/3 of John's household is under 16. Let's hope that the vaccination process will be able to include children as well. **Sarah:** a week ago, SVA had 34% of eligible adults (18+) have received their 1<sup>st</sup> dose. Last week expected 70 new doses prior to the storm. **MP:** Many villages have high percentage of the population that are children. There's only so much we can do when we don't have vaccine for children yet. Let's get as much eligible adults vaccinated as possible. Going to be really important. **John:** Education is key. Need to have a bilingual message across for SLI and needs to be understood by everybody how important it is to get vaccinated. Most elders are very limited English speakers. If there was a process in place to make sure that the elders are educated and can understand in SLI Yu'pik. **Sarah:**
  - **Angie:** Please explain how any minor will need parental consent prior to getting any of the vaccines. **Megan:** Any vaccine or medication administration requires parental or legal guardian authorization for any medical treatment or vaccination. Need parental consent for any child under 18 or any adult that has a legal guardian. Please provide a letter with approval from a parent/guardian. You can fill out a form from the clinic.
  - **Amos, WMO:** What's the process for sports? **Megan:** COVID spreads in many major sports. Where one player had it and gave COVID to other people. Best thing to do is to get vaccinated (16+) and to wear a mask whenever at all possible to prevent spreading the disease. **Amos:** What about the recommendation to wear two masks? **Megan:**

Should wear a mask with multiple layers. If you have a mask with a single layer, wear two of them. The white cloth masks don't look like multi-layers, however they have 3 layers.

- **Debra, WAA:** Can the travel coordinator make any appt to make an appt for the patient/escort to get tested prior to flying back to Nome? **MP:** We'd have to talk to the CTCs and see how ANMC makes appts. We don't know but we can examine this. **Angie:** What does Bering Air require for testing? **MP:** a negative result within 24 hours. **Angie:** We will examine this and get an answer back tomorrow.
- **Debra, WAA:** Fax to send updated mandates to? Reba: can send to [pr@nshcorp.org](mailto:pr@nshcorp.org) or fax to 443-2113
- **Annie, SHH:** When you make an appt, a health aide has to ask you screening questions. Is there a more efficient or different way to get the screening done? Is there a different way or can somebody else call to make those appts? **MP:** It's been in our system for close to a year now. You have to get screened to make sure you don't have COVID. If you are having routine appts, you need to call in and get screened. If it's an emergency, than you should just go and get seen. If you're struggling to get appts made in an efficient manner, and we'll talk to VHS and getting that problem addressed. Seems like some inefficiencies. **Annie:** Does it have to be a health aide to ask those questions. The CTC answers and then you're told somebody's gotta call you back. If the clinic opens at 8am, and you wait and you don't get a call back until noon or if you need an appt or your kid needs to get seen. Is there a way to have a CTC ask those questions? **MP:** Unfortunately, it has to be a health aide who asks and screens those questions in case you answer yes to any of those questions and need medical follow-up. You shouldn't have to wait until noon. **Annie:** Isn't even relevant to have a CTC answer those question? **MP:** There will come a time that we can loosen these restrictions. Any health aide can answer those questions. I'll be talking to the clinic and VHS about this. **Annie:** It's cough/cold/flu season. It might be helpful to have one of those here in the village.
- **Annie:** Lysol wipes for Shishmaref? **Angie:** Sent to the tribe. We'll be reaching out to see how the distribution is going and we'll be getting monthly shipments for the next two years. We'll be sending them out. **Debra, WAA:** Is that upon request or will the wipes be sent out on a schedule? **Megan:** There is a schedule and allotments to how they are sent out. Nome caller, is there a process for Nome tribes? **Megan:** Available at the food bank, NSHC ground level. Working with tribes in Nome to get those distributed.
- **Roy:** Let's say, hypothetically, if someone tests positive in a village and their household members have been vaccinated. What's the message to those household members? **MP:** We want everyone to get vaccinated. For now, everything remains in place. If you're a close contact of a positive test, you have to still quarantine. The vaccines aren't 100% effective. We don't know yet if you're exposed to a positive case if you can still be a carrier and/or transmit the disease to other people. You'll still have to quarantine. It's still a relief to have household members vaccinated because they're less likely to develop COVID after exposure. Nothing changes at this point. Everybody still has to test and quarantine as normal. **Megan:** While we have updated some of our travel restrictions in our region, not everywhere else have dropped their quarantine requirements for vaccinated peoples. Make sure to check your destination and follow all local guidance regarding quarantine. (ex: Hawaii, New York State both still require vaccinated people to quarantine)
- **Debra, WAA:** For people that travel or on small airlines. Is AKAir going to require proof of vaccination? **MP:** That's a great question. Will they require that in the future? I wouldn't expect that to happen anytime soon. That might happen eventually. **Megan:** Until vax is widely available across the country I don't expect a vaccine mandate. For example, some employers are incentivizing vaccinated employees with extra \$/hour. **MP:** Would need vaccine to be fully approved (Not EUA) before it can be mandated.
- **Barb, Nome:** After the vaccine, wait 2 weeks after a second shot. We continue testing after a regular basis. Are the same tests going to be used after the vaccine? **MP:** These MRNA vaccines will not affect the test. Going forward with testing, we have plenty of supply and we expect to continue to have further supply for testing. Further out, is NSHC planning on testing anyone who wants it? **Roesch** makes a large unit for running 800 tests/8hour day. We were finally able to purchase one and expect it to arrive and be installed in the next few months. Going forward we should be in a much better position for testing aggressively. **Barb, Concern:** People's behavior is beginning to change thinking they're safe because they've been vaccinated. There's pressure almost to move back into moving

back with people. In our region we have plenty of organizations with boards and council meetings that congregate often. It seems as though it would be a bad idea to have 20+ people gathered together. **MP:** Our PR team is working to put out the message that there's a light at the end of the tunnel, but we're not there yet. We expect 8 weeks from now that we expect 70-80% of our populations to be vaccinated and then we can open up (based on when vaccine arrives). We still have to teleconference/zoom/etc. **Megan:** As we consider what's safe in meeting groups, what percent of tests administered is coming back positive? In Anchorage, it's about 1 in 30 people are positive. If you have a group with 30 people, there's a good chance that someone has COVID or is a close contact. Some areas of the state are higher or lower (Kotz: 1/20 or 5%). Be cautious.

- **Amos:** Seems like we'll be having this pandemic for a while. Are there any innovations coming out for air filtration? **MP:** There are companies making better air filtration systems for nursing homes, etc. Going forward, we can assume that improving air filtration system will be going forward, especially for older buildings. Many new buildings already have stringent requirements. **Megan:** NSHC has added negative pressure rooms to our acute care, and gotten new easier-to-clean furniture to prevent disease spread. **Barb:** Our tribal office is small, and we've used CARES Act funds for a special area for tribal members (not interacting with office staff) such as barriers, sinks for washing, and use of windows, touchless hand sanitizers. **Megan:** Good examples, and we expect less cases of flu and other infections (besides COVID) that we see every year.
- **Blanche, TLA:** Laundromats opened up for washers, but still means that there's 60 homes getting caught up on laundry. Trying to purchase 40 toilet plungers. **Angie:** Sent buckets to Teller last Friday. **Lucy, TLA:** Wanted to order plungers in case we ever need to wash laundry via hand/non-electric.
- **Caller, SHH:** GCI not working well in SHH, and calls keep dropping. **Angie:** Please continue sending reports into SHH. **Lucy, GAM:** Please repeat. **Angie:** GCI connectivity has had plenty of issues brought forward on this call since March 2020. When we had GCI on our last call, they expressed to try and get ahold of a representative and make sure a log is made to GCI. They were aware of some issues and working on a project that affected connectivity. They'll hopefully be administering a credit to customers experiencing outages in the communities that they have projects.
- **Roy:** After a high percentage of our region has received their second dose. At what point do you change the PR and communications and change the narrative after getting the second dose? **MP:** How do we open up? We slowly will open. The key is lots of communication and more freedom as we go. Right now, we're offering 2 doses, and eliminating travel quarantine, however you still have to test. This is going to happen over the next couple of months while we wait for everyone else to get their shots and the rest of the public is vaccinated. We will wait for CDC updated guidelines and waiting for vaccine numbers. That's going to be new data, new studies, and many more studies. We're hopeful that there will be good news. (Ex: transmission, close contact quarantine, etc.). There's so much we don't know yet. We will have our PR communicate what reasonable timelines we can expect once we have solid answers. Close contact testing might change, or how frequent of testing guidelines might change. The new 800-test Cobas will change some protocols for us, but we'll also still use the rapid analyzers as well.