

Vaccination at Boston homeless shelters up against high level of hesitancy



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By: [Drew Karedes, Boston 25 News](#)

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BOSTON — Boston Health Care for the Homeless is in the process of administering 3,500 doses of the Moderna vaccine at shelters across the city. The process of vaccinating Boston’s homeless population officially got underway last Wednesday.

Last week, 482 doses of the vaccine were administered at shelters; 282 of those were given to staff and 200 were given to shelter guests. BHCHP is hoping those at the front of the line will help ease the concerns of fellow guests.

“It’s important for folks who have been vaccinated to share their experiences,” said Barbara Giles, a nurse and COO with the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program. “We’re hoping shared personal experiences will help the process.”

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Giles said a high level of hesitancy at shelters is one of the biggest challenges.

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“People are waiting to hear how it went with the first group, and that will help them to see that everything went okay,” Giles explained.

According to Boston Health Care for the Homeless, there were no major issues or side effects reported during last week’s vaccinations at the Southampton shelter, Woods Mullen, New England Center and Home for Veterans and Pine Street Inn.

“It was so emotional. Finally some hope and finally some light at the end of this very long, bleak year,” said Lyndia Downie, president and executive director at Pine Street Inn.

Downie said a survey taken at Pine Street Inn showed about 50% of people were hesitant to get vaccinated. However, she believes people will ultimately be open to the first step in returning to some sense of normalcy.

“I want to be realistic, it’s going to be a long road,” Downie said. “We can’t give up social distancing or personal protective equipment or the universal testing we’ve been doing.”

Vaccinations will continue this week at Pine Street Inn, the Saint Francis House and family team shelters in Boston. Health care providers have some concerns about getting through to

people for their second dose, especially those without cell phones.

Shelters across Boston are staying connected through a shared database that shows where folks are staying. Downie told Boston 25 News that there has been less movement between facilities due to reduced-capacity restrictions.