

EAST BAY TIMES

COVID: 30,000 on waitlist to get vaccinated in Contra Costa County

Most residents over 75 have received first dose

By [SHOMIK MUKHERJEE](#) | smukherjee@bayareanewsgroup.com |

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The waitlist for a first dose of the coronavirus vaccine in Contra Costa County has risen to about 30,000 residents amid a supply shortage that has [plagued distribution around the Bay Area](#).

In an effort to boost its outreach, the county will open a new vaccination site at San Ramon's Diablo Valley College campus. San Ramon is among the Contra Costa County cities and communities with the third lowest percentage of residents who have received their first dose.

While health officials have had [some success in vaccine rollout](#) — around 87% of residents over 75 have received their first dose as of Tuesday — supply chain problems have limited the county over the past month to distributing mostly second doses, rather than inoculating new patients.

Despite the lengthy backlog of people waiting for a shot, the county's health director at a meeting Tuesday encouraged residents to continue signing up for a future appointment.



Contra Costa Health Services equity officer Gilbert Salinas addresses the county's Board of Supervisors at a Tuesday, March 2, 2021 meeting about vaccine rollout efforts in harder-hit communities. (Screenshot)

"We want you to consider adding your name (to the list) ... because we know a lot more vaccination is going to move in," said health director Anna Roth at Tuesday's county supervisors' meeting.

Meanwhile, health officials say they are addressing [inequities in vaccine distribution among different cities and ethnic populations](#) — gaps that county supervisors say aren't shrinking fast enough.

Residents of cities less affected by the virus are still receiving shots at a higher rate than those in cities and communities harder hit by the pandemic.

And white residents are still receiving disproportionately more shots (18%) than “Hispanic or Latino” residents (13%), per county data, despite the latter group's higher case rate (there is some overlap between the two groups in the county's race and ethnicity categories).

Supervisor John Gioia pointed out Tuesday that Walnut Creek has seen 39% of its residents receive their first dose, despite having far fewer cases per 100,000 residents than COVID-leaders such as Bay Point and Antioch, which have respectively seen 14% and 11% in the same category.

“While the percentages are going up slowly,” Gioia said, “they're still going up faster in higher-income communities.”

Early into the county's vaccine rollout, health officials said the disparities partially had to do with frontline health care workers and senior citizens — two high-priority groups — skewing more white and living predominantly in certain cities.

A month later, health officials now say their efforts have fallen victim to overall supply shortages that have limited distribution to second doses instead of first ones.

One of the county's initiatives is a pilot program to get farmworkers vaccinated. The program was rolled out this month in the county's eastern region — cities like Oakley, Brentwood, Byron, Knightsen, Antioch and Pittsburg.

“We are opening up slots and getting farmworkers to the head of the line,” said Gilbert Salinas, the county's equity officer.

As the health department works to close the gaps, its efforts will still refer to the county's priority list for who receives vaccinations, one official noted at the meeting.

“Even in those communities of color that are really hard-hit, it's the essential workers and the seniors that we're targeting,” health officer Chris Farnitano said.