



Area Agencies on Aging Say Seniors Should Receive Vaccine Priority.

It is estimated that 80% of all COVID-19 deaths could be stopped if those over 65 are vaccinated. “Virginia should prioritize those most at risk of death and serious illness” says Ron Boyd, President of the Virginia Association of Area Agencies and CEO of the Local Office on Aging in Roanoke. Boyd adds “we should follow the example of our neighbors in Tennessee, Maryland and Delaware.” “They recognize that by vaccinating older members of their communities, more so than other groups, will reduce acute care demands as they make up over 70% of those being hospitalized.”

The Association, known as V4A, is asking that Virginia’s seniors be given the highest priority for access to the vaccine. The current prioritization does not recognize the reality that older adults are at a higher risk of death and hospitalization. This disproportionate death rate is especially severe in long-term care facilities.

Mr. Boyd says association members are also concerned that due to the risk older Virginians are encouraged to stay home to lower their chances of becoming infected resulting in unintentional adverse consequences including social and physical isolation, delayed medical treatments and the challenges of meeting basic daily needs. The addition of these factors increases the risk of mental health complications.

V4A is a network of the 25 local Area Agencies on Aging across Virginia. Each of the 25 agencies provide an array of services to support seniors and those with disabilities in their homes including home delivered meals, transportation and in-home care. The goal of these agencies is to help elderly and disabled individuals remain in their own home and community for as long as possible, able to make their own decisions and retain their independence.

Boyd said older adults over 60 are currently in the very large “catch-all” 1b group that includes frontline essential workers, people living in correctional facilities, homeless shelters and migrant labor camps, people aged 16 through 64 years with a high-risk medical condition or disability that increases their risk of severe illness from COVID19. The need to protect our older adult population is summarily diminished. He added “we would hope the Governor and the Health Commissioner will recognize the urgent need reasons to reprioritize our vulnerable older Virginians.”

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