



Memorandum

To: Residential Care Facilities in Wallowa County

From: Cara Biddlecom, Interim Public Health Director
Dean Sidelinger, Health Officer and State Epidemiologist

Date: February 22, 2024

Subject: Public health services including immunization access in Wallowa County

Following the decision of the Wallowa County Board of County Commissioners to transfer its local public health authority responsibility to the state in 2018, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) assumed responsibility for limited public health services to protect the public's health. OHA partners with Winding Waters Clinic to provide immunization services and other activities as public health services for all of Wallowa County (not solely Winding Waters patients) to prevent and control communicable disease and outbreaks. In addition, OHA has appointed Dr. Elizabeth Powers as the local health officer for Wallowa County.

For vaccination specifically, Winding Waters Clinic is funded by OHA to assure access throughout Wallowa County, including filling any gaps in access where public health services are needed. This includes the public health role of offering seasonal respiratory vaccines, including but not limited to COVID-19 vaccines, to all residents and staff of care facilities regardless of whether they have a primary care provider outside of Winding Waters Clinic. Offering this type of vaccination service is a critical public health function to expand vaccination uptake among high-risk populations and prevent illness and community outbreaks. OHA encourages facilities to partner with Winding Waters Clinic to help remove any barriers towards immunization.

If there are questions or concerns regarding public health services in Wallowa County, please contact the Winding Waters Public Health Hotline at 541-426-4848 or the Office of the State Public Health Director at lpha.tribes@oha.oregon.gov