

Meagan Werth Ranson

From: Jennifer Steventon
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 9:11 AM
To: PressRoom Nevada Health Response
Subject: County Licensed Foster Parents
Attachments: Vaccine argument.docx

I will also call in a public comment.

I have attachments what I will be saying. I have been contacting whomever I can to get foster parents prioritized while being ignored. We chose to be foster parents because we wanted to help these children and hopefully make a difference in their lives and it has been disappointing that the state and county that we serve have excluded us in these times.

I am calling today to ask you to re-evaluate county foster parents for priority vaccine scheduling.

At the end of February foster parents licensed through private agencies in Washoe County were given the link to schedule their vaccines. But Washoe Health District is stating foster parents licensed through Washoe County are not considered a priority or essential because we aren't an agency per the Governors Playbook. This makes no sense as we do the same job and foster parents licensed through Washoe County have more prolonged face to face community contact as in most cases the children placed with the private agencies no longer have parental visits. We have discussed this with social workers and the children attorneys and they are all shocked we haven't been given the vaccine, as the attorney put it the attorneys are all working with the same kids and parents and they received their vaccine.

Per ACIP recommendations that are mentioned on page 23 of the Nevada playbook, says specify prioritization within population groups should be based on the risk of acquiring infection and the risk of transmitting the infection to others. To put what we do into perspective

- we sit in a room for an hour with windows that do not open.
- We have two infants who are too young to wear masks.
- Social distancing can not followed as these parents want to hold their child.
- Our particular case the parents are homeless and we have no idea what contacts they have had in the community. The parents masks are either bandanas or flimsy single layer mask. And they consistently let it fall below their nose.
- We then take these children home with out knowing if they were exposed. If one is exposed to COVID then it will quickly spread throughout our household.
- Per CDC, babies under 1 may be more likely to have severe illness from COVID.

On page 24 the standardized criteria list and CDC guidance for the priority list. Based on what I just told you we a do on a weekly basis we easily fall under

1a-We and the children in our care have an unavoidable, close contact with those who may have COVID.

2a- We and the children in our care have unavoidable, sustained contact with those that may have COVID.

3a- I would say our job as licensed foster parents is important to the community.

3b-Being foster parents the community and Washoe County depend on us to take these children into our homes and we provide them with safety and well-being.

4. Community spread, we have followed all guidelines and so it would only spread throughout our household and we care about our community and always wear CDC recommended masks.

5. Based on my immune disorder, asthma, and a high BMI I have to say I would have a very risk of COVID complications and death.

6. In our case we are older and raised our children. And we both have underlying conditions. And are at high risk for COVID complications.

In a recent article from the New England Journal of Medicine it states foster parents and caregivers should be prioritized to protect those they take care of. Prioritizing vaccination for foster caregivers will allow these young children in foster care that cannot wear a mask to benefit from vaccine protection even when they cannot be vaccinated themselves.

I also ask that you put a plan in place at the visitation centers to get these parents that are actively engaged in visits vaccinated, provide better masks for these parents and consider installing HEPA air purifiers to keep these young ones or special needs children that can not wear a mask safe during the visits.

In conclusion I ask you to consider putting yourself in our shoes and taking your own infant into a room during these times with no proper air circulation for over an hour with others that are not properly wearing masks. When you and your infant leave that room and you go home wouldn't you be concerned that infant could have been exposed? That your infant could get seriously ill. That it could spread throughout your household?

I ask that you please reconsider and have Washoe Health District vaccinate Washoe County's licensed foster parents.