

# THE CITY OF PITTSFIELD

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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### City, law enforcement officials urge caution with COVID-19 Vaccination Buddy System

PITTSFIELD, Mass. (Feb. 12, 2021) – City and law enforcement officials are urging local seniors to be vigilant as the state’s COVID-19 vaccination buddy system – an initiative meant to increase participation among seniors 75 and older in mass vaccination clinics by having an accompanying “caregiver” receive one as well – has resulted in an alarming increase in direct solicitation and advertising to seniors from individuals seeking to get vaccinated.

Following the buddy system’s official implementation on Thursday, Feb. 11, throughout the state, online sites such as Craigslist are filled with ads targeting seniors with offers of payment to serve as their caregivers to take them to their vaccine appointments.

“This is deeply disturbing in so many ways. I want to remind our seniors that there are legitimate and available resources on hand to help them if they need assistance,” says Mayor Linda Tyer. “The City of Pittsfield is continuing to explore additional ways to support and address the needs of our seniors who may have challenges getting to the vaccination clinics, but for now, I encourage any senior who has questions to call the local Council on Aging for guidance and assistance.”

Chief Michael Wynn, of the Pittsfield Police Department, notes that these solicitations may also provide a window for other deceptive behavior.

“By communicating with these individuals, seniors may be opening themselves up to additional fraudulent activity,” Wynn says. “We know that once an elder is victimized to this kind of fraud, it’s not just one trip to the well for the offender.”

James Clark, Executive Director of the Pittsfield Council on Aging, says the council is ready to help seniors navigate through this process. To date, the council has completed more than 1,000 reservations for dose 1 and 2 of the vaccine for those 75 and older.

“If they have any questions or are in doubt, we want them to call us. We are in constant communication with the Berkshire Vaccine Team and we can assist them,” he says.

As a reminder:

- If you are 75 and older and plan to attend a vaccination clinic by way of the vaccination buddy system, please only bring your caregiver or family member.
- Do not make contact with individuals advertising (online or otherwise) their services to take you to a vaccination appointment.
- Additionally, if you have been contacted by one of these individuals or have witnessed this type of activity, please contact your local council on aging for legitimate assistance. To reach the Pittsfield Council on Aging, please call 413-499-9346.

For more information, please visit <https://www.getvaccinatedberkshires.org>.

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