Internal Memo

Date: January 28, 2022

To: All Incarcerated Individuals at MCF-Shakopee

From: Paul Schnell, Commissioner

RE: COVID-19 Conditional Medical Release

Effective today, the Department of Corrections will stop using its conditional medical release (CMR) authority as a way of managing COVID-19 risk for pregnant individuals. DOC’s traditional longstanding conditional medical release remains an option for individuals who suffer from grave medical conditions and pose no threat to the public.

With no vaccine or treatment possible, DOC began using its CMR authority under Minn. Stat. § 244.05, subd. 8 early in the pandemic as one way to protect those most vulnerable to COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions. DOC relied on the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) list of underlying conditions increasing risk for severe illness from COVID-19 in making those determinations, including pregnancy.

But as vaccines became widely available and data grew showing their effectiveness in protecting against serious COVID-19 illness, DOC discontinued the use of this authority in May 2021 for all but pregnant women. At that time, there was inadequate data on the effects of vaccination on pregnant women and their fetuses.

Since then, however, the CDC has released new data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant people and recommended vaccines for this group. The CDC determined that the data “demonstrate that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine for pregnant people outweigh any known or potential risks.” In accordance with CDC guidance and research, pregnant individuals are now strongly encouraged to get vaccinated and will no longer be eligible for COVID-19 CMR.

If you have questions about vaccines, risk and benefit considerations, or effectiveness concerns, you may send a kite to nursing requesting information about the COVID-19 vaccination. You can also send a kite to Health Services if you would like to be scheduled for the next available round of vaccine distribution.