

# NEWS RELEASE

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22 July 2021

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## **The Senior Support Team of NH has Accomplished its Goals and Ended Operations**

Rye, NH - NH COVID-19 cases and deaths are now at the lowest levels the state has seen in almost a year, reports consistently indicate that the available COVID-19 vaccines are extremely effective, and vaccination rates in NH are nearly leading the nation. Due to that success, the Senior Support Team of New Hampshire (SST) ended its daily operations in support of senior residential facilities on June 30th, 2021.

The SST was a unique, fully-remote, all-volunteer organization launched in April 2020 to support assisted living facilities, skilled nursing facilities, and other senior residential facilities in New Hampshire through the COVID-19 pandemic. The centerpiece of the SST was the work done by the COVID Response Liaisons, who were available every day to communicate with an assigned set of senior facilities. The Liaisons provided facility leaders with information on COVID guidance and programs tailored to their current needs, and the statewide team advocated for any supplies or services that might make COVID-19 outbreaks in senior facilities less likely. Throughout most of the last 14+ months, about 55 senior residential facilities participated in the SST COVID Response Liaison program.

The statewide team reported key findings and new questions to NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) leadership each day. Daily communication with both DHHS and facilities allowed the SST to rapidly identify new issues and questions and consistently close the loop with facilities to get them the answers they needed.

“Recognizing the information and supply gaps confronting our NH senior residential facilities in the earliest phases of the pandemic, the SST was a remarkably rapid ‘all hands on deck’ statewide all-volunteer response designed to fill that critical need. It was an honor to work alongside these dedicated volunteers in support of our most vulnerable residents,” **says SST co-founder and State Senator Dr. Tom Sherman.**

The SST:

- Provided detailed support and guidance to senior facilities on personal protective equipment (PPE) acquisition, which was especially difficult and urgent during the first weeks of operation in April and May 2020. Systematic tracking of PPE requests sent by SST facilities to the state helped make the system much more responsive and reliable - the improvement was quite clear from June 2020 onward.

- Provided evidence-based information on infection control and COVID-19 guidance.
- Gathered unique data on essential senior-facility services, like private vendors of PPE and supplies, to help inform NH DHHS policymaking.
- Proactively engaged with stakeholders in mid-November 2020 to ensure that all types of senior care facilities, including skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and assisted living facilities (ALFs), were clearly included in COVID-19 Vaccination Phase 1a in New Hampshire.
- Rapidly reported issues with access to COVID-19 vaccines for senior care facilities and staff many times in late 2020 and early 2021, enabling them to be corrected to ensure vaccine access. Most of these issues were corrected on the same day - one was first reported by SST volunteers on Christmas Eve 2020!

The SST is grateful to the over 150 volunteers who made this possible. The team came from a diverse range of backgrounds in healthcare, academia, and community organizing, learned to work together fully online and remotely starting on day one, and did tireless work every day (including holidays!) for over 14 months to support NH's seniors through this pandemic.

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