Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Community-Based Vaccination Partnership for Underserved Communities

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15,000 Residents to be Vaccinated in March in Houses of Worship and Community Sites

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today announced the launch of a community-based vaccination partnership to provide equitable access of the COVID-19 vaccine to underserved communities throughout New Jersey.

The community-based vaccination sites are supported through a partnership by the New Jersey Department of Health, New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and U.S. Department of Defense, in addition to local faith leaders, nonprofit organizations, local officials, and health departments. The initial phase of the community-based vaccination partnership will include sites in Somerset, Trenton, Elizabeth, Vineland, and Paterson. These cities have been strategically selected as they have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and are some of the most diverse and socio-economically challenged communities in the state. The community-based vaccination partnership will vaccinate 15,000 residents through the end of March and launches on Monday, February 15 at the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset.

“Among our highest priorities is ensuring equitable access to appointments and vaccinations,” **said Governor Murphy.** “We are grateful for this unique partnership between our state agencies, federal government, and faith and local leaders as we begin this new phase in our vaccination effort to provide New Jerseyans with access to vaccine.”

"Throughout this pandemic, the Health Department’s work on the COVID-19 response and our vaccination planning has been done through an equity lens," **said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli.** "Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by this virus, and with our interfaith community partners, we are working to increase access and availability of the vaccine to vulnerable communities.”

“We have been working in close collaboration with the state of New Jersey since the onset of the pandemic,” **said FEMA Region 2 Acting Administrator David Maurstad.** “As part of President Biden’s COVID-19 response plan, FEMA has a key role in COVID-19 vaccine distribution, establishing vaccination sites and helping to accelerate state vaccination efforts through federal funding. We are committed to helping Governor Murphy identify additional sites and fill any resource gaps, where needed. Together we will ensure every New Jerseyan who wants a vaccine can get one — equitable vaccine access remains a top priority.”

“We are ready for this. We’ve had educational webinars for our members for the past month,” **said Reverend Dr. DeForest B. Soaries, Jr., Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset.** “Overwhelmingly, African American and Hispanic members of our church and community are ready to take this vaccine. I have a woman 105 years old registered for the vaccine.” Reverend Soaries stressed that all available appointments at his church are already filled. “We have 100 staff and volunteers who are going to serve and assist seniors,” he said.

In order to ensure equitable access in these high-need cities, these sites will operate as closed points of distribution for members of the immediate community only. Vaccination appointments will be required and will be handled directly through partnering houses of worship, community organizations, and local community leaders. Each site will coordinate with a health partner and vaccine will be dispensed from the State’s allocation. A vaccination support team from the Department of Defense will provide the clinical staffing at the sites and the Federal Emergency Management Agency will provide non-medical support. Each site will be able to vaccinate approximately 1,500 people per week and vaccinations at each location will take place over a two-week period, followed by a return to administer second doses.

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