Illinois Taking Aggressive Action to Address First Signs of Possible Resurgence

News – Friday, March 26, 2021

IDPH Authorizes Local Health Departments with Low Demand to Vaccinate Residents 16+ as Federal Projections Show State Expected to Receive 1 Million Doses Next Week

Rapid Response Vaccination Teams to Deploy to Areas Seeing Upticks to Accelerate Vaccine Administration

State Hasn't Met Metrics for Bridge Phase Reopening as Hospitalizations and Cases Increase in Chicago, Cook County, and Region 1 (Rockford area)

SPRINGFIELD – To address a concerning possible trend in increasing COVID hospitalizations and case rates, the State of Illinois is launching Rapid Response Vaccination Teams to five counties and expanding vaccine eligibility where demand appears to have waned.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has seen vaccine demand slow in several counties throughout the state, with early signs of unfilled appointments and increased vaccine inventory. IDPH is authorizing those communities to begin vaccinating all residents 16 and older at their immediate discretion, in order to use the vaccine doses they currently have available.

"Recent increases in hospital admissions and test positivity are concerning new developments and we don't want to go down the same path we've seen before and experience a resurgence in the pandemic, which is why Governor Pritzker directed us to use all our resources to halt these upticks," IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike said. "We cannot move forward if our metrics are going backward. The vaccine will help get us to the end of the pandemic, but we need to continue to reduce spread of the virus by wearing a mask, avoiding large crowds, keeping six feet of distance, getting tested after seeing others, and getting vaccinated as soon as possible."

Expanded Eligibility

The federal government is projecting that Illinois will receive nearly 1 million doses next week for distribution, an all-time high. Steady vaccination operations are the best tool to keep Illinois residents safe. Reductions in demand result in inventory that could be unused, and all inventory should be used as quickly as possible to protect residents.

Residents should contact their local health department to learn whether they have expanded eligibility.

“The number one goal for the state is to get as many people vaccinated, as quickly and safely as possible in order to stay ahead of variants,” Dr. Ezike said. “This shift is similar to what we saw when expanding vaccine eligibility from Phase 1B to Phase 1B+ where some parts of the state were ready to move forward, while others were not. Each county is different and local health departments know better how to vaccinate people in their communities as soon as and as equitably as possible.”

While all communities will continue to receive their baseline allocation of doses, new doses above that baseline will be allocated to high-demand areas where at-risk eligible residents face long waits for appointments.

Rapid Response Vaccination Teams

To bend the trend in a region seeing increased vulnerability and protect vulnerable residents, several teams are being deployed for rapid operations.

Mobile rapid response vaccination teams will deploy over the next two weeks in five counties in Region 1 where IDPH epidemiologists have determined there is a need to administer doses quickly to blunt increasing trends. These doses are on top of the allocation to the local health departments. These mobile teams will be providing single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine to county residents. Appointments will be coordinated by the local health department.

Residents of Region 1 are also encouraged to visit the existing mass vaccination site set up in Winnebago County.

DATE	COUNTY	MAKE AN APPOINTMENT	DAILY DOSES
March 31	Carroll County	http://www.ccphd.org/	800
April 1	Ogle County	https://www.oglecounty.org/departments/health_department/new_page.php	1,200
April 2	Boone County	https://events.juvare.com/IL-IDPH/eaa35aa4-f83d-48ee-8660-520d401803aa/	1,000
April 3	Lee County	http://www.lchd.com/covid19-vaccinations/	600
April 5	Whiteside County	https://covidvaccination.dph.illinois.gov/	600

Bridge Phase Update

Since March 8, Illinois has seen 10 days of increases in the seven-day rolling average for hospital admissions. The COVID-19 test positivity on March 10 was 2.5%. Today's reported test positivity is 3.3%. While these rates are certainly significantly lower than the peak, they represent a potential early warning sign about a possible resurgence.

Chicago has seen its daily case rate increase by nearly 50% since last week, along with six days of increases in test positivity. Suburban Cook County has seen its daily case rate increase more than 40%, along with nine days of increasing hospital bed usage. Region 1, the Northern portion of the state including Rockford and surrounding communities, has seen eight days of increasing hospital bed usage and six days of increasing test positivity.

To advance into the **Bridge Phase** that is the final step before the full reopening, the entire state must achieve several metrics:

- 70% of residents 65 years and older must have received a first dose;
- Hospitals must maintain 20% or greater ICU bed availability;
- Hospitalizations for COVID-19, admissions for COVID-like illness and deaths must hold steady or decline over a 28-day monitoring period.

As outlined in the March 18 update to the Restore Illinois plan, IDPH will evaluate statewide performance against the metrics by looking back at the data from the preceding 28 days.

While Illinois is on pace to reach 70% first doses for residents 65 years and older in the coming days, IDPH is monitoring an increase in new hospital admissions for COVID, which will need to be appropriately addressed and resolved before moving into the Bridge Phase. IDPH epidemiologists will continue to focus on the most recent 10 days to monitor any acute trends that prevent the state from reaching the Bridge Phase.

Statewide reopening metrics can be found at **http://www.dph.illinois.gov/statewidemetrics**.

Information regarding vaccination locations as well as details on how to book an appointment to receive the vaccine can be found at the state's COVID website, **coronavirus.illinois.gov**. Residents who don't have access to or need assistance navigating online services can call the toll-free IDPH hotline at 833-621-1284 to book an appointment. The hotline is open 7 days a week from 6am to midnight with agents available in English and Spanish.

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