



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

better health. stronger communities.

January 5, 2021

For Immediate Release

Contact: Gillian Conrad

(269) 927-5624

gconrad@bchdmi.org

Vaccination for COVID-19 Continues in Berrien County

Health Department Opens Vaccination for Additional Health Care Priority Groups

(Benton Harbor, MI) --- As of today, the Berrien County Health Department will have provided more 300 initial doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to its staff and individuals in priority groups 1 and 2 of Phase 1A, which included emergency medical personnel, some long-term care residents and long-term care facility workers since vaccination efforts began last week. Today, the Berrien County Health Department is announcing that all individuals who are included in any of the [Priority Groups in Phase 1A](#) are eligible to receive the vaccine.

According to [guidance provided](#) by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, those who fall into the priority groups eligible in Phase 1A include:

- Physicians, nurses, or other health care providers who may interface with patients such as: physical therapists, respiratory therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, social workers, discharge planners, patient care associates, phlebotomists, blood bank technicians, radiology technicians, or any other support staff who interfaces with patients;
- Students (medical/nursing/physician assistant/other clinical students), residents or fellows in training in any specialty program who are involved in direct patient care, and volunteers who interface directly with patients;
- Dentists, dental hygienists, optometrists, and clerical staff in any area of the facility who may interface with patients;
- Hospital security guards who may interface with patients, environmental services staff in any area of facilities that may interface with patients or infectious material directly or indirectly, food service workers who may serve patients, their families, or employees;
- Pharmacists and laboratory workers (even if they do not interface with patients);
- Outpatient substance use disorder treatment facilities or other outpatient settings including, dialysis centers, rehabilitation centers, urgent care clinics, hyperbaric centers, infusion centers, rehabilitation facilities, or any other area that is involved in direct patient care whose job location may not be physically connected to a hospital.

The Berrien County Health Department has engaged directly with facilities that employ persons in these priority groups to coordinate vaccination for their employees. However, if there are facilities or persons who fall into these priority groups who have not yet heard directly from the Berrien County Health Department or their employer, they are encouraged to contact the health department for further information on upcoming clinic times and appointment instructions. Persons in Phase 1A can call 1-800-815-5485 or fill out an online form located on the health department's website to indicate their interest in receiving the vaccine. Employees are encouraged to bring their occupation or work identification badge for verification upon arrival for the vaccination appointment.

Vaccines are being provided at the Berrien County Health Department offices and at drive-thru clinics at various locations throughout Berrien County. At this time, vaccinations are only for those who fall into the priority groups listed above and are provided by appointment only.

Plans are ongoing for the next phase of the vaccine effort, Phase 1B, which will include individuals over the age of 75 and frontline essential workers who keep critical infrastructure functioning. While timelines are fluid and dependent on a variety of factors, it is anticipated that Berrien County will begin vaccination for individuals in Phase 1B by late-January or early-February. Residents are encouraged to keep up-to-date with vaccine distribution progress and estimated timelines by signing up for the Berrien County Health Department COVID-19 Vaccine Newsletter found at www.bchdmi.org/COVID19.

###