



Spectrum Health
Lakeland

Joint News Release

March 16, 2021

For Immediate Release

Berrien County Health Department Contact:

Gillian Conrad

(269) 927-5624

gconrad@bchdmi.org

Spectrum Health Lakeland Contact:

Jessica Springer

(517) 398-5258

jessica.springer@spectrumhealth.org

Berrien County COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Additional residents eligible in coming weeks, new scheduling processes announced

(Benton Harbor, MI) --- The Berrien County Health Department and Spectrum Health Lakeland, along with area federally qualified health centers and several pharmacy partners, have administered more than 48,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in Berrien County. This number represents more than 30,000, or nearly one in four, Berrien County residents over the age of 16 who have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to date.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) made several recent announcements further expanding eligibility for COVID-19 vaccinations. Adults over the age of fifty became eligible as of March 8th. Beginning March 22nd, individuals over the age of 16 with disabilities or medical conditions will be eligible. The state also announced that beginning April 5th, all Michiganders age 16 and up will be eligible to receive a vaccination. Despite this expanded eligibility, vaccination efforts in Berrien County will continue to prioritize residents based on highest risk, including older residents, those with underlying medical conditions, and frontline/essential workers.

While vaccine supplies are increasing, appointments are still required to receive a COVID-19 vaccination at this time. The Berrien County Health Department and Spectrum Health Lakeland will no longer maintain a pre-registration process or a "waitlist." Rather, both organizations have introduced online self-scheduling tools for residents to make appointments for upcoming clinics as they become available. Community members are encouraged to visit the Spectrum Health Lakeland and Berrien County Health Department websites often to view appointment availability. Residents with limited internet access are encouraged to call the Berrien County Health Department at 1.800.815.5485 or Spectrum Health Lakeland at 269.927.5100 for assistance in scheduling appointments.

In early weeks of the vaccine rollout, individuals at highest risk due to age were prioritized which has resulted in more than 62% of Berrien County residents over the age of 65 having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Any resident over the age of 65 who has not yet received a vaccination is encouraged to call 1.800.815.5485 or 269.927.5100 to schedule an appointment immediately.

Efficient, yet equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine remains a cornerstone of the joint vaccination strategy in Berrien County. Both organizations continue to collaborate to ensure vaccinations are provided in a variety of geographic locations throughout Berrien County and at a

variety of community locations including senior centers, older adult and low income housing complexes, churches, and schools. Additionally, health officials continue to vaccinate homebound individuals, select patients in primary care or emergency medical settings, as well as community members with higher occupational risk or those in congregate living situations.

More information about vaccination efforts in Berrien County is available at bchdmi.org/COVID19 or spectrumhealthlakeland.org/vaccine.

###