



COOK COUNTY HEALTH

ISRAEL ROCHA, JR.
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Addendum to slide deck)
February 26, 2021

Activities and Announcements

COVID-19

See presentation.

Black History Month Panel Discussion

On February 25, 2021, Cook County Health hosted a Black History Month panel discussion on Facebook Live with African Americans in Medicine. With opening remarks from President Preckwinkle and Israel Rocha, Dr. Claudia Fegan moderated a panel of African American medical professionals discussing the important role African Americans have played in medicine and addressed vaccine hesitancy in the African American community. Panelists included:

- Jorelle R. Alexander, DMD, System Chair of the Department of Oral Health
- Jacqueline Boone, RN, Divisional Nursing Director, Patient Care Services, CORE Center
- Courtney M.P. Hollowell, MD, Chair of the Division of Urology
- Sharon A. Irons, MD, Chair of the Division of General Internal Medicine
- George W. Paul, MD, Chair of the Division of Pediatrics, Emergency Medicine Administration

Food as Medicine

As access to healthy food remains a great need for our patients and communities, the Fresh Truck partnership between Cook County Health (CCH) and the Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD) continues. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic required CCH and GCFD to develop and implement revised protocols for the Fresh Truck distributions that allow for appropriate screenings and social distancing to protect patients, as well as CCH and GCFD staff and volunteers. These revised protocols are in place until further notice.

Through February 16, CCH's Fresh Truck partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD) resulted in 309 visits to CCH health centers – Arlington Heights, Austin, Blue Island, the CORE Center, Cottage Grove, Englewood, Logan Square, North Riverside, Provident/Sengstacke, Prieto, and Robbins.

A distribution scheduled for February 16 at Robbins Health Center was cancelled due to the extreme snow. CCH is working with GCFD on a potential rescheduled date.

Collectively, the Fresh Truck distributions have resulted in the provision of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as some shelf stable items during the COVID-19 pandemic, to an estimated 37,679 individuals, representing 124,729 household members, totaling more than 802,500 pounds of food. Most of the individuals benefiting from the Fresh Truck screened positive for food insecurity at a CCH health center visit.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository's Fresh Food Truck visits for the month of March include the following ACHN Health Centers.

- March 4 – **Prieto Health Center** – 2424 S. Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL 60623
- March 9 – **Provident Hospital/Sengstacke Health Center** – 500 W. 51st Street, Chicago, IL 60615
- March 18 – **Arlington Heights** – 3520 N. Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, IL 60004

- March 19 – **CORE Center** – 2020 W. Harrison Street, Chicago, IL 60612
- March 25 – **Blue Island Health Center** – 12757 S. Western Ave., Blue Island, IL 60406
- March 23 – **Logan Square Health Center** - 2840 W. Fullerton Avenue, Chicago, IL 60647

CCH began hosting **Top Box** pickups at Provident Hospital in December 2020 – these will continue through the first half of 2021, while we monitor participation. Additional CCH pickup sites may be added, depending on interest from staff and community members.

Top Box pickups at Provident Hospital are scheduled for the following Fridays from 3-6pm: February 26, March 26, April 23, May 21, and June 25.

A variety of pre-packed boxes of fruits, vegetables, and various proteins are available for pre-order. Top Box Foods accepts debit and credit card payments, as well as SNAP, making it an option for community members who may be resource limited. Visit the Top Box Foods website at <https://www.topboxfoods.com/cook-county-chicago/home> for more information and to place an order.

Top Box Foods is a Chicago-based nonprofit organization that seeks to make great, healthy, affordable food accessible to all. Top Box Foods offers fresh produce, frozen meats, and other essentials and believes that filling your plate and feeding your community doesn't have to empty your wallet.

IMPACT 2023 Objective 5.1C

Community Advisory Councils

Cook County Health Advisory Councils include patients, community and religious organizations and serve as a way to promote our services in the communities where our centers are located. The Councils provide feedback to our staff and help strengthen our health centers' relationships in the community. The Councils meet quarterly to provide current information on Cook County Health and as an avenue for members to share information about their organizations.

Upcoming CAC meeting dates, including the 2021 schedule:

North Riverside: Wednesday at 1:00 PM: March 17, June 16, September 15, December 15
1800 S. Harlem Avenue, North Riverside, IL 60546

Englewood: Thursday at 1:00 PM - March 18, June 17, September 16, December 16
1135 W. 69th Street, Chicago, IL 60621

Provident Hospital/Sengstacke Health Center: Wednesday at 10:00 AM: April 14, July 14, October 13
500 W. 51st Street, Chicago, IL 60609

Cottage Grove: Tuesday at 1:00 PM: April 27, July 27, October 26
1645 S. Cottage Grove Avenue, Ford Heights, IL 60411

Robbins: Tuesday at 1:00 PM: May 18, August 17, November 16
13450 S. Kedzie Road, Robbins, IL 60472

Arlington Heights: Tuesday at 1:00 PM: May 25, August 24, November 23
3520 N. Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, IL 60004

IMPACT 2023 Focus Area 5

Legislative Update

State

- Representative Camille Lilly filed [HB3232](#), which is a joint effort between Cook County and Cook County Health to improve health equity and access to care. A Senate bill will also be filed.

HB3232 seeks to increase transparency and public access to hospital data, including what hospitals are and are not doing when it comes to provision of care to uninsured patients, what services uninsured patients are using, and demographics of these patients, as well as other data related to what hospitals are doing to advance health equity and reduce health disparities. The legislation also seeks to improve the process by which patients are screened for and connected to Medicaid and hospital financial assistance programs.

This effort will help lay the groundwork for future changes and system improvements for more equitable access to care by insured and uninsured patients across all hospitals.

- After serving 50 years in the Illinois House, and nearly three decades as Speaker of the House, Mike Madigan announced his resignation from the 22nd district, effective February 18. Local committeemen will convene to appoint his replacement.
- The Governor delivered his state of the state and budget address on February 17. Additional details about the proposed FY2022 budget can be found at budget.illinois.gov. A summary follows:
- FY2022 state budget includes \$41.6B in General Revenue Funds (GRF), reflecting a \$1.8B or 4.2% decrease from FY2021
 - \$932M in savings identified through closing of corporate tax loopholes
 - Budget does not account for any federal stimulus
 - Mostly flat funding of state agencies at FY2021 levels
 - Healthcare and Family Services
 - Maintains Medicaid eligibility and covered services at FY2021 levels; no rate reductions
 - Projects an additional 185,000 individuals to be added to Medicaid
 - Decrease of \$638M in GRF – primarily due to 6.2% enhanced FMAP and lower than expected liabilities; assumes eFMAP through December 2021
 - \$150M annual investment in healthcare transformation
 - Department of Human Services
 - Continues eviction mitigation for individuals impacted by COVID-19 (\$145M)
 - Additional funding for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (\$15.8M)
 - Intent to pilot an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS)
 - Public Health
 - Maintains \$1B in funding for public health preparedness and COVID-19 responses at state and local health departments
 - Additional \$4.8M to hire 50 nursing staff for regulation of long-term care facilities
 - Aging
 - Additional \$29.4M for Community Care Program to account for homemaker rate increases effective January 1, 2022
 - Additional \$11.3M for home delivered meals to older adults
- The House and Senate are currently scheduled to return to Springfield March 2.

- Earlier this month, Mercy Hospital and Medical Center filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The Illinois Facilities and Services Review Board denied Mercy’s application to close their hospital as well as a separate application to open an outpatient facility. At the March 16 meeting, the Board is scheduled to hear from Mercy Hospital again about their intent to close.
- On January 19, federal CMS notified the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services of partial approval of Illinois’s Continuity of Care / Administrative Simplification 1115 Medicaid waiver. The waiver request was submitted early 2020 (pre-pandemic) and included three requests:
 - Allow for Medicaid recipients who have their coverage reinstated within 90 days to return to their Managed Care Organization (instead of 60 days) – approved
 - Waive requirement to implement Hospital Presumptive Eligibility – approved
 - Allow for Medicaid to continue covering women post-partum up to 12 months (instead of ending on day 61) – not approved. HFS is working with the new administration to resubmit this request and provide more current data. HFS has also indicated their intent to cover all post-partum women, including undocumented women and others who might not otherwise qualify due to immigration status.

Federal

- In February, Congress has been focused on the second impeachment of former President Trump and the negotiations and legislative maneuvers toward enacting President Biden’s “American Rescue Plan.” Meanwhile, the new administration has continued to focus on staffing the leadership for federal departments and agencies, while starting to implement the President’s priorities, including COVID response and rolling back some policies of the previous administration.
- **Biden “American Rescue Plan”**
Appealing to President Biden’s stated preference for working in a bipartisan fashion, a group of 10 Republican senators crafted a proposal for a more limited version of the COVID relief bill promoted by the White House. Ultimately, however, Democrats decided that the package was insufficient to meet the needs they had identified.

In order to advance the legislation, Congressional Democrats decided to use the budget reconciliation process whereby both chambers pass a budget resolution which instructs Congressional authorizing committees to develop legislation that meets certain budget targets. While the Senate debated the articles of impeachment the week of Feb. 8, 12 House committees began marking up bills pursuant to their “reconciliation instructions”.

The House Budget Committee will compile the 12 bills into one FY21 Reconciliation bill which will then be readied for House floor consideration by the Rules Committee. House leadership expect debate and votes to conclude by the end of the week.

The Senate will not mark up individual committee bills but proceed to floor debate on its version, likely an amendment in the nature of a substitute, in the first week of March. The House plans to move to adopt a bill with any amendments from the Senate and send it to the President by March 14.

The House Oversight and Reform Committee reconciliation bill includes \$350 billion in aid for state and local governments, with \$65 billion in direct funding for every county, allocated based on population. Cook County would be estimated to receive just over \$1 billion if this provision were enacted.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee reconciliation bill includes most of the health provisions of interest to CCH:

Health Disparities:

- Medicaid coverage for incarcerated individuals 30 days prior to their release, to ensure continuity of care for justice-connected individuals
 - Begins one year after enactment
 - Sunsets after five years
- A Medicaid state option to allow states to cover postpartum women for 12 months after birth, to help address the maternal mortality crisis disproportionately affecting women of color
- \$250 million for nursing home strike teams to help facilities manage COVID-19 outbreaks when they occur
- \$1.8 billion to support the purchase, procurement, or distribution of COVID-19 test and testing supplies, PPE, and vaccines for staff and individuals in congregate settings
 - Funding would go to states, localities, territories, and tribes for strategies and activities to detect, diagnose, trace or monitor COVID-19 in congregate settings
 - Settings include prisons, jails, detention centers, long-term care facilities, psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment facilities, intermediate care facilities, and other settings providing care for individuals with disabilities
- \$800 million to the National Health Service Corps to support primary health care clinicians in high-need areas
- \$240 million to support the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment program, which helps support nurses working in critical shortage and underserved areas

Vaccines:

- \$7.5 billion for CDC to prepare, promote, distribute, administer, monitor, and track COVID-19 vaccines
 - Includes distribution and administration, support for state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments, community vaccination centers, IT enhancements, facility enhancements, and public communication
- \$1 billion for the CDC to undertake a vaccine awareness and engagement campaign
- Medicaid coverage of COVID-19 vaccines, including the option for states to provide coverage to the uninsured, without cost sharing at 100 percent FMAP for the duration of the public health emergency.

Testing:

- \$46 billion for testing, contact tracing, and mitigation
 - Implementing a national strategy for testing, contact tracing, surveillance, and mitigation
 - Providing technical assistance, guidance, support, and grants or contracts to States
 - Manufacturing, procurement, distribution, administration of tests, including personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies necessary for administration
 - Establishing and expanding federal, State, or local testing and contact tracing capabilities, including investments in laboratory capacity, community-based testing sites, and mobile testing units
- \$1.75 billion for genomic sequencing and surveillance of the circulating strains of COVID-19.
- \$500 million to allow CDC to establish, expand, and maintain data surveillance and analytics, including modernizing US disease warning system to forecast and track hotspots for COVID-19

Public Health Workforce:

- \$7.6 billion in funding to public health departments to hire 100,000 full-time employees into the public health workforce
 - Positions would include contact tracers, social support specialists, community health workers, public health nurses, epidemiologists, lab personnel, and communications. Funds would also support PPE, technology, data management, supplies, and reporting

- \$100 million to support the Medical Reserve Corps, a network of volunteer medical and public health professionals that support emergency response efforts and community health activities

Mental Health:

- \$3.5 billion for SAMHSA, split between the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Community Mental Health block grant programs
- \$100 million to the HRSA Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program to expand access to behavioral health services by focusing on training behavioral health paraprofessionals
- \$140 million to develop a program for mental and behavioral health and to prevent burnout among health care providers and public safety officers, including training and outreach
- \$80 million to provide support for mental health and substance use disorder services at community-based entities and behavioral health organizations
- \$10 million to support the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network, which works to develop and promote effective community practices for children and adolescents exposed to a wide array of traumatic events
- \$50 million to SAMHSA Suicide Prevention and Project Aware programs which support youth mental health services and suicide prevention efforts.

Private Health Insurance Coverage:

- Expand ACA Marketplace premium tax credits to more middle-class Americans for 2021 and 2022, including those with incomes above 400 percent of FPL
- Allow individuals receiving unemployment compensation during the public health emergency to access ACA premium tax credits regardless of income
- Provide partial COBRA subsidies to help unemployed workers maintain their employer sponsored health insurance coverage

Consumer Water and Energy Assistance:

- \$4.5 billion to HHS for home energy assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- \$500 million in additional funds for HHS for the Low-Income Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Emergency Assistance Program (established by Congress at the end of 2020)

- **Biden Administration Health Leadership Appointments**

President Biden’s nominee for HHS Secretary, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, has nominations scheduled before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on February 23 and before the Senate Finance Committee on February 24.

On February 19 Biden nominated Chiquita Brooks-LaSure to serve as CMS Administrator. Brooks-LaSure was an Obama Administration official at CMS and had served as a Democratic staffer for the House Ways and Means Committee when Becerra was a member.

- **Budget and Appropriations**

While Congress is focused on the FY21 Reconciliation bill as a vehicle to advance the President’s American Relief Plan, it is beginning to work on the FY22 annual appropriations process. The President has not yet submitted his FY22 budget request. While it is not unusual for presidential budgets to be released after the official February 1 deadline, it is particularly common in presidential transition years.

- **117th Congress Leadership Changes**

With the Senate reaching agreement on organization for the new Congress, Democrats officially seized committee gavels. The Chair of the Senate Finance Committee with jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid, is Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR.). Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID) is the Ranking Member. The Chair of the Senate HELP Committee, with jurisdiction over programs in the Public Health Services Act, is Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) with Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) as Ranking Member. Senator Murray will also serve

as Chair of the Labor-HHS Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, with Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) as Ranking Member.

Community Affairs

COVID Outreach Efforts

In collaboration with the Cook County Department of Public Health Office of Community Mobilization, Cook County Health is hosting tours of the vaccination sites for community organizations and leaders. The tours will help the organizations talk to their constituents about the Covid-19 vaccine, the vaccination process, dispel rumors and encourage people from the community to get vaccinated. So far, participants have found the tours to be extremely informative. They have also shared suggestions and improvements to the process.

Completed Tours

- February 3 – **Triton College** – T Building, 2000 5th Ave, River Grove, IL 60171
- February 5 – **Triton College** – T Building, 2000 5th Ave, River Grove, IL 60171
- February 9 – **Robbins Health Center** – 13450 S Kedzie Ave, Robbins, IL 60472
- February 10 – **Cottage Grove Health Center** – 1645 Cottage Grove Ave, Ford Heights, IL 60411
- February 11 – **North Riverside Health Center** – 1800 S Harlem Ave, North Riverside, IL 60546

Upcoming Tours in March

- March TBD – **South Suburban College** – 15800 State St, South Holland, IL 60473
- March TBD – **Arlington Heights Health Center** – 3250 N Arlington Heights Rd, Arlington Heights, IL 60004
- March TBD – **North Suburban Site** – Site location will be announced soon

In addition to the vaccination site tours, CCH has developed educational PowerPoint presentations in English and Spanish that are being presented at the Advisory Council meetings and other community meetings. The presentation provides information on the vaccine, the vaccination registration process, the vaccination sites and encourages a dialogue on vaccine facts and myths. Presentations to date include:

Upcoming Covid-19 Virtual Educational Presentations in March

- March 4 – **Sarah's Inn** – North Riverside, IL 60546 – English support group for women who are victims of domestic violence.
- March 4 – **Sarah's Inn** – North Riverside, IL 60546 - Spanish support group for women who are victims of domestic violence.
- Late March TBD – **Apostolic Church of God** – 6320 S. Dorchester Ave., Chicago, IL 60637

Racial Healing Circles

As an effort to become an anti-racist organization, Cook County Health will be hosting racial healing circles at Provident Hospital and on the South Side, funded by Chicago Community Trust and Illinois Department of Human Services. The plan consists of having circles with Provident Hospital employees, Community Advisory Council members, and members with the Cook County Department of Public Health Learning and Action Network members. Each healing circle will take approximately three hours, and some will be broken into two 1.5 hour sessions.

The current Healing Circles proposed schedule is as follows:

- January 19 – **Racial and Health Equity Initiative Committee** – morning session
- March 15 – **South Suburban CCDPH Partners and Advisory Council members** – morning
- March 22 – **South Chicago Partners and Advisory Council members** – morning
- March 26 – **West Suburbs CCDPH Partners and Advisory Council members** – morning
- March 29 – **Spanish Language Partners and Advisory Council members** – afternoon
- March 30 – **Provident Hospital Staff** – afternoon
- March 31 – **Provident Hospital Staff** – afternoon

Outreach Events

The Cook County Health outreach team continues to work with partners and community organizations to promote CCH's ambulatory sites and programs and enrollment in the CountyCare Medicaid Plan. Flyers and giveaways are provided to partners, who in turn hand them out at socially distanced events that they host. In addition to handing out informational "goodie bags", the CCH team also participates in virtual outreach meetings. Below are highlights of some events in which the outreach team participated this past month:

- February 4 – **Worth Township's Emergency Free Food Distribution** – 11601 S. Pulaski Avenue, Alsip, IL 60803
- February 14 – **Something Good in Englewood's Valentine Love Event** – 6344 S. Peoria Street, Chicago, IL 60621
- February 16 – **Illinois Action for Children's South Suburban Parent Educator Virtual Collaborative Meeting** – 17926 S. Halsted, Homewood, IL 60340
- February 20 – **True Vine Missionary Baptist Church's Groceries from the Heart & PPE Giveaway** – 14324 S. Marshfield Avenue, Dixmoor, IL 60426
- March 3 – **Cook County Southland Juvenile Justice Council meeting** – virtual meeting

Media, social media reports and other documents attached.



Cook County Health
Media Compilation Report
January 26 – February 22, 2021



Media Dashboard: January 26 – February 22, 2021

Total Number of Media Hits: 154

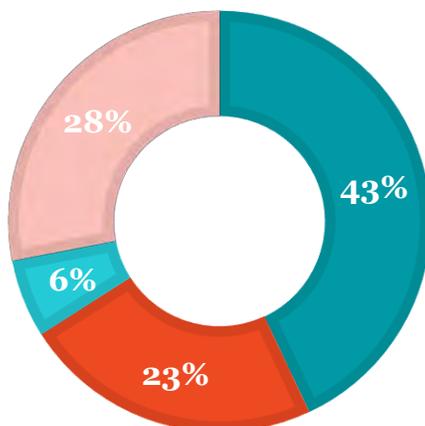
Top 5 Local Media Outlets

1. NBC-5
2. Chicago Tribune
3. Daily Herald
4. WBBM-AM
5. WGN-9 and Patch

Top 5 National Media Outlets

1. Yahoo! News
2. MSN
3. Becker's Hospital Review
4. Modern Healthcare
5. U.S. News & World Report

Media Outlet Type

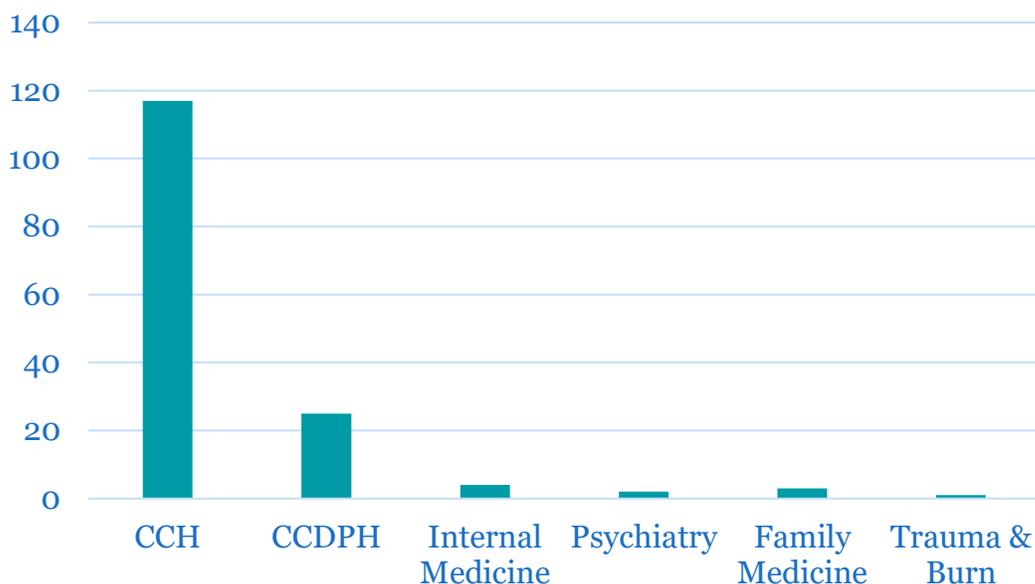


■ Web ■ Print ■ Radio ■ Television

Most Common Topics

1. Triton College opens as Cook County mass vaccination site
2. Several Cook County vaccination sites close due to inclement weather
3. Tinley Park Convention Center opens as Cook County mass vaccination site
4. CCH announces South Suburban College as COVID-19 vaccination site
5. Doctors warn hiccups could be a symptom of COVID-19

Media Mentions by Department





Cook County opens large vaccination site in Tinley Park; first of several to come

Craig Dellimore
January 26, 2021

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/cook-county-opens-large-vaccination-site-in-tinley-park>

County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha joined Governor Pritzker on Monday to announce that the Tinley Park Convention Center will serve as Cook County's first large-scale vaccination site opening on Tuesday, to continue Phase 1A and begin Phase 1B vaccinations, by appointment only.

"There are only about 120,000 first doses arriving in Illinois - outside of Chicago that is - this week. Because of the federal supply limitations, I want to emphasize that vaccinations are being given by appointment only," Pritzker said.

Phase 1B of the COVID-19 vaccination plan includes individuals age 65 and older and frontline essential workers, such as first responders, manufacturing employees and grocery store personnel, and teachers. While an estimated 600,000 suburban individuals are eligible for vaccine under Phase 1B, officials warn there is currently not adequate vaccine supply to vaccinate everyone.

"While current vaccine supply does not meet the demand - we are standing up large scale sites now to ensure that we are ready as vaccine continues to be distributed to Cook County," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "We are anxious to contribute to the Biden Administration's goal of providing 100 million vaccines in the first 100 days."

Vaccinations at Tinley Park and other Cook County Health sites will be provided by appointment. Beginning at 12 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25, appointments for individuals in 1B can be scheduled at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Individuals without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 (from 7a.m. to 7p.m., Monday - Friday) also starting Monday. Cook County Health will only offer appointment slots based on the amount of vaccine on hand and will add appointments as new vaccine shipments arrive.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said the opening of the mass vaccination site in Tinley Park is an important day, and not just for people in the south suburbs.

"Don't get me wrong, we are still losing lives every day. More than 400,000 Americans have succumbed to the disease. But now a year later, I am so grateful to be here planning for a surge in residents getting the vaccine," Preckwinkle said.

Cook County officials expect to be able to provide as many as 3,000 vaccines per day when the Tinley Park site is fully optimized and when adequate vaccine is available.

"Widespread vaccination sites will allow us to quickly and efficiently get these life-saving vaccine doses to Illinoisans as more federal shipments of vaccine come online," said Governor JB Pritzker. "The Illinois National Guard and the Illinois Department of Public Health are proud to partner with Cook County to launch the Tinley Park Convention Center Vaccination Site - our seventh collaboration in Cook County overall, with many more to come across the state. And Illinois residents from every region can find their nearby vaccination site options, from local health department operations to hundreds of pharmacy partners statewide, on coronavirus.illinois.gov. As federal supply is currently limited and every state in the nation is facing a shortage, I urge all eligible Illinoisans to check back regularly for available appointments - and in the meantime, mask up, keep our distance, wash our hands, and remember we'll stay healthy and safe if we look out for each other."

In addition to Cook County Health sites, the Cook County Department of Public Health has distributed vaccines to more than 90 partner locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano's, Walgreens, Federally Qualified Health Centers and hospitals who are also offering vaccines by appointment. A complete listing of these sites can be found at www.cookcountypublichealth.org.

How to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine

In the weeks ahead and pending vaccine availability, Cook County plans to open at least five additional large sites across the suburbs. County officials expect Phase 1B to take some time and caution residents to remember that moving through the various phases is contingent on the availability of vaccine.

“This first large site in the Southland is indicative of our commitment to distribute vaccine equitably, but we fully expect that demand will quickly outpace supply. It is critical for people to understand that while we are anxious to vaccinate everyone who wants to be vaccinated, vaccine supply remains the biggest limiting factor. We are asking Cook County residents for their continued patience as we work to ramp up one of the largest County-operated vaccine programs in the country,” said Israel Rocha, CEO, Cook County Health.

Residents not yet eligible for vaccine can also sign up at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov to receive updates on their phase and for information on dozens of additional vaccination sites across Cook County.



Thousands receive COVID vaccine on opening day of Tinley Park vaccination site

Mike Krauser

January 26, 2021

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/first-doses-given-at-tinley-park-covid-vaccination-site>

For some it's like hitting the lottery: getting the coronavirus vaccine. At the latest mass-vaccination site to open, located at the Tinley Park Convention Center, the first of shots were administered Tuesday.

Beth Kazmierczak, of New Lenox, said she almost cried when she walked into the convention center, seeing table after table manned by medical professionals and members of the National Guard.

WBBM: Describe that feeling when you walked in.

"It was just surreal. We've lived in this crazy bubble as a family for the last year, to walk in a be like, wow I feel like we are seeing light at the end of the tunnel," she said.

She was among one of the first to get an appointment and get vaccinated at the mass vaccination site.

"When I walked in, I almost started crying, just because it has been such a long journey to the vaccine...It was awesome. I have a daughter with Downs syndrome. I qualified in 1A, because I am a caregiver for her, so I am just really excited to be able to be vaccinated for her and keep her safe," she said.

Another woman, Lakshmi Sevugan, qualified for the vaccine, due to her age.

WBBM: So you are getting the vaccine today. Are you excited about that?

"I am excited," she said, "and I hope people follow this and get vaccinated, so all of us could be safe."

As more vaccine gets into the pipeline, they are expecting to vaccinate about 18,000 people a week at the Tinley Park Convention Center.

For now, appointments are limited to the number of available doses.

Cook County opens first large-scale vaccination site in Tinley Park

Mike Clark

January 26, 2021

https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/cook-county-opens-first-large-scale-vaccination-site-in-tinley-park/article_c69ec28d-8249-5cc8-87a0-0d1dbfba9588.html

Cook County opened its first large-scale vaccination site Tuesday in Tinley Park, while Walgreens locations in Calumet City and Lansing were listed as local vaccine providers.

The Tinley Park Convention Center at 18451 Convention Center Drive initially will administer the vaccine to patients in Phase 1A and 1B. The latter includes people age 65 and older and essential workers such as first responders, manufacturing employees and grocery store staffers.

According to a news release, about 600,000 Cook County residents are included in Phase 1B, but there are currently not enough doses to vaccinate everyone.

"While current vaccine supply does not meet the demand, we are setting up large-scale sites now to ensure that we are ready as vaccine continues to be distributed in Cook County," Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said in the release. "We are anxious to contribute to the Biden administration's goal of providing 100 million vaccines in the first 100 days."

Vaccines at the Tinley Park location and other Cook County Department of Health sites are by appointment only. Appointments may be booked online at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov or by calling 833-308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

County officials hope to offer up to 3,000 vaccines a day at Tinley Park when the site is at peak capacity and sufficient doses are available.

According to the release, Cook County also has distributed vaccines to more than 90 partners, including Walgreens locations at 522 Torrence Ave. in Calumet City, 18133 Torrence Ave. in Lansing, 390 E. 162nd St. in South Holland, and 2601 E. Sauk Trail in Sauk Village.

Appointments for vaccinations at Walgreens locations may be set up online at <https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/vaccination/covid-19>.

North Riverside vaccine center now taking appointments

Bob Uphues

January 26, 2021

<https://www.oakpark.com/2021/01/26/north-riverside-vaccine-center-now-taking-appointments/>

On Jan. 25, the Cook County Health Clinic at 1800 Harlem Ave. in North Riverside became an important hub in the state's campaign to vaccinate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, against COVID-19 as the global pandemic enters its second year.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Monday morning announced that as of noon that day the state would begin Phase 1B of its vaccination program, which includes some 600,000 Cook County residents, including those 65 and older as well as a slew of essential workers, including first responders, postal service workers, grocery store employees, public transit workers, teachers and school administrators and those working in adult daycare settings.

Anyone who qualifies for a vaccination in Cook County under Phase 1B can now make an appointment through a special website that went live Jan. 25 at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. You can also make an appointment by phone by dialing the county's vaccination appointment hotline at 1-833-308-1988.

The website also includes a list of FAQs, reason why you should get vaccinated and information on the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines themselves.

But it appears people are going to have to patient. Less than 24 hours after the county's new website began booking appointments for its 13 vaccination sites, every available spot was filled.

"The rollout of Phase 1B is truly an exciting development, but I want to remind everyone that there are only about 120,000 first doses arriving in Illinois – outside of Chicago, that is – this week," Pritzker said.

"Because of the federal supply limitations, I want to emphasize that vaccinations are being given by appointment only. I've said that before, but I want to make it clear so people don't go line up at their local pharmacy or line up at their local health department."

Health officials expect the limited number of appointments available at the North Riverside site and at other clinics will be booked quickly. However, said Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha Jr., that should not dissuade people from visiting the new appointment website and registering their information.

According to Rocha, whether you are someone who qualifies for Phase 1B or not, "you should register your information so that as you become eligible for a vaccine, you will receive updates."

"We are anxious to vaccinate all the people that are able to receive the shot, but patience is needed as the federal government works to ramp up production," Rocha said. "When you visit our microsite at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov it is critical to remember that all sites share appointments at this one time."

The website only reflects appointments for which a vaccine is guaranteed, said Rocha.

North Riverside clinic is one of just four operated by Cook County Health taking appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations, but there are more than 90 other locations at Walgreens, CVS and Jewel-Osco pharmacies. Hundreds more sites will open as vaccine supplies ramp up, Pritzker said during his Monday press conference at the Tinley Park

Convention Center, which has been chosen as a large-scale vaccination site capable of delivering up to 18,000 doses a week when at capacity.

“As more vaccine comes available from the federal government, additional mass vaccination sites are slated to begin operations, built on existing community vaccination efforts,” Pritzker said.

Cook County is being aided in its efforts to ramp up vaccine distribution by partnering with the Illinois National Guard. About a dozen National Guard troops were assigned to the North Riverside clinic on Jan. 19 and will be assisting there through at least March 31, according to 2nd Lt. Alex Villafuerte.

The troops were assigned to the site during Phase 1A to administer vaccinations to frontline healthcare workers.

“We’re here to help out the nurses with administering the vaccinations, so between civilian nurses and combat medics that are here, we have about five people giving the COVID vaccinations,” Villafuerte said. “At this location we’re averaging about 150 vaccinations per day.”

Dr. Daniel Vittum, lead physician and medical director of the Cook County Health Clinic in North Riverside, said the National Guard troops will help dramatically increase the number of vaccine doses it would otherwise be able to provide.

“The 1B pool of people is much larger, so we’re going to need more vaccine, more vaccinators, more people to register and that’s why [the National Guard troops] are here,” Vittum said, adding that with the added help they should be able to push to 275 doses daily. “It’s a massive operation, so we want to do it right and we want to do it equitably and we want to do it quickly, but we want to do it correctly.”



Tinley Park Convention Center Opens as Mass COVID Vaccination Site

January 26, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/tinley-park-convention-center-opens-as-mass-covid-vaccination-site/2422563/>

The Tinley Park Convention Center is now open as a coronavirus mass vaccination site in Illinois, state officials announced.

The center, located at 18451 Convention Center Drive, opened Tuesday as an Illinois National Guard mass vaccination site in Cook County, according to Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker.

Pritzker, joined by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, toured the new site Monday, as the state entered Phase 1B of its vaccine rollout, opening up doses to millions of residents.

"Widespread vaccination sites will allow us to quickly and efficiently get these life-saving vaccine doses to Illinoisans as more federal shipments of vaccine come online," Pritzker said in a statement. "The Illinois National Guard and the Illinois Department of Public Health are proud to partner with Cook County to launch the Tinley Park Convention Center Vaccination Site – our seventh collaboration in Cook County overall, with many more to come across the state."

Appointments are required, according to the village of Tinley Park, which said appointments can only be made through the [state](#) and county websites. They can be scheduled via Cook County's newly-launched vaccine [website](#), or by calling (833) 308-1988.

"This first large site in the Southland is indicative of our commitment to distribute vaccine equitably, but we fully expect that demand will quickly outpace supply," Israel Rocha, CEO of Cook County Health, said in a statement. "It is critical for people to understand that while we are anxious to vaccinate everyone who wants to be vaccinated, vaccine supply remains the biggest limiting factor. We are asking Cook County residents for their continued patience as we work to ramp up one of the largest County-operated vaccine programs in the country."

County officials expect to be able to administer up to 3,000 vaccines per day "when the Tinley Park site is fully optimized and when adequate vaccine is available."

As of Tuesday, [seven mass vaccination sites](#) will have opened in suburban Cook County. (Full list of locations [here](#))

The county said it plans to open at least five additional large sites across the suburbs in the coming weeks, but those will be dependent on vaccine availability.

Phase 1B, which began Monday, opened up vaccinations to people age 65 years and older as well as "frontline essential workers," which includes first responders, education workers like teachers and support staff, childcare workers, grocery store employees, postal service workers and more.

In addition to the Tinley Park site, several Walgreens and Jewel-Osco locations also began vaccinations or opened up appointments for Illinois residents eligible under Phase 1B of the state's vaccine rollout.

Illinois' Department of Public Health has launched a site for eligible residents to find vaccine events and make appointments.

The governor said current vaccination sites in the state are available by appointment only, but that the state plans to launch walk-in locations in the coming weeks.

"As the federal supply of vaccines increases and Illinois receives more vaccine, the state will launch walk-in locations and expand sites to additional providers like doctor's offices and urgent care clinics," the governor's office said in a release Monday. "More information about those locations will be released in the coming weeks."

Murphy urges essential workers, older residents in suburban Cook County to connect with vaccine providers via new website

Office of State Senator Laura Murphy
January 26, 2021

<https://www.dailyherald.com/submitted/20210125/murphy-urges-essential-workers-older-residents-in-suburban-cook-county-to-connect-with-vaccine-providers-via-new-website>

To help suburban Cook County residents in Phases 1A and 1B - including health care workers, front-line essential workers and residents age 65 and older - get vaccinated against COVID-19, State Senator Laura Murphy (D-Des Plaines) is spreading the word about Cook County's new vaccine distribution website.

"The vaccine is a critical defense against the COVID-19 virus, both for individuals and for our community," Murphy said. "The more people who get the vaccine, the closer we are to a full recovery."

The Cook County Department of Public Health launched the COVID-19 Community Vaccination Program to begin vaccinating individuals in Phase 1B of Illinois' vaccine distribution plan.

Residents of suburban Cook County who think they are eligible to be vaccinated in Phase 1A or 1B are encouraged to visit <https://vaccine.cookcountyil.gov/> and enter their information to be connected with a vaccine provider. Those without access to the internet can reach the Call Center 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday through Friday at 1-833-308-1988.

Phase 1A of the state's vaccination plan prioritized health care workers. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, Phase 1B comprises residents over age 65 and front-line essential workers who carry a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure because they are unable to work from home or their work does not allow for safe social distancing. This includes:

- First responders
- Teachers, principals, classroom aides and other school staff
- Food and agriculture workers
- Manufacturing workers
- Corrections officers and inmates
- Postal workers
- Public transit workers
- Grocery store workers
- Shelters and day care staff

Given data showing people of color die of COVID-19 at younger ages, Illinois lowered the CDC-recommended age eligibility by 10 years, from age 75 to age 65, to provide more equitable vaccine access to older Illinoisans.

Illinois has 1.3 million people who qualify as front-line essential workers and 1.9 million adults age 65 and over, totaling an estimated 3.2 million Illinoisans eligible to be vaccinated in Phase 1B.



How employers will fit into city's vaccine plan • Pharmacist accused of spoiling vaccines to plead guilty • VillageMD to open first Chicago clinic

JON ASPLUND

January 27, 2021

<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/health-pulse/how-employers-will-fit-citys-vaccine-plan-pharmacist-accused-spoiling-vaccines-plead>

CITY, COUNTY BRINGING EMPLOYERS INTO THE VACCINATION MIX: Employers eager to get their workers vaccinated against COVID-19 are getting some guidance from the city of Chicago about where to begin.

While supply is still limited, Chicago officials are encouraging businesses to start thinking about vaccinating their employees. Employers can even be vaccinators if they qualify: They must have a medical director on site, qualified individuals to give vaccines and the ability to store vials and track who has been vaccinated.

Meanwhile, Cook County health officials have been in touch with local employers who are interested in hosting vaccination sites at their workplaces once more doses become available, according to Dr. Rachel Rubin, who co-leads the Cook County Department of Public Health.

Once pharmacy chains, including Walgreens, Jewel-Osco and CVS, have finished vaccinating people at nursing homes and some independent living communities, the next step could be setting up vaccination clinics at workplaces, Rubin said. Depending on supply, the goal is to vaccinate the bulk of public and private school employees in suburban Cook County by late February—possibly leveraging Cook County Health's outpatient clinic network or standing up mass vaccination sites at local high schools, Rubin said.

In addition to mass vaccination sites—like one that just opened in Tinley Park—and 13 Cook County Health outpatient clinics, local health officials are contemplating additional access points. Future vaccination sites could include mobile units and drive-thrus at forest preserve district sites, as well as sending teams directly to homeless shelters and other hard-to-reach populations, Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha said. [READ MORE.](#)



Want to help your employees get vaccinated? Start here.

A.D. QUIG
January 26, 2021

<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/health-care/want-help-your-employees-get-vaccinated-start-here>

Phase 1B employees eligible for vaccination starting this week include workers in these industries: food and agriculture; manufacturing; education; grocery stores; and child care.

First responders, corrections officers, and workers in the U.S. Postal Service and public transit are also eligible in this phase.

But the supply of vaccine doses remains low compared with demand: Even the city says appointments at its existing vaccination sites are booked up with health care workers eligible under the initial vaccination rollout phase—1A— which started in mid-December.

The city is receiving roughly 34,000 first doses each week. For scale, that doesn't even cover the number of Chicago manufacturing workers eligible to get vaccinated in Phase 1B: 53,000. Still, Chicago Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady encouraged employers who want to vaccinate their employees to begin preparations.

Here is some guidance from the CDC as well.

Owners of businesses with fewer than 250 employees can take this survey to potentially be linked with one of the city's mass vaccination sites.

The survey is for businesses in one of the following industries:

- Phase 1B: First responders, corrections officers, food and agricultural workers, U.S. Postal service, manufacturing workers, grocery store workers, public transit workers, education sector, child care workers.
- Phase 1C: Transportation and logistics, water and wastewater, food service, shelter and housing, construction, finance, information technology and communications, energy, legal, media, public safety, and public health.

Medical facilities—like hospitals; clinics; Federally Qualified Health Centers, generally found in underserved areas; pharmacies; or long-term care sites—that meet federal requirements can sign up with the CDC as a vaccinator site if they haven't already. The city's provider page has detailed instructions on how to enroll.

University of Chicago Medicine, for example, is running its own vaccine clinic. In partnership with the university, it is vaccinating faculty over age 65, teachers at its Laboratory Schools and charter school, and certain UChicago Medicine patients. It's also planning to establish its own clinic for Phase 1C vaccine distribution, tentatively, when 1C is supposed to begin at the end of March.

The state of Illinois is partnering with Walgreens, Jewel-Osco and Hy-Vee pharmacies statewide to provide COVID-19 vaccinations, but appointments are hard to come by. Eligible locations are at coronavirus.illinois.gov.

Employers can become vaccinators too, if they qualify: They must have a medical director on site, qualified individuals to give vaccines and the ability to store vials and track who has been vaccinated.

Mark Denzler, president and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, says he's worked with manufacturers at the city and state level to make them vaccinators. Some have on-site clinics or third-party agreements with health care providers.

"We've worked with companies like AbbVie, Abbott, John Deere and ADM," Denzler says. "Ford, for example, early on bought a lot of these freezers and have the ability to store (vaccines)." He anticipates manufacturers to start vaccination programs in late February or March, given the rate of vaccine production.

He's hearing from association members that employees are responding to a "carrot approach" to receiving their shots: "PTO or cash bonuses for getting it versus a mandate."

Employers can also partner with third-party vaccinators. Capsule, a "digital first pharmacy" that offers mass vaccinations at workplaces, can be reached at vaccinations@capsule.com. Those that email that address will receive a survey in return about how to get started. The city also suggests reaching out to Vituity, another healthcare services company, at abbie.haigh@vituity.com.

Meanwhile, Cook County health officials have been in touch with local employers who are interested in hosting vaccination sites at their workplaces once more doses become available, according to Dr. Rachel Rubin, who co-leads the Cook County Department of Public Health. Rubin today updated Cook County commissioners on the vaccine distribution effort in suburban Cook County.

Once pharmacy chains, including Walgreens, Jewel-Osco and CVS, have finished vaccinating people at nursing homes and some independent living communities, the next step could be setting up vaccination clinics at workplaces, Rubin said.

Depending on supply, the goal is to vaccinate the bulk of public and private school employees in suburban Cook County by late February—possibly leveraging Cook County Health's outpatient clinic network or standing up mass vaccination sites at local high schools, Rubin said.

While some health departments have been able to move more quickly into Phase 1B, health officials said Cook County doesn't have as many extra doses following the first phase of the rollout, possibly because more health care workers are getting their shots in the area.

Reporter Stephanie Goldberg contributed.



Here's How You Can Get Vaccinated Against Coronavirus In Chicago

Kelly Bauer

January 27, 2021

<https://blockclubchicago.org/2021/01/27/heres-how-you-can-get-vaccinated-against-coronavirus-in-chicago/>

Coronavirus vaccinations are now open to more people in Chicago — but appointments are hard to come by.

All vaccinations in Chicago will be done by appointment, Dr. Allison Arwady, head of the Chicago Department of Public Health, has said. But she's also said patience will be key, as the city only gets a limited amount of vaccine doses from the federal government every week and appointments fill up quickly.

Here's how you can try to get vaccinated:

Who's Eligible For Vaccinations

Chicago is in Phase 1B of its vaccination campaign. Here's who eligible during this phase:

- Chicagoans age 65 and older, with special priority given to people 75 and older and people 65 and older with underlying medical conditions.
- Frontline essential workers:
- Correctional workers.
- First responders.
- Grocery store workers.
- People working in manufacturing/factory settings with outbreaks.
- Day care, K-12 and early education workers.
- Public transit workers.
- Other manufacturing workers.
- Agriculture workers.
- Continuity of government and postal workers.
- People from Phase 1A, including health care workers.

How To Get Vaccinated

Hospitals

The city's health department says you should first contact your primary care provider or a health clinic or hospital where you've received care in the past. You can check their website or contact them for information on vaccinations and setting up an appointment if they're vaccinating people.

The city has also instructed hospitals and other providers to directly contact existing patients who are eligible for vaccines and offer them appointments. Providers are supposed to first offer appointments people most at risk — namely, patients who are oldest and have underlying medical conditions.

Pharmacies

Select pharmacies are offering COVID-19 vaccinations to eligible people, though appointment slots fill up quick.

Here's where you can try to make an appointment online:

- [Jewel Osco](#)
- [Mariano's](#)
- [Walgreens](#)
- [Walmart](#)

Note: CVS is not offering vaccinations to the general public at its pharmacies in Illinois.

Workplaces

The city's health department will work with large employers to offer vaccinations through their workplaces.

People who will be vaccinated through their workplace do not need to take action, according to the city health department.

Zocdoc

Zocdoc lists publicly available appointments from the city's vaccination sites, as well as from local organizations like AMITA Health, Erie Family Health and Innovative Express Care, among others.

Not all vaccine providers in Chicago are listing their open appointments on the scheduling tool. But more providers are expected to join, according to the city.

People will be able to sign up online for the appointments through Zocdoc. The tool will check if you are eligible to be vaccinated. If you are, it will show nearby vaccination locations and open appointments. People can then make an appointment.

[You can use the Zocdoc tool by clicking here.](#)

Mass Vaccination Sites

Chicago:

The city's mass vaccination sites are not open to the public for appointments.

Cook County:

Cook County does have vaccination sites that are accepting appointments so long as you are eligible under Phase 1B and you live and/or work in Cook County. Appointments fill up fast. You can [register with the county here](#) or call 833-308-1988 to make an appointment and/or to get updates.

Where To Get Vaccinated

Chicago's health department has a map of some vaccine providers in and around the city:

When Will I Be Eligible?

Here's the city's tentative timeline:

- Phase 1A: Continuing. Covers health care workers and people living and working in long-term care facilities.
- Phase 1B: Continuing. Covers Chicagoans 65 and older and frontline essential workers.
- Phase 1C: Expected to begin March 29. Covers other essential workers and people ages 16-64 with underlying medical conditions that put them at risk for severe cases of COVID-19.
- Phase 2: Expected to begin May 31. Covers all Chicagoans 16 and older.

Children will likely not be vaccinated until the summer or later, Arwady has said.

How To Get Updates

- You can [sign up with Chi COVID Coach](#) to get updates from the city's health department on its vaccination campaign.
- You can check the [health department's website](#) for information.
- You can also contact [Block Club's free coronavirus hotline](#) with questions.



Some Chicago area home care agencies frustrated with vaccine rollout

Gaynor Hall
January 27, 2021

<https://wgntv.com/news/coronavirus/some-chicago-area-home-care-agencies-frustrated-with-vaccine-rollout/>

Some home care agencies are beyond frustrated and confused with the vaccine rollout as county health departments are pleading for patience.

Charmaine Conaghan is the owner of Always Best Care Senior Services based in Glenview. Weeks ago, she says she filled out a survey with the Cook County Public Health Department for her agency.

"The expectation was that we would receive instruction as to how we would get the vaccine whether we would be sent to a pharmacy, Jewel Osco was a possibility or if we would be given a time," she said.

But that didn't happen.

Now, she's trying to get her roughly 125 workers registered individually, and as of this week, vaccines are open to group 1B.

Appointments are hard to come by. She is desperate to get her employees vaccinated...after losing one of her longtime clients to COVID-19.

"It absolutely broke my heart that he had to be taken to a hospice care center," she said. "So he had to die in a facility and that's the nightmare."

Dr. Rachel Rubin with the Cook County Department of Public Health says they're working to remove the barriers for home caregivers.

"They need to sign up as individuals for now however we have meetings setup with industry groups of these home healthcare providers coming up over the next day or two and we're trying to work out a system where we will be better able to pass out vaccinations to these home healthcare workers and also potentially utilizing medical care givers to also give vaccinations in the future to their homebound clients," Dr. Rubin said.

Katie Fielmann, of Comfort Keepers, who is also the Home Care Association of America Illinois chapter president, says she is hopeful after getting a breakthrough call from DuPage County yesterday offering appointments for some of her workers.

"We have a long way to go, but this is a positive for us," she said.

Cook County health officials said people who qualify for Phase 1A are still being prioritized, but they said right now there is still not enough vaccine to go around.

Officials unveil Tinley Park vaccination site Monday, urge residents to register for vaccine appointment

Eric Crump

January 27, 2021

<https://www.hfchronicle.com/article/2021/jan/27/officials-unveil-tinley-park-vaccination-site-monday-urge-residents-register>

State and county officials held a news conference Monday to announce the launch of Phase 1B of coronavirus vaccinations and the opening of a vaccination site at the Tinley Park Convention Center.

The site opened to the public on Tuesday for appointment-only vaccinations. It is one of more than two dozen sites being set up and operated by the Illinois National Guard.

The Tinley Park site has a current capacity of 9,000 vaccinations per week, according to Gov. J.B. Pritzker, and it can expand eventually to 18,000 per week when the supply of vaccine doses increases.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle lauded the creation of the large-scale vaccination site.

"Today that sliver of light at the end of the tunnel is just a bit brighter," she said.

The requirement to make appointments is intended to prevent long lines of people waiting for vaccines and the frustration they experience if the site is unable to provide them with shots, as has happened in some other locations in the country, Pritzker said.

Israel Rocha, CEO for Cook County Health, noted that Cook County residents should visit the county's [vaccine portal](#) not only for information but to register for an appointment.

During the registration process residents will be advised whether they qualify to receive a vaccine under the current phase of the program, and if so, will allow them to register for an appointment.

Those who don't yet qualify for an appointment can still sign up to receive updates on the program.

"The website will only reflect appointments in which a vaccine is guaranteed," Rocha said, noting that in some other places, appointments were made and then canceled when not enough doses were available. "We're trying to avoid that."

He said the county's goal is to get everyone vaccinated as quickly and equitably as possible.

The state [vaccine locator](#) shows 14 sites within 10 miles of Homewood and 15 sites within 10 miles of Flossmoor. Most are Walgreens or Jewel-Osco pharmacies. The closest are the Walgreens at 18301 Pulaski Ave. in Hazel Crest and the Walgreens at 3200 Vollmer Road in Olympia Fields.

In addition to the Tinley Park Convention Center, there are also four sites managed by the Cook County Department of Public Health in the area, one at Cottage Health Center in Ford Heights, the CCDPH office in Oak Forest and the Robbins Health Center in Robbins.

As of Wednesday, 4.6% of residents in CCDPH's jurisdiction had received at least one dose of the vaccine, and 1.2% had completed the vaccine series.

The administration of vaccines has not been geographically even, though. According to the CCDPH website, 5.3% of residents in the North region have received at least one dose. In the South region, 3.2% of residents have gotten one dose.

County Commissioner Donna Miller, who represents the 6th District, including Homewood, noted that the South Suburbs have been hit hard by the virus.

"We know African American and Hispanic communities have been hit hardest," she said. We have had the vast majority of deaths in Black and brown communities. We need to get past the vaccine hesitancy that people experience."

Flap over lawyer vaccinations at Cook County Jail highlights confusion over rollout of shots for court staffers

Megan Crepeau
January 27, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/criminal-justice/ct-cook-county-jail-attorneys-covid-vaccine-20210127-s5q6dq7zwfajpkmdoz7tbz4asi-story.html>

A brief, unofficial window of COVID-19 vaccine availability to rank-and-file Cook County attorneys this week highlighted a communication breakdown between some top officials about a coming rollout of shots for court personnel — a particularly fraught issue as officials aim to **bring back jury trials as soon as next month**.

A handful of attorneys, both prosecutors and public defenders, were vaccinated at Cook County Jail on Monday and Tuesday after word spread through the grapevine that the inoculations were available.

They were utilizing a “walk-up protocol” that, apparently unbeknownst to them, had been intended only for Cook County sheriff’s staffers. That program was halted Tuesday after officials learned that attorneys had gotten the shots, and several were turned away at the doors, according to the sheriff’s office.

But as the ever-vigorous courthouse rumor mill churned away, Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx said she was surprised to learn the public defender’s office had been coordinating with sheriffs about possibly getting vaccine priority for public defenders whose job duties include jail visits.

“It’s clear as mud as how this process has been operating,” she said. “This is not a measure of ‘I don’t want public defenders to be vaccinated.’ I want a vaccine strategy that keeps all of us safe and is fair and equitable and recognizes the state’s attorney (staffers as essential).”

The Tribune spoke to two sources within the public defender’s office who were vaccinated Monday; they figured that their inoculations were not part of any official rollout, but bristled at the notion that there was any underhandedness on the part of their office. They heard about the vaccine’s availability through the grapevine Monday evening, they said, and they were under the impression they were getting doses that happened to be left over.

“We all knew we were so incredibly lucky to be in a position to be in the right time at the right place,” said one source within the public defender’s office who was inoculated Monday. “We were very concerned that we were jumping the line, and we were assured that these were just extra doses. There was nothing sinister about this.”

They spoke to the Tribune separately and on condition of anonymity, since they were not authorized to speak publicly about the issue. Both provided the Tribune with copies of their inoculation cards, which state they were vaccinated at the jail on Monday.

“We knew there was some kind of official negotiation going on to try to get us the vaccines. None of us thought (this week’s vaccine) was the official negotiated system,” one of the sources said. “We were all under the assumption that this was just, ‘hey, if you go right now, you can get it.’ ”

In response to Foxx’s comments about the alleged lack of communication on the official vaccine rollout, Era Laudermilk, deputy of legislative affairs for the public defender’s office, told the Tribune that county leadership, including

prosecutors, have been in discussions about administering vaccines to the jail site. And, she said, the sheriff's office informed them some public defender employees would qualify under that umbrella.

Laudermilk noted many of those employees often work in the jail and said no court stakeholder was intentionally left out of the process.

"Like every other jurisdiction in this country, the rollout of the vaccine has been a learn-as-you-go, fly the plane while you're building the wings process," she said. "Everyone is super focused on, let's just get people vaccinated. ... I believe all of this was done with the best of intentions, we're still trying to figure it out, and pointing the finger at each other is not helping this effort."

In a statement, the sheriff's office said there had been "ongoing conversations regarding potential future opportunities for public defender employees who routinely enter the jail to receive vaccinations," but noted that no plans had been set in stone and that public health officials, not the sheriffs, make final decisions about vaccine priority.

"At no time since vaccinations began at the jail on Wednesday, Jan. 20, has access to vaccinations at the jail been formally opened to staff at the state's attorney's office or the office of the public defender," the office stated.

So far, more than 1,800 eligible sheriff's staffers have gotten their first vaccine doses, according to the office.

Vaccine rollout has not yet begun for Cook County Jail detainees. A representative of Cook County Health said in a statement that their office is working with sheriffs and the city department of public health "to plan for the complex implementation of detainee vaccinations," and pending vaccine availability they expect those vaccinations to begin in February.

In an email obtained by the Tribune, Public Defender Amy Campanelli told employees last week that "employees whose job duties include going to the jail qualify for priority to receive the vaccine," and said "our turn may come up potentially within the next week or two."

That was news to Foxx, who said no plans to prioritize certain public defenders had been discussed in any of the planning meetings attended by top county officials.

While prosecutors do not enter the jail nearly as often as public defenders, they still do public-facing work, and the courthouse is an "ecosystem" where staffers from overlapping county offices interact closely, Foxx said.

Foxx also said she believed public defender management may have had a hand in coordinating the early vaccines Tuesday, an assertion she also made in an email to employees that went out Tuesday night.

But public defender officials on Tuesday denied that strenuously, saying they were not even aware of their staffers getting vaccinated Tuesday.

Laudermilk said she knew some their staffers got vaccinated Monday, but not Tuesday, and said those vaccinations were not part of the ongoing planning to get their employees inoculated.

And of that planning, Laudermilk said their office was merely "accepting an offer" from the sheriffs to discuss getting more public defenders vaccinated, and called it concerning that "there's even an allegation that we are trying to do something in a sneaky way."

State board rejects plan to close Mercy Hospital

Kelly Milan

January 27, 2021

https://www.hpherald.com/evening_digest/state-board-rejects-plan-to-close-mercy-hospital/article_6fd8065e-60f6-11eb-8105-f3ecd409124b.html

The statewide Health Facilities and Services Review Board rejected the establishment of an outpatient facility to replace Bronzeville's Mercy Hospital at a Tuesday meeting, marking a temporary win for community activists and local legislators who have been calling for the hospital to remain open.

"We are disappointed with the initial decision by the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board and are evaluating our options to open an outpatient center on Chicago's South Side," said Trinity Health, the hospital network that owns Mercy, in response to the decision.

Trinity announced in early November that it planned to build an outpatient center as a replacement for Mercy Hospital, 2525 S. Michigan Ave. The outpatient center was set to be 2 miles away from Mercy at 3753 S. Cottage Grove Ave., and would offer diagnostic and urgent care services.

According to Trinity, offering preventative and diagnostic care earlier for local residents would help prevent emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

But members of the Health Facilities and Services board were skeptical of the plan.

"I think it's an illogical grouping of three services," said Dr. Linda Rae Murray, a board member — and former Trinity Health board member — who teaches health policy at the University of Illinois-Chicago. "You're just talking about urgent care. It's going to be small staff, just a little larger than the typical Walgreens walk-in clinic. I just don't understand how you think this materially improves care."

"I have a lot of concerns based on [the state board staff report](#) — not so much on the testimony and the questions that were asked and responses," said Chairwoman Debra Savage. "Based on that, I'm going to have to say no because I still have significant concerns."

The final vote was three to two to reject the plan for the care center.

Trinity Health will have an opportunity to reappear before the board and present additional information relevant to the approval of the permits. The network has 14 days to notify the board staff in writing to indicate whether Trinity intends to reappear and submit additional information.

In January of 2020, Mercy formed a coalition with three other hospitals — Advocate Trinity Hospital, South Shore Hospital and St. Bernard Hospital — to create an independent health system and build one to two new hospitals and three to six outpatient centers to ultimately replace the four hospital facilities, according to a Trinity Health Systems spokesperson.

Since 2012, Trinity says it has invested more than \$124 million in infrastructure improvements at Mercy and provided more than \$112 million in funding, with monthly operating losses of \$4 million that no longer can be sustained.

But activists dispute Trinity's claims about Mercy's lack of profitability — they say that the hospital made \$4.2 million dollars last year, according to Jitu Brown, national director of the Journey for Justice Alliance and a member of the Chicago Health Equity Coalition, a network of community organizations, hospitals and health departments united to improve health in Chicago and Cook County.

“When is disinvesting in Black communities ever off the table?” said Brown. “At some point as a community, you have to say these institutions need to function with some level of leadership from our community or these people are colonizing forces. They are in our communities running institutions with no relationships with the people in these communities.”

This past summer, Brown and community members began their advocacy work to inform the public of Mercy’s closing and advocate to save the hospital. They won an initial victory when the state review board rejected Trinity Health’s plan on Dec. 15.

South Side legislators have also called for Mercy to remain open, and promised action in Springfield in the coming months.

“We are, of course, pleased with the Illinois Health Facilities Board's decision to reject Trinity's proposal. We are convinced that Trinity Health Systems has forfeited the privilege of providing healthcare in the Bronzeville community. We need them to sell Mercy to one of the suitors, who are committed to honoring Mercy's message of serving the poor; and justice,” said Brown after Tuesday's vote.

At a community meeting last week, Brown said that the coalition is still pushing to meet with Pritzker, and wants the governor to use the power of his executive office to encourage the sale of Mercy to suitors.

Mercy Hospital sees about 57,000 people per year — about 12,000 in-patient and 36,000 out-patient, according to Dr. Anudeed Dasaraju, a resident in Emergency Medicine at Mercy from the University of Illinois Chicago, who spoke at the meeting.

The care center could handle at most 30% of Mercy’s ER visits and 10% of its total patient contacts, according to Dasaraju.

“To contextualize what an urgent care visit is, those are considered low-acuity visits, meaning, in simple terms, sniffles and sneezes,” said Dr. Dasaraju. “An urgent care center will not see people having cardiac arrests, not see people having strokes, not see people who have heart attacks -- All those people who come to this care center will not be seen and shipped off to hospitals.”

Nearby hospitals are 3 to 5 miles away and not all hospitals within the area are equipped to treat strokes and heart attacks, according to Dr. Dasaraju.

“You’re effectively delaying care on every level if you transition Mercy Hospital — a full-service hospital — to the care center that they’re proposing,” said Dr. Dasaraju.

“We aren’t blind nor are we stupid,” said Etta Davis, a member of Lugenia Burns Hope Center and a patient at Mercy. “What are we supposed to do after hours during a respiratory cardiac and other crises? By the time an ambulance comes from across town, the person experiencing the crisis will probably be dead or died on their way to the hospital.”

“I know that in a business you want to make a profit, but when it comes to putting profit over human life, then we have a problem,” Davis said.

With the shortage of ICU beds on the South Side, the closing of Mercy hospital would eliminate an important source of care, according to Dasaraju.

“We see ICU patients every single day, which means these people need to be treated very quickly and then escalated to a level of care where they need adequate nursing and 24 hour monitoring,” Dr. Dasaraju said. “Now if you eliminate that, you create a substantial gap not only for the ICU beds in the area, but the entire area of the South Side.”

The closing will also eliminate 30 OB/GYN beds, with only 3 hospitals on the South Side able to provide OB/GYN care.

Dr. John Picken, veteran obstetrician at Mercy Hospital, who has worked there for 51 years, spoke about Mercy’s renowned treatment for high-risk pregnancies.

According to Picken, 80% of deliveries at Mercy Hospital are high-risk pregnancies where the mother, fetus or newborn are in danger. About five years ago, Mercy formed a comprehensive partnership with Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, one of the top children's hospitals in the country, to bring highly specialized pediatric services to infants and children.

"If Mercy closes, there is no place for people to go and there's no way they are going to get this kind of care," said Picken.

"Black Lives Matter. There is no question about that, and the movement is great. It's done phenomenal work already in uniting people of every race and religion to stamp out police violence against Black people, but pregnant Black women have lives, too," he continued. "And their unborn babies have existence in the lives ahead of them and their high-risk newborns have a life ahead of them. Those are Black lives, also."

Community organizers and health care providers worry if Mercy closes, then other hospitals will close in the future.

"We were very clear it could be Mercy today, Jackson Park tomorrow or St. Anthony's after that or Roseland and after that or Provident after that," Brown said.

This December, Cook County Health closed its Woodlawn and Bronzeville clinics, with patients referred to Provident Hospital.

Provident Hospital, already struggling to maintain its facilities as it closed some of its intensive care units due to redevelopment plans, has been sending all of its COVID-19 patients to Stroger Hospital.

Provident Hospital also does not deliver pregnant women. COVID-19 patients and pregnant patients of Provident Hospital are sent to Stroger Hospital.

"When I say I want to save Mercy, I am not saying let's save the current managers of Mercy," said Ald. Sophia King (4th), at last week's meeting. "I think they have proven that they are not worthy of managing a hospital in our community."



Tinley Village Board Praises Vaccine Distribution Center In Town

Yasmeen Sheikah
January 28, 2021

<https://patch.com/illinois/tinleypark/tinley-village-board-praises-vaccine-distribution-center-town>

The Village of Tinley Park Board of Trustees praised the opening of Illinois' first mass vaccination center here in Tinley Park, at Tuesday evening's special board meeting.

The [Cook County Department of Public Health](#) opened the first of five mass vaccination sites at the [Tinley Park Convention Center](#), 18451 Convention Center Drive, Monday. Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and other elected officials toured the mass site, on its opening day. About 9,000 vaccines will be dispensed weekly, and up to 18,000 doses per week once the federal government ramps up vaccine distribution. Vaccines are being administered by National Guard members, to eligible residents, including everyone over age 65 and frontline essential workers.

Over 3.2 million Illinoisans are [eligible for Phase 1B](#) of vaccine distribution.

Although the [site is open](#) and appointments have been made, the village board unanimously voted to approve a memorandum of agreement with the CCDPH, to use village facilities to perform emergency public health activities, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In turn, this made the space Illinois' first mass site to receive the vaccine.

Assistant Village Manager Pat Carr told the board that the site was put together "very quickly," revealing around the clock work brought the site together in under two weeks.

"Our convention center has been vacant for the past nine months because of COVID. So we put together a plan with Cook County Health, Cook County Emergency Management [and] the Cook County Department of Public Health, to utilize our facility," Carr said. "Within a matter of days, this past weekend, with around-the-clock construction, we were able to transform the convention center into the first mega pod vaccination center in the state."

Carr said this is a historic event and that about 500 vaccines were distributed on day one of being open. He said the site will continue to vaccinate the public until further notice.

Trustees weighed in on the site coming to town. Mike Glotz said bringing the site to Tinley "is absolutely amazing." He thanked Carr and anyone else who got involved in setting it up.

Trustee William Brennan referenced former Mayor Ed Zaborcki and board for bringing the convention center to Tinley Park. He said he spoke with Cook County Board of Commissioners President Toni Preckwinkle and found the department was looking for a space with a big enough parking lot to accommodate the amount of people expected to come in.

Trustee Cynthia Berg thinks its great that the village was able to partner with the department of public health.

"I know the south suburbs have been disproportionately affected by COVID, so it's nice of Tinley Park to be in the position to help out," Berg said.

On Monday, Pritzker said about three-quarter of a million doses have been administered so far in Illinois, with only about 120,000 first doses arriving this week in Illinois outside of Chicago. Due to the limited supply, vaccinations are being given by appointment only, with more slots being added each week as more vaccine becomes available.

Every state in the nation is experiencing this same shortage, Pritzker said. "It's another example of the Trump Administration's tragic incompetence that they didn't invoke the defense production act and didn't order more vaccine from the manufacturers."

You can [register for the vaccine here](#). Appointments must be made, and no walk-ins are accepted at the convention center at this time.

“Esperamos dos meses”: la experiencia de quienes sí han podido sacar una cita para vacunarse contra el coronavirus

January 28, 2021

<https://www.univision.com/local/chicago-wqbo/esperamos-dos-meses-la-experiencia-de-quienes-si-han-podido-sacar-una-cita-para-vacunarse-contra-el-coronavirus-video>



Fernando Caldera y su esposa Yolanda recibieron este jueves la primera dosis de la vacuna contra el virus y aseguraron a Noticias Univision 66 que tuvieron que esperar varias semanas para poder registrarse y agendar una cita. Asimismo, las personas señalaron sentirse felices e hicieron un llamado a la comunidad a confiar en el antídoto.



Cook County Hispanics disproportionately affected by COVID-19 hospitalization, study finds

ABC7 Chicago Digital team
January 28, 2021

<https://abc7chicago.com/health/study-shows-outsized-effect-of-covid-19-on-cook-co-hispanics/10109935/>

A new study out Thursday shows the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Hispanics in Cook County in the early days of the pandemic.

From mid-March to mid-May 2020, 60% of all hospitalized COVID-19 infected patients at Cook County Health were Hispanic.

At one point in mid-April, that number climbed to 75%.

Common threads among those patients included living in areas with high proportions of residents who were also Hispanic, living in multi-generational homes or overcrowded residences, and being employed in manufacturing and construction.

"The rapid and disproportionate increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations among Hispanics after the shelter-in-place mandate indicates that public health strategies were inadequate in protecting this population," said Dr. Bill Trick, study principal investigator and associate chair of research at Cook County Health. "These individuals were unable to shelter in place because their employment (or employers) didn't allow for remote work."

Hispanic patients were also more likely to require admission to an ICU and had an increased need for needing a ventilator or dying.

The study's lead researcher told ABC7 Eyewitness news that educating the Hispanic community to follow public health guidelines and get vaccinated against the coronavirus remains important.



Cook County to Open First of Several Large Vaccination Sites

January 28, 2021

<http://www.lawndalenews.com/2021/01/cook-county-to-open-first-of-several-large-vaccination-sites/>

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha were joined by Governor J.B. Pritzker to announce that the Tinley Park Convention Center will serve as Cook County's first large-scale vaccination site opening the week of January 25th to continue Phase 1a and begin Phase 1b vaccinations. Phase 1b includes individuals age 65 and older and essential workers such as first responders, manufacturing employees and grocery store personnel. While an estimated 600,000 suburban individuals are eligible for vaccine under Phase 1b, officials warn there is currently not adequate vaccine supply to vaccinate everyone. Vaccinations at Tinley Park and other Cook County Health sites will be provided by appointment. Individuals in 1b can schedule an appointment at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Individuals without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 (from 7a.m. to 7p.m., Monday – Friday). Cook County Health will only offer appointment slots based on the amount of vaccine on hand and will add appointments as new vaccine shipments arrive.

How do I schedule a second COVID-19 vaccine shot? Why hasn't my health system contacted me yet? Common Illinois vaccine questions answered.

Lisa Schencker

January 29, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/vaccine/ct-coronavirus-vaccine-questions-second-shot-20210129-6t76v77qbvca5f7i4ebadvbcua-story.html>

The first official week of COVID-19 vaccinations for seniors and essential workers in Illinois has sparked mixed emotions and many questions about the process of getting vaccinated.

The vast majority of Illinois seniors and front-line essential workers who are eligible for vaccinations under the phase that started Monday have not yet received shots. Supply remains extremely limited.

But some of those who did get vaccinated reported problems scheduling a second shot. Others worried that a blizzard would keep them from their appointments. Many of those who have yet to be vaccinated are wondering why their health systems haven't yet invited them to be inoculated.

The Tribune reached out to retail pharmacies, health systems and the Cook County Department of Public Health to get answers to those questions, and others, about getting vaccinated.

Q: What if I miss my vaccination appointment because of an emergency?

A: A broken-down car, sickness or blizzard can sometimes derail plans to get vaccinated. If that happens, a number of health care systems say they'll work with people to help them reschedule.

"We're sensitive to those situations and we know that life happens, and we know how important this is to patients, so we want to be able to do everything within our reasonable power to accommodate them," said Philip Quick, associate vice president of access at Rush University Medical Center.

At Loyola Medicine, if patients have to cancel, they can go online to reschedule and probably won't have to wait too long for another appointment as long as they're flexible with times and locations, said Dr. Neil Gupta, chief medical officer, medical group services at Loyola Medicine.

Representatives for Cook County Health, Walgreens, Walmart and Mariano's also said a person who misses a vaccination can reschedule.

Q: How can I schedule my second shot?

A: The second dose of the Moderna shot is supposed to be given 28 days after the first, and the second dose of the Pfizer shot is supposed to be given 21 days after the first.

Many pharmacies and health systems are scheduling second shots, on site, right after people receive their first ones. University of Chicago Medicine is typically scheduling people for their second shots when they get first doses, and if they don't schedule at that time, they get electronic reminders to do so. At Rush University Medical Center, the clinician who gives a person a shot also books that person for their second one, Quick said.

“Before they leave that seat, they have that second appointment,” Quick said.

Some people reported trouble scheduling a second shot at Walgreens, but the Walgreens website has been updated to allow people to schedule first and second doses at the same time, said spokesman Phil Caruso. People who already got a first shot at Walgreens without being able to schedule a second one will be contacted with steps to make their second dose appointments, he said.

Mariano’s, Jewel-Osco and Walmart are scheduling second shots when people get their first shots.

Q: What if I can’t get my shot 21 days or 28 days after the first?

A: People shouldn’t panic if they can’t get their second doses on day 21 or 28, said Dr. Michelle Prickett, an associate professor of medicine in pulmonary and critical care at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine.

Those are the recommended times for the second doses, but there is wiggle room. Those second doses may also be given, if necessary, up to four days earlier than the recommended time or as late as within six weeks of the first dose, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As long as people receive their second doses within that six-week time frame, “It should be effective,” Prickett said.

Q: Why hasn’t my health system contacted me yet to make an appointment for a vaccination?

A: Chicago-area hospital and health systems are moving at different paces when it comes to vaccinating their patients. Some, such as Loyola Medicine, are allowing all their patients ages 65 and older or who are essential workers to sign up for appointments. Others, such as NorthShore University HealthSystem, don’t anticipate starting shots for their senior patients until the first week of February.

Still others are inviting only some of their patients to receive shots at the moment. Northwestern is prioritizing its oldest patients and those who live in certain vulnerable ZIP codes for the shots. DuPage Medical Group is prioritizing its patients who are at highest risk of getting severely ill should they catch COVID-19.

Q: Do I have to prove I’m 65 or older or an essential worker to get a shot?

A: In some places, yes, and in other places, no. Loyola, for example, is asking older patients to bring an ID with date of birth, and essential workers to bring proof of their employment, such as a letter from their employer, a pay stub, a work ID or a uniform to their vaccination appointments, Gupta said. Loyola is turning away people who cannot prove they’re eligible.

Cook County Health asks for proof from essential workers when they check-in at the county’s mass vaccination sites, such as staff IDs, professional license numbers or certificates, pay stubs, signed letters from employers or a uniform.

Others, however, are taking a different approach. Rush is asking people to bring a photo ID, but otherwise is not asking essential workers for proof of employment, Quick said.

Walgreens’ website says people should bring work IDs or other documents showing proof of employment to their vaccination appointments if they’re front-line, essential workers.

Q: Should I search multiple websites and/or contact multiple providers to see if I can get a vaccination appointment?

A: You can do that. Vaccines are still relatively scarce in Illinois, **so it can be very difficult to get an appointment**. It’s OK to search multiple websites for appointments and work with multiple providers, but you should only actually schedule one appointment. The state has launched a website, <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-location>, where people can find vaccination locations and links to schedule appointments.

Q: What kinds of side effects might I experience from the vaccine?

A: The most common side effects are pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache and muscle pain, though people may also have chills, nausea and/or vomiting. Most side effects go away within a few days. Side effects are mostly mild to moderate, according to the CDC.

Q: Is it true that side effects are more common with the second dose than the first?

A: Yes, said Prickett. The side effects typically only last for a day or two but most commonly include fatigue, headache and/or muscle pain. With the second dose of each vaccine, higher percentages of people in clinical trials experienced fatigue, headache or muscle pain than with the first dose, according to the CDC.

“It’s essentially restimulating your immune system to think it’s trying to fight the virus again,” Prickett said. “Most people who are vaccinated are having an immune response, and it’s just an indicator their immune system is trying to make antibodies to the virus.”

Q: When should someone seek medical attention because of side effects?

A: Severe reactions, such as an allergic response, are rare, and typically occur within 15 minutes of receiving the shot, which is why patients are generally being observed for 15 minutes after being vaccinated, Prickett said. People, however, should seek medical attention if they’re experiencing high fevers after a shot, altered mental states, gastrointestinal issues with dehydration, or if they pass out, she said.



Tinley Park Partners With State, Cook County To House Mega Vaccination Site At Tinley Park Convention Center

Jon DePaolis

January 29, 2021

<https://patch.com/illinois/tinleypark/tinley-park-partners-state-cook-county-house-mega-vaccination-site-tinley-park>

The Village of Tinley Park Board of Trustees celebrated the opening of a COVID-19 vaccination site at the Village-owned Tinley Park Convention Center Tuesday, Jan. 26, during a special meeting.

The vaccination site — a partnership between the State of Illinois, the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and the National Guard — opened at the convention center, located at 18451 Convention Center Drive, earlier in the day.

The board members voted 6-0 to approve a memorandum of agreement with the other governmental entities to use the convention center.

"This memorandum of agreement with the Cook County Department of Public Health and the Village of Tinley Park is to utilize Village-owned facilities to perform emergency public health activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic," Trustee William Brennan noted before the vote.

Earlier in the evening, during the Committee of the Whole meeting that preceded the Village Board meeting, Assistant Village Manager Pat Carr explained how Tinley Park became involved with the mega vaccination center.

"This came up ... almost two weeks ago," Carr said. "It came up very quickly. Cook County Health and the hospital system was looking for a large space to open one of the first mega [vaccination centers] in the state, and our convention center has been vacant for the past nine months because of COVID. So, we put together a plan with Cook County Health, Cook County Emergency Management and [CCDPH] to utilize our facility.

"We were able to put it together, and within a matter of days this past weekend with around-the-clock construction, we were able to transform the convention center into the first mega pod vaccination center in the state.

"It's been a historic event. We started vaccinations to the public today. We'll continue until further notice."

Carr said he believed about 500 vaccinations occurred on Jan. 26.

"The game plan is to get up to 4,000 a day," he said.

Trustee Michael Glotz thanked Carr for the role he played in setting up the vaccination site at the convention center.

"This is absolutely amazing that Tinley Park was able to land this," Glotz said. "I know you put a lot of time and effort into this, [as well as] anyone else that helped you though EMA and everyone that was involved other than yourself. So, thank you."

Brennan also commended the board's predecessors — like Mayor Ed Zabrocki — for getting the convention center in the first place.

"I talked to [Cook County Board of Commissioners President] Toni Preckwinkle ... and they were really looking for a facility that had a big enough parking lot to accommodate all those people," Brennan said.

Trustee Cynthia Berg said she thought it was great that the Village was able to partner with the county and CCDPH.

"I know the south suburbs have been disproportionately affected by COVID, so it's nice of Tinley Park to be in a position to help out," Berg said.

Appointments are required for the state- and county-run vaccination site. For more information on registering for the vaccine, visit <https://vaccine.cookcountyil.gov/>.

\$43 millones más para vacunas en Illinois

Lo anunció el gobernador de Illinois, JB Pritzker y vienen de parte de FEMA y financiará la distribución en locales como Morton East y Lake County Fairgrounds.

<http://lanuevasemana.com/2021/01/29/noticias-de-las-9-233/>

ABC7 News reportó que ayer por la tarde, el gobernador JB Pritzker visitó un sitio de vacunación en Morton East High School en Cicero, donde la Guardia Nacional de Illinois está administrando vacunas y por eso ayer se administraron más vacunas COVID de lo normal.

El noticiero agregó que “en Chicago, los funcionarios de salud dijeron que están recibiendo solo alrededor de 35,000 dosis de vacunas a la semana, lo que les permite administrar solo 5,000 dosis al día, para vacunas que requieren dos dosis”.

También informó ABC 7 News que “las citas para la segunda dosis son aún más difíciles de encontrar para algunos que sus inyecciones iniciales. El director ejecutivo de Cook County Health, Israel Rocha, dijo que analizará la situación que describió Jones, y agregó que llegarán más vacunas al condado y más personal agregado a las ubicaciones debería permitir que las citas se realicen en el lugar después de recibir la primera dosis”.

As next stage of vaccinations begins, Southland educators say they ‘just want the opportunity’

Mike Nolan

January 29, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/ct-sta-vaccinations-south-suburbs-st-0131-20210129-s3ewwbkr3vddvafaaduogopia-story.html>

As the next stage of COVID-19 vaccinations gets underway, Kimako Patterson hopes her school district gets its literal shot at the vaccine.

Of the 425 staff at Prairie-Hills Elementary District 144, including 216 teachers, 275 have said they’re willing to get the vaccine, but it is not known when doses will be available, said Patterson, the district’s superintendent.

“It’s very frustrating,” she said. “We just want the opportunity.”

The district, which serves 3,000 students in suburbs including Country Club Hills, Hazel Crest and Markham, has several nurses on staff able to administer the shots, Patterson said.

“We are more than ready,” she said.

As demand is outstripping supply of vaccines, and as the first stage of vaccinations in Cook County and elsewhere is still unfinished, there are concerns about how the next step will be achieved.

Leaders in predominantly Black suburbs are also launching educational campaigns they hope will change perceptions of the vaccine as it becomes more broadly available.

Phase 1a, still being wrapped up in some areas, included vaccinating hospital workers and employees of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

In 1b, just getting underway, those 65 and older are eligible for the vaccine along with an array of residents considered essential workers, including police officers and firefighters, educators, letter carriers and employees at grocery and drugstores.

In suburban Cook County, that is estimated to be about 645,000 people, including some 375,000 residents who are 65 and older, according to the Cook County Department of Public Health.

The county opened a **large-scale vaccination site in the Tinley Park Convention Center**, and also offers the vaccine at its clinics at 1645 S. Cottage Grove Ave., Ford Heights, and 13450 S. Kedzie Ave., Robbins.

Those eligible need to schedule an appointment at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov, or by calling 833-308-1988, which is staffed from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays.

Will County health officials have established an online registry at willcountyhealth.org to get a database of those eligible under 1b for the shot. Those 65 and older without computer or internet access can contact the county’s Senior Services Center at 815-723-9713.

During a Cook County Board committee meeting Tuesday, health officials said supplies of vaccines remain in short supply but hope the pipeline will fill up soon.

The county won't see "a consistent and recurring supply at least for the next few weeks," said Israel Rocha, chief executive of the county's public health department.

"We're waiting like everyone else," he said.

Rachel Rubin, the health department's co-leader, said it is unknown what the vaccine supply will be day to day or week to week.

Plans also call for mobile strike teams to vaccinate people who are homebound, in homeless shelters or in low-wage work locations, county officials said. Once the weather improves, forest preserve district locations are eyed for drive-through vaccination centers.

Equitable distribution

County officials say the focus of vaccinations will be in underserved communities, particularly brown and Black communities that have seen large numbers of people infected with the virus as well as deaths.

County Commissioner Donna Miller, D-6th District, who was part of the meeting, said deaths in her district where COVID-19 was a factor totaled 1,100 by the end of 2020, and about 38% were Black or Latino residents.

"We can't have an inequitable distribution of the vaccines," she said after the meeting.

Long-term racial disparities in access to health care contribute to a mistrust of the vaccine in Black and brown communities, and that is a hurdle that must be overcome, officials said.

Poll results released in December by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Chicago showed that 24% of Black respondents and 34% of Hispanics planned to get the vaccine, compared with 53% of white respondents.

"The vaccine hesitancy is very concerning and an issue in Black and brown communities," Miller said.

But mistrust of the vaccine has been evident across the racial spectrum, with many people nervous about the quick development.

Miller, who worked in the pharmaceutical industry for 25 years, said that despite what is perceived as a rush job, the vaccines have been thoroughly tested.

"When people think it's rushed it's not really rushed," she said.

Also adding to fears in Black communities is what is often referred to as the "Tuskegee experiment."

Starting in 1932 and continuing until 1972, what the U.S. Public Health Service at the time called the "Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male" involved 600 Black men, including 399 with syphilis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Researchers told the men they were being treated for "bad blood," a term used to describe several ailments, including syphilis, anemia and fatigue, according to the CDC. Those who had syphilis were never given adequate treatment for their disease, even with the advent of penicillin, according to the CDC.

A class-action suit was filed on behalf of the study participants and their families, and in 1974 a \$10 million out-of-court settlement was reached, under which the federal government promised lifetime medical benefits and burial services to all living participants, according to the CDC.

The fear that Blacks may once again be treated as subjects in an experiment is something that county Commissioner Dennis Deer, D-2nd, who chairs the Health and Hospitals Committee, has often tried to tamp down.

Referencing the Tuskegee study in remarks at the opening of the Tinley Park vaccination facility, Deer emphatically said of the vaccine "this is not that."

In trying to change perceptions of the vaccine in brown and Black communities, health care officials “have to take these concerns to heart,” Rubin said.

“It’s safe and effective and it saves lives,” she said.

Rocha noted the number of people in health care professions, including doctors and nurses, who have received the shot.

“They are voting with their arms,” he said.

Mayors in suburbs with large Black populations, such as Matteson and Robbins, are also working on education campaigns.

Mayors Sheila Chalmers-Currin in Matteson and Tyrone Ward in Robbins said they plan to have video taken when they get the vaccine, which would be played on their villages’ community access channels.

“We are trying to encourage (residents), trying to educate them to get beyond their fears and skepticism,” Ward said.

Chalmers-Currin said she believes it is a matter of good information being distributed to override mistruths.

“When individuals get the proper information and the correct information” they are more likely to agree to the vaccine, she said. “In order for us to eradicate this virus people need to get the vaccine.”

At the county board committee meeting, Commissioner Deborah Sims, D-5th District, which includes the south suburbs, said that despite having a phobia about needles she intends to get vaccinated.

“I’m definitely going to take this shot. Everybody should take it,” she said.

Schools line up

One plan being proposed is for high schools in the south and southwest suburbs to act as central vaccination sites for their staff as well as staff from feeder districts.

Those details are still being worked out, and districts are hoping for doses to come their way to at least get their staff vaccinated.

Bremen High School District 228, which has schools in Country Club Hills, Midlothian and Oak Forest, expects about 700 doses later in February and will vaccinate only its staff, which numbers about 800, a district spokeswoman said.

Kirby Elementary District 140 in Tinley Park said that more than 84% of its staff are willing to get vaccinated and the district expects to get initial doses in the coming weeks.

High School District 230, with schools in Orland Park, Palos Hills and Tinley Park, is working to secure doses and about 85% of staff have indicated they want the vaccine, said Superintendent James Gay.

He said his district and other regional school districts are working to establish vaccination sites that would serve staff from multiple schools, but specific locations and other details are still being worked out.

Orland Elementary District 135, announced that, working with a Meadow Ridge School parent who is a Jewel pharmacist, the COVID-19 vaccine will be made available to district employees, distributed on a gradual basis based on availability.

Patterson said that about 1,100 of her district’s students are back in the classroom, and that the district has invested heavily in maintaining safe work areas, although some teachers are working remotely due to health concerns.

In early January, after the holiday break, the district tested about 1,000 students and staff for the coronavirus and just one test came back positive, she said.

The district used \$1.3 million in federal COVID-19 stimulus money received last year and has outfitted district buildings with air purifiers and masks, and provided students with laptops, tablets and supplied Wi-Fi hot spots if they lacked good internet access, she said.

“We’ve done just about everything we can to be safe,” Patterson said.

What We Know About the COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout in Illinois

Becky Vevea
Vivian McCall
January 29, 2021

[HTTPS://PULITZERCENTER.ORG/STORIES/WHAT-WE-KNOW-ABOUT-COVID-19-VACCINE-ROLLOUT-ILLINOIS](https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/what-we-know-about-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-illinois)

You may be uncertain about what the COVID-19 vaccine rollout means for you.

We'll be answering questions about when and where people are going to get vaccinated and how the distribution plans for the state, Cook County and Chicago will impact you. We'll dig into some of the science behind the vaccine and explain how it works.

How many doses of the vaccine have been administered in Illinois?

Illinois' first week of distribution began Dec. 14. Since then, the state has reported 650,804 people have gotten at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine as of Jan. 25. That's roughly 5.1% of the state's population. Of those people, 137,990 have also gotten a second dose, meaning 1.4% of the state's population is now fully vaccinated.

Chicago is posting daily vaccination tallies on a web page dedicated to the rollout. (The page lags a few days, and some data only includes tallies of Chicago residents.)

Both the state of Illinois and the city of Chicago get weekly shipments of the vaccine. Data showing how many doses have been shipped from each company, Moderna and Pfizer, is updated by the CDC weekly.

Who is allowed to get a COVID-19 vaccine right now?

In Illinois, the vaccine is being administered to health care workers and people who live and work in long-term care facilities, like nursing homes. There are about 800,000 people in those two groups. The state estimates about 490,000 people are classified as health care workers and 360,000 live or work in long-term care facilities, like nursing homes. The federal government is managing the latter with existing contractors, including Walgreens and CVS.

People age 65 and older and a specifically defined list of frontline essential workers are also eligible, as of Jan. 25. In Chicago, people over the age of 75 with underlying health conditions will be prioritized, but anyone over 65 is eligible. Illinois is deviating from the federal guidelines to include a slightly lower age threshold in this group, since Black and Latino residents are dying with COVID-19 at younger ages.

There are about 3.2 million people in this group, sometimes referred to as "1b" by the CDC and local officials. It's a massive number and will likely take a while to get through.

State estimates indicate there are about 800,000 people over the age of 75 and an additional 1.1 million between the age of 65 and 74.

There are also 1.2 million "frontline essential workers."

People considered to be in that group of workers include: firefighters, police officers, corrections officers, teachers and school support staff, and daycare workers. It also includes people who work in food and agriculture, the postal service, manufacturing, grocery stores, and public transit.

Starting Jan. 25, state officials say people in this 1b group can start lining up for vaccines.

Who is eligible next for the COVID-19 vaccine in Illinois?

Chicago's plan posted online indicates the next in line — remaining essential workers and people over the age of 16 with underlying medical conditions — may be able to get vaccinated starting March 29. The general population could start as soon as May 31.

When can I get a vaccine?

This is the big question, and it depends on how much vaccine is available, and whether you're in the first two priority groups. Right now, public officials say there's still so little vaccine that it will take months to get through groups 1a and 1b, which includes health care workers, nursing home facility residents and staff, certain frontline essential workers and people aged 65 and over.

The state has estimated that the vaccines won't be available to the general public for months.

Where will I get a vaccine?

Most likely, at your doctor's office. If you don't have a primary care doctor, there are hundreds of community clinics and federally-qualified health centers that are authorized to give vaccines. Similar to how the flu shot is distributed, people will also eventually be able to go to local pharmacies, like Walgreens and Jewel-Osco, to get vaccinated.

Chicago has six mass vaccination sites at the following City College campuses: Malcom X, Truman, Daley, Arturo Velazquez, Olive-Harvey, and Kennedy-King College. Currently, those sites are by appointment only for health care workers who are not employed at a hospital.

There are seven mass vaccination sites in suburban Cook County operated with help from the Illinois National Guard. They're at the following Cook County Health locations: North Riverside Health Center, Robbins Health Center, Morton East Adolescent Health Center, Cottage Grove Health Center, Blue Island Health Center, Arlington Heights Health Center and the Tinley Park Convention Center. These are all for now by appointment only.

Can I register in advance so I know when it's my turn to get vaccinated?

Not if you live in Chicago. City officials have directed people to sign up for additional information at ChiCOVIDCoach, but you won't be able to register for appointments there.

Suburban Cook County residents can register here. Lake County has a registration form here. Will County residents can register here. Kane County has a form to sign up for vaccine updates. DuPage County also has an information sign up. McHenry County allows health care workers to register for appointments and also allows residents to sign up to receive updates here.

If I get the vaccine, will I be protected from COVID-19 right away?

No. You'll need two shots, and similar to the flu vaccine, experts say it can still take a few weeks for the vaccine to work after the second shot. And, getting vaccinated doesn't mean you'll be 100% protected, just like when you get the flu shot. Everyone is being advised to continue to maintain social distancing and wear masks for some time.

If I have already contracted COVID-19, can I skip the vaccine?

No. Experts say everyone should still get vaccinated. We don't know enough about the virus yet to understand if we're protected from getting COVID-19 again after we've had it.

Do I have to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

No. There is no state or federal or city requirement that you get vaccinated. But if you do not take it when available to you, experts say you risk getting the virus and spreading it to others. And private businesses may eventually have the authority to require workers be vaccinated before coming back to work in person.

Which vaccines have been authorized so far?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are the first to have received emergency use authorization in the United States. Vaccines from AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson are still awaiting for that authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

Is the vaccine free?

Perhaps. The vaccine itself is supposed to be free. If you get it from a city or state-operated vaccination site, like at a mass vaccination event, it should be at no cost to you. But medical professionals in other settings may be able to charge an administration fee for the shot. Vaccine providers are supposed to be able to get that cost reimbursed with the patient's private or public insurance.

How do we know this vaccine is safe?

All medicines, including vaccines, undergo rigorous phased trials before they're given to the general public. The COVID-19 vaccine has been developed and approved quickly because this is an emergency. That doesn't mean scientists cut corners. This is what it takes:

Pre-clinical trials see if a vaccine works in animal models like monkeys, which have a physiology similar to humans.

Phase I trials test if a vaccine is safe on a small group of participants. Scientists see if those people develop antibodies.

Phase II trials determine which dose is most effective for generating antibodies while remaining tolerable for patients.

Phase III trials, or randomized control trials, are what you've heard about in the news. They take a huge number of participants (the Pfizer trial had more than 40,000) and divide them into two groups. One group gets the vaccine and the other group gets a placebo, or a fake. Because it's unethical to expose people to COVID-19, researchers waited for participants to get sick out in the world. Then they compared the number of COVID-19 cases between the two groups.

In the Pfizer study, the vast majority of the participants who developed COVID-19 were in the placebo group, a statistically significant number that shows the vaccine works (that's where the 90% effective figure comes from). It's worth nothing that's astoundingly high—nobody expected the COVID-19 vaccine to be this effective.

The Food and Drug Administration set its benchmark at about 50% effectiveness.

Are there side-effects?

That's an imprecise term. If you've ever felt flu-like after getting a flu shot, that actually shows a vaccine is working.

Vaccines activate your immune system and your body needs to get a little sick to develop antibodies. Headaches, fevers, aches and pains are just signs our body is responding. So while you may experience similar symptoms after getting a COVID-19 vaccination, it's absolutely nothing to fear.

Can the vaccine give you COVID-19?

No. It's impossible.

If someone is vaccinated, can they still catch COVID-19?

We don't know yet, but probably not. We know the vaccines are very effective at preventing illness, but don't know for sure if it prevents transmission because that was not part of any clinical trial.

Researchers only evaluated people once they became sick, instead of regularly testing all participants for COVID-19 to find potentially asymptomatic patients.

How long will it take for someone to obtain immunity from the vaccines?

The first dose of the Pfizer vaccine grants partial immunity and is about 50 percent effective at protecting against COVID-19. The second shot three weeks later brings its effectiveness up to between 90 and 95 percent.

But the shot, or shots, are not a free ticket to go about life normally. The vaccines are highly effective, but not 100% effective, and we don't know if they keep people from spreading the virus. Experts still say mask-wearing, social distancing and washing hands will be necessary for everyone, including those who get the vaccine.

I've heard some of the vaccines are 'mRNA' vaccines. What are those?

mRNA vaccines are the most streamlined vaccination method we've come up with so far. Their simplicity is brilliant, but the speed at which we've developed them is thanks to decades of foundational research on coronaviruses following the SARS and MERS outbreaks.

To understand how mRNA vaccines work, you have to first know the difference between DNA and mRNA, or messenger RNA.

Georgetown Microbiologist Julie Fischer explained it this way: DNA is like a master blueprint that never, ever leaves the wall of the drafthouse, while mRNA is the copy taken to a construction site and thrown away. mRNA has a thankless job. Our cells read this genetic information and then shred it to bits.

mRNA with the genetic instructions to COVID-19's spike proteins, which it uses to latch onto and infect our cells, is the key to the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines and pretty much the Death Star plans for COVID-19. But to prevent our murderous enzymes from tearing the vaccine apart, both companies developed a fatty, lipid shell to protect it once injected into the body.

Once injected, the lipid shells fuse to our cells and release the mRNA into their cytoplasm. Our cells read the instructions and begin producing the COVID-19 spike proteins. The mRNA from the vaccine is destroyed.

The spikes will then grow and break off from our vaccinated cells. Immune cells, called helper t-cells and antigen presenting cells, which function at the hall monitor of the body, sound the alarm on the foreign objects, collecting and presenting them to other immune cells. T-cells, the enforcers, learn to destroy them. B-cells learn to make antibodies, which neutralize the spike proteins.

What makes the mRNA vaccine exciting?

mRNA vaccines are a brand new technology decades in the making that has distinct advantages over traditional production methods —like speed.

These new vaccines can be produced at a much faster rate because nothing is being grown. Scientists instead synthesize molecular instructions for our cells to make COVID-19's distinctive spike protein, which our body's immune system creates antibodies for and destroys, protecting us against the virus.

Vaccines that use attenuated, or weakened, versions of a virus, like the flu vaccine, have to be grown in cells or eggs. There are painstaking, laborious steps to creating these vaccines, production is slow by comparison and it is harder to produce at scale.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines awaiting Food and Drug Administration approval utilize this method. Pfizer and Moderna both made mRNA vaccines, while AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson developed what are called recombinant vaccines, which disguise a harmless common cold virus as COVID-19 to train our immune system.

All methods ultimately achieve the same goal of immunity, but these new technologies will likely change the future of vaccine production and development.



More people are uninsured. But charity care is down.

Stephanie Goldberg

January 29, 2021

<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/health-care/more-people-are-uninsured-charity-care-down?>

The amount of charity care provided by the area's biggest hospitals edged down at a time when more people are losing the health insurance they need to pay for treatment.

Free care for low-income patients represented less than 2.5 percent of net revenue for all but one of Cook County's largest hospitals in 2019, according to newly released state data. The exception: County-run Stroger Hospital spent just over half its revenue on free care—not including bad debt, which is billed but not recovered in full.

"Hospitals that are rich and charge a lot provide very little charity care," says Gerard Anderson, a professor of health policy and management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "Hospitals that are poor and don't charge as much provide proportionally more."

Collectively, the largest area hospitals saw charity care expenses fall 1 percent as revenues rose 3 percent in 2019, compared with the previous year. The pre-pandemic figures add fuel to the debate over whether nonprofit hospitals are providing enough charity care to [justify property tax exemptions](#) worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Activists say wealthy hospitals should do more, alleviating the disproportionate burden on Cook County's public health system and other safety nets at a time when more people lack health insurance.

Even before COVID-19 started spreading, the ranks of uninsured people in Illinois were rising alongside efforts to undermine the Affordable Care Act. From 2016 to 2019, the number of people without health insurance in the state increased 11 percent to 905,900, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis.

Despite more people in need of financial assistance, the largest hospitals in the county by net revenue spend a minuscule portion of that money on free care, according to the Illinois Health Facilities & Services Review Board.

University of Chicago Medical Center spent \$20 million on charity care, or 1 percent of net revenue; Northwestern Memorial Hospital spent \$21.9 million, or 1.1 percent; Rush University Medical Center spent \$20.4 million, or 1.5 percent; Loyola University Medical Center spent \$6.3 million, or 0.5 percent; and Advocate Christ Medical Center spent \$23.5 million, or 2 percent.

Meanwhile, Cook County Health's flagship hospital spent \$309.5 million, or 50.9 percent of its revenue—and more than double the amount spent by the 10 other large nonprofits combined. Cook County Health gets a tax allocation from the county for public health and correctional health operations, but it doesn't get taxpayer money for traditional medical services.

"Clearly, the other providers in the Cook County ecosystem are not carrying their weight, and how to get them to do that has eluded me so far," Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said late last year.

Some hospitals say they're providing more free care during the pandemic, likely due to people losing their jobs—and the employer-sponsored health insurance that comes with them. But industry observers expect charity care to decline slightly since fewer people sought nonemergency care during the pandemic, and the federal government reimbursed providers for treating uninsured COVID patients.

Most of the hospitals say they don't aim to spend a certain amount on charity care annually, as the cost is based on the number of patients who qualify for financial assistance and the types of services provided.

Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, Northwestern Memorial Hospital has been "increasing funding to community health center partners, supporting care coordination efforts and making investments to support those most in need—none of which is recorded as charity care expense," the hospital says in an email.

The University of Chicago Medical Center says in an email that it provides a range of community benefit programs, noting, "the narrow focus entirely on charity care grossly undervalues the breadth of our role and provides a misleading view of our organization's sizable impact on those we serve."

Rush did not respond to a request for comment. Representatives for Advocate Aurora Health, Loyola Medicine, Northwest Community Healthcare, NorthShore University HealthSystem's Evanston Hospital and University of Illinois Hospital say they're committed to ensuring all eligible patients have access to free or reduced care.

To maintain their tax exempt status in Illinois, nonprofit hospitals are supposed to spend at least as much on charitable services for low-income people as they would otherwise pay in property taxes.

In addition to free medical treatment, many hospitals also factor in costs associated with medical research and educating health care professionals, as well as losses they say they incur treating Medicaid patients.

For example, University of Chicago Medical Center says the cost of treating patients on government-run Medicaid—which pays far less than private insurance and Medicare—exceeds reimbursements by more than \$100 million each year.

"The state decided how much it wanted to pay for Medicaid and so that's a government determination for a reasonable rate for a hospital," Anderson says. "The fact that (hospitals) charge more—and can get more—doesn't necessarily make it a community benefit, but it's on the list."

Additionally, for-profit hospitals get the same reimbursements from Medicare and Medicaid as tax-exempt, nonprofit hospitals that list shortfalls among their charitable contributions, says Tim Classen, associate professor of economics at Loyola University Chicago's Quinlan School of Business.

Pediatric charity care costs are often low, largely because there are relatively few uninsured kids in Illinois—roughly 120,000, Lurie Children's Hospital Chief Financial Officer Ron Blaustein says.

"We're at a disadvantage if we don't get to include these other dollars"—from low Medicaid reimbursements to investments in programs that address health inequities—as charitable services, Blaustein says.

In Chicago, progressive aldermen have called for a program that would require wealthy nonprofit hospitals to make "payments in lieu of taxes" to the city.

"We can't keep raising taxes and expecting low-income and working families to carry the tax burden," says Ald. Jeanette Taylor, 20th. "Once we get back to something close to normal—it will be a conversation."

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Stephanie Goldberg

January 29, 2021

<https://www.modernhealthcare.com/not-profit-hospitals/chicago-area-hospitals-providing-less-charity-care>

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Alderman Beale Urges all to “Take Your Shot”

January 30, 2021

<https://chicago crusader.com/alderman-beale-urges-all-to-take-your-shot/>

Vaccinations Now Available in Pullman/Roseland

Wishing to ensure that all who are eligible to receive vaccinations know where and how to get them, 9th Ward Alderman Anthony M. Beale this weekend is alerting Pullman/Roseland residents of the new availability of vaccines at three sites accessible to south side residents. In robocalls this weekend and through the 9th ward office’s newsletter, Alderman Beale will spread the word that in Pullman/Roseland those eligible (those who are 65 and older or are essential workers) can register and receive vaccinations at Roseland Hospital or at the Walmart located at 10900 South Doty Avenue.

Also, Alderman Beale wanted to make certain that people know that in addition to the new Pullman/Roseland sites, eligible Chicagoans can go to register for vaccinations at Walmart stores in Austin and Chatham and that Cook County is accepting appointments from anyone living or working in the county, whether or not they are clients of the hospital.

“While the pandemic has altered virtually every part of our lives and caused unprecedented suffering and hardship, we can begin to hope for better days,” says Alderman Beale. “We know that all sites anticipate an ample supply of vaccine for the next nine days, so we are trying to spread the word as broadly as possible. Starting with our seniors and essential workers, and eventually to us all, we want to say to everyone: ‘Take Your Shot’ – our futures depend on it,” adds Alderman Beale.

- To get vaccinated at **Roseland Hospital**, individuals are required to register in advance at vax@roselandhospital.org. Once individuals are registered at the Roseland Hospital, they will then receive an email with the appointment time.
- To make an appointment to receive the vaccination at the **Walmart location** in Pullman, call **708.846-1137**.
- To obtain an appointment to receive the vaccination at a Cook County Department of Public Health facility, go to <https://vaccine.cookcountyil.gov> or call the Sign-Up Hotline at **833-308-1988** (Mon-Fri. 7am-7pm).

All individuals scheduled to receive a vaccination at any location are being advised to arrive 10 minutes before the appointment time to complete paperwork. Each person needs to bring with them proof of Eligibility of Phase 1A or 1B. Eligible front-line essential workers need to bring a healthcare badge and photo identification.

Anyone interested in receiving updates and additional information about the vaccination distribution progress from the City of Chicago can sign up at www.covidcoach.chicago.gov.

For additional information about the vaccinations, a complete list of the City and County COVID testing sites and available resources to help weather the pandemic, contact the 9th Ward office at 773.785.1100 or visit www.ward09.com.



Big hospitals spend little on charity care • UnitedHealth invests in affordable housing • Biden delays drug rebate rule

Jon Asplund
February 1, 2021

<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/health-pulse/big-hospitals-spend-little-charity-care-unitedhealth-invests-affordable-housing-biden>

AREA HOSPITALS PROVIDED LESS CHARITY CARE IN 2019: Free care for low-income patients represented less than 2.5 percent of net revenue for all but one of Cook County's largest hospitals in 2019, according to newly released state data.

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With COVID-19 vaccines in short supply, these Park Ridge and Niles residents shared how they secured appointments

Jennifer Johnson
February 1, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/park-ridge/ct-prh-vaccine-appointments-tl-0204-20210202-fhbsqtmr15fihjinsw3j3xitiq-story.html>

For many, securing an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine is reminiscent of trying to obtain tickets to a sold-out concert tour.

Within seconds, available dates and times for vaccinations are snapped up on health department and pharmacy websites, making the process frustrating and challenging for those eligible for vaccination under Phase 1B, which includes frontline workers and individuals over 65.

The Cook County Department of Public Health warns that the COVID-19 vaccine supply is “extremely limited at this time.” A spokesman for Walgreens said that while new appointments are being made at about 90 different Walgreens stores across the state, “the initial supply of vaccine we are receiving from the state is limited and therefore a limited amount of appointments are available each day.”

Yet, some Park Ridge and Niles residents say they have managed to schedule COVID-19 vaccines, despite the challenges.

A new health system

Bruce and Susan Gilpin of Park Ridge said they secured an appointment after a friend, who had been monitoring various vaccination sites, saw time slots available through University of Illinois Health and sent them a text of the sign-up link.

To their surprise, the link showed openings — unlike the many other sites Susan Gilpin said she had been frequently checking during the previous two days.

“If you don’t get there within a few milliseconds of when they open up for the appointments, they are all taken,” Bruce Gilpin said of the vaccine providers.

Susan Gilpin said she had spent an hour or two a day checking different pharmacies online to see if they had vaccine appointments available.

“It was very frustrating,” she acknowledged. “I literally got up one night and noticed it was five minutes to midnight and I thought, ‘I’ll wait until midnight and jump on the Walgreens site and see if new appointments had been released.’”

None were, she said.

The couple said they qualify for vaccines under Phase 1b because they are over age 65.

Susan Gilpin said she was “greatly relieved” to finally get an appointment for the first and second doses of the vaccine, even though she and her husband are not patients of University of Illinois Hospital.

“I would tell people, if you don’t have a doctor in a certain network, at least go to the website to see if it’s possible to access an appointment without being a current patient,” she advised.

The Gilpins have primary care physicians affiliated with Advocate Aurora Health, but the hospital system had not yet contacted them about vaccine availability, Susan Gilpin said.

[Advocate Aurora Health's website](#) states that patients will be contacted to schedule a vaccine "when you become eligible and it's your turn based on available vaccine supplies."

Dr. Gary Martin, a Park Ridge resident and physician at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, said many of his patients who have received vaccines so far are 80 years old and over or are slightly younger with underlying health conditions, like a cancer diagnosis, diabetes, heart or lung disease.

Northwestern Medicine is contacting the patients by phone to set up the appointments at hospitals as the patients qualify and as vaccine is available, Martin said.

He acknowledged that the vaccine roll-out in Illinois is "slow going, but it's getting done."

"They can only (vaccinate) based on availability and when they've got (the vaccines)," Martin said of health care providers. "That's why they're not scheduling them until they have them in hand. That's the limiting factor: The availability of the vaccine."

Your regular doctor

While Advocate Aurora Health asks patients not to call individual hospitals or doctors' offices to schedule a vaccine, Kyle Cartwright, of Park Ridge, said she managed to get an appointment through a phone call.

Cartwright explained that her husband was contacted by the medical group for a vaccine, but then told he did not qualify, even though he is over 65 and has an underlying health condition.

"My son suggested I call the billing department," Cartwright said.

Able to speak with a "live person," Cartwright explained the situation and was transferred to another department where she was able to schedule vaccinations for both herself and her husband.

"I felt hugely relieved," she said. "My husband works at Target and he's been working his regular 40-hour week since this whole thing started, so I'm more excited for him than for me."

Cook County

Teresa Neumayer, of Niles, said she was able to schedule her mother and grandmother for vaccines as soon as the Illinois Department of Public Health launched a website with a search option for vaccination locations at coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-location. She found appointments at the Arlington Heights Health Center, a Cook County-run facility.

Neumayer acknowledged that she did not expect it would be so challenging for eligible seniors to receive the vaccine, noting that many are not computer savvy.

"I felt like they were waiting for someone to assist them and I didn't feel that help was coming," she said of her mother and grandmother, who were "thankful" they were able to get appointments, which are scheduled for this weekend.

"After speaking to some of their friends, they realize they are pretty lucky to have gotten an appointment," Neumayer said.

Kate Camarano, who operates STEM Studio, a school for children ages 3-8 in Park Ridge, found appointments at a Des Plaines Osco while checking the Illinois Department of Health vaccination location search.

"I was checking all the time throughout the day," she said.

Camarano was also able to make appointments at the same pharmacy for her husband, who is a teacher, as well as her parents and an aunt, who are all over age 65.

“By the time I had made the first two appointments, there were slim pickings,” she acknowledged. “There weren’t many available.”

Camarano recommends checking for available appointments every day, using the IDPH website as a starting off point. She said she has also found vaccinations available through at-home vaccination services, something she plans to use for her school staff.

Carolyn Ford, an English teacher at Maine South High School in Park Ridge, said she signed up for a vaccine after a fellow teacher notified her and other educators about some openings at Osco locations.

An error, which opened up appointments to Ford and other teachers one day before they were eligible under Phase 1B, allowed them to secure appointments at one location on Jan. 24, Ford said.

“I felt very lucky,” Ford said. “I felt like I should play the lottery that night because it is very hard to get an appointment.”

In addition to her teaching duties, which include in-classroom instruction, Ford said she wanted to be vaccinated early in order to see her mother, who is elderly and lives in Indiana.

“I want us back to normal as soon as possible and I want to be part of that,” she said.

Bloomberg

Private Doctors Hunt for Vaccines as Shots Go to Hospital Peers

Elise Young
Shruti Singh

February 1, 2021

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-17/one-third-of-u-s-troops-decline-covid-19-vaccine-pentagon-says>

Thousands of U.S. health-care workers are still seeking Covid-19 vaccinations even as states and cities open eligibility to people far removed from the pandemic's front line.

Since Pfizer Inc./BioNTech and Moderna Inc. vaccine shipments began nationally in mid-December, the priority has been doctors, nurses and other professionals likely to come in contact with the novel coronavirus. But those unaffiliated with hospitals and major health systems -- including private-practice physicians, dentists and therapists -- say they're being overlooked.

Pediatrician David Berger, with a practice in Tampa, Florida, said his patients include babies and many children with autism who have a hard time wearing masks. Still, he couldn't snag a vaccine appointment until Jan. 15, a month after Florida made them available. He said his physician's assistant, who "sees more sick kids than I do," had yet to find a slot as of Sunday.

"We want to be protected," Berger said.

Though President Joe Biden has promised to boost states' vaccine supplies by 16%, that adds a scant 1.4 million doses nationally each week. Since mid-December, the U.S. has vaccinated just 9% of its 330 million citizens.

At the same time, guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has led governors to expand eligibility in states including New Jersey, California, New York and North Carolina. In some places, front-line health workers are jockeying for doses alongside smokers, prisoners, tax investigators, forest rangers and people 65 and older regardless of any medical condition.

"It's very haphazard in a lot of places," said Lee Savio Beers, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics. She said some in the 67,000-member group have reported finding slots gobbled up moments after registration starts. Others have canceled patient visits to make a workday shot appointment or driven for hours in search of a vaccination site.

Unaffiliated professionals may be in greater Covid-19 danger than colleagues based in hospitals, where vaccinations are widespread, patients are tested and visitors are limited.

Of 1,004 Covid-19 deaths among U.S. medical professionals reported as of May 13, 55% were physicians, according to the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. The largest share of those doctors, 27%, included general practitioners, family medicine and primary-care specialists who typically see patients in offices.

Pennsylvania Health Secretary Rachel Levine ordered all the state's vaccine providers, including hospitals and pharmacies, to set aside 10% of their doses for unaffiliated health workers as of Jan. 6.

In Deer Park, New York, the dental office of Kevin Henner has lost 11 patients to Covid-19. He landed his first shot in early January at Suffolk Community College.

“It was incredibly efficient -- boom, boom, boom -- and everything went great, but they didn’t give us an appointment for the second one,” Henner said. With his dose due in less than a week, he said, he’s been looking to book with no success. Most of his seven staff members are just as frustrated, he said: One found an open slot, only to discover that the vaccination site had erred and had to bar non-employees.

Caitlin Liddle, a licensed clinical social worker who runs her own psychotherapy practice in Chicago, spent two weeks following mostly word-of-mouth appointment leads. “There were a few dead ends, and that was disappointing,” she said.

On Jan. 18, she scored: Liddle was among almost 1,000 health-care workers vaccinated through Oak Street Health, a physician group operating in 11 states that partnered with Chicago and Cook County to run clinics.

Eager Recipients

Oak Street’s executive medical director, Ali Khan, said he has administered hundreds of Covid-19 vaccines. While some health systems have reported hesitancy among employees, he’s finding broad acceptance from traveling nurses, nurse practitioners, infusion specialists and others who work beyond hospital walls.

“They are all standing up and saying: ‘How can I get vaccinated?’” Khan said. Even with more doses promised, he said, expanded eligibility means a potential “scarcity problem in real time” for those workers.

Suburban Cook County has about 100,000 health-care workers, and most of those yet to be vaccinated are likely unaffiliated, said Rachel Rubin, senior medical officer and co-lead of its Department of Public Health. The county is hosting vaccination sites and trying to reach unaffiliated workers such as home health-care workers through associations, she said.

“It’s going to create challenges,” Rubin said. “We have to have the vaccine and vaccinators. Over the last few days there are promises of increased supply.”

Berger, the Florida pediatrician, said he understood why hospital doctors were given priority, because “they’re dealing with more sick people.” But then Governor Ron DeSantis put seniors 65 and older in the same category as many essential workers, making it harder for those in health care to get protection.

“Most people who are 65 -- they have survived this and they can stay at home,” Berger said. “There are people who have positions where they don’t have that option. That’s what was frustrating to me.”



Cook County study finds Hispanic community suffering from more COVID-19 hospitalizations

February 1, 2021

<https://www.fox32chicago.com/video/895847>



Dr. Bill Trick from Cook County Health talks about why they've seen a disproportionate amount of coronavirus hospitalizations among the county's Latino population.

Illinois expected to top 1M COVID-19 vaccinations

John O'Connor
February 2, 2021

https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/illinois-news/illinois-expected-to-top-1m-covid-19-vaccinations/article_aa2da241-b5dd-5492-915e-8ff330bf82c8.html

Illinois public health officials said they expected COVID-19 vaccinations to top 1 million by the end of Monday, even as the state struggles to get more doses and fend off criticism it is moving too slowly.

The Illinois Department of Public Health reported that it has received more than 1.8 million doses of the vaccine designed to prevent coronavirus illness. As of midday Monday, 996,410 people had received at least one shot of vaccine.

There were 2,312 newly confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 Monday, with 16 additional deaths. There have been 19,259 deaths from the illness out of 1,128,613 infections.

In Illinois, there are many facilities prepared to offer shots, with another large-scale site in Cook County to open Wednesday. But delivery of the antidote to Illinois has been slower than anticipated, even though nationally, an average [1.3 million are receiving shots daily](#), higher than President Joe Biden's stated goal of 1 million per day for his first 100 days in office.

Senate Republicans [complained last week in a letter](#) to Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker that the process was too slow. It cited a New York Times report that Illinois was 47th among states in overall distribution, with just 4.8% of residents receiving one shot.

Pritzker said the data used for the article was outdated and that the state was ramping up its capacity.

The latest site to open will be on Wednesday at Triton College in River Grove, just west of Chicago. It will be available to tend to the approximately 600,000 people in Chicago's suburbs who are eligible for shots in Phase 1b of the vaccination priority plan. Those are people 65 and older and essential workers such as first responders and manufacturing or grocery store employees.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle noted that supply of vaccine doesn't meet demand.

But, she said, "We are standing up large-scale sites now to ensure that we are ready as vaccine supply is expected to increase in the coming weeks and months."

The first of such sites in Cook County opened last week at the Tinley Park Convention Center. It provided 7,000 vaccines in its first week. Officials predict that when fully operational, Triton will be capable of 4,000 weekly. More large sites will be announced in coming weeks.

Illinois Expected To Top 1 Million COVID-19 Vaccinations

John O'Connor, Associated Press
February 1, 2021

<https://www.wbez.org/stories/illinois-expected-to-top-1-million-covid-19-vaccinations/ea9eb6ec-09e5-4220-8b75-b4445e4d9e4b>

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The Illinois Department of Public Health reported that it has received more than 1.8 million doses of the vaccine designed to prevent coronavirus illness. As of midday Monday, 996,410 people had received the first or second of two required shots.

There were 2,312 newly confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 Monday, with 16 additional deaths. There have been 19,259 deaths from the illness out of 1,128,613 infections.

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John O'Connor

February 1, 2021

<https://apnews.com/article/public-health-illinois-coronavirus-pandemic-d1d8b69ac6cde735c28d033cb195559a>

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That Cook County text message about vaccine appointments isn't spam

Marni Pyke

February 1, 2021

<https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20210201/that-cook-county-text-message-about-vaccine-appointments-isnt-spam>

Cook County residents puzzled by text messages about COVID-19 vaccinations from out-of-town area codes can be assured the messages are bona fide, health department officials said Monday.

"We are contacting you because you signed up to receive COVID-19 vaccine updates ... we are pleased to announce that Cook County Health has released additional availability of vaccines appointments," said text messages some people received on their phones over the weekend.

The messages came from phone numbers in states including Ohio and Maryland, leading some people to avoid clicking the appointment link out of concern it was spam.

Cook County Health Department spokesman Don Bolger said the messages were legitimate and that the county has outsourced some of its communications to help handle the wave of people seeking information about vaccines.

But with not enough vaccines to fill needs, appointments are being snapped up.

In one case, a text sent at 4:15 p.m. Sunday with news about open slots for inoculations was followed by an 8:16 p.m. message stating that all vaccination sites "had been fully booked. More will be released as vaccine is received. Please be patient."

On Monday, the department announced that a mass vaccination site will open Wednesday at Triton College in River Grove with the ability to give more than 4,000 shots a week.

Currently, vaccinations are available for long-term care residents and health care workers (Phase 1A), and people age 65 and older plus essential workers (Phase 1B). Essential workers are those who need to be physically present at their jobs during the pandemic, such as firefighters, day-care workers, bus drivers, factory workers and grocery store employees.

Vaccinations at the Triton College site will serve people in Phase 1B and are by appointment only, which can be made starting at 9 a.m. Tuesday. To schedule a shot, go to vaccine.cookcountyil.gov, where individuals can also sign up for vaccine information.

Residents without access to the internet or who need help scheduling, can call (833) 308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays.

The county intends to open more mass sites in the coming weeks.



Appointments Open Tuesday for New Cook County COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Site

Additional large vaccination sites in Cook County are expected to open in the coming weeks

February 1, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/appointments-open-tuesday-for-new-cook-county-covid-19-mass-vaccination-site/2426153/>

Appointments for suburban Cook County's second large COVID-19 community vaccination site, Triton College in River Grove, will open at 9 a.m. Tuesday morning, according to Cook County Health.

Appointments can be made at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Those without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call 833-308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Under Phase 1B, the current phase of Illinois' vaccination rollout, people age 65 years and older as well as "frontline essential workers," which includes first responders, education workers like teachers and support staff and grocery store employees, are eligible.

Suburban Cook County opened [its first mass vaccination site at the Tinley Park Convention Center on Tuesday, Jan. 26](#). Nearly 7,000 vaccines were administered at the convention center during the first week in operation, health officials said.

At Triton College, "when fully operationalized and when ample vaccine supply becomes available," more than 4,000 vaccines are expected to be administered weekly.

Vaccinations at all Cook County Health sites are by appointment only. Additional large vaccination sites throughout the county are expected to open in the following weeks.

In addition to the two mass vaccination sites, several Walgreens and Jewel-Osco locations are also among those offering appointments for residents eligible under Phase 1B.

Residents who are not eligible to receive the vaccine can sign up at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov to receive updates about phases and eligibility.



'We're Not Considered A Nursing Home': Seniors At Lincolnwood Condo Want COVID Vaccine, But Can't Get It

Jeremy Ross

February 1, 2021

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2021/02/01/lincolnwood-seniors-covid-vaccine/>

Illinois has hit a milestone for COVID-19 vaccines.

The state has given out more than one million doses. On average, more than 43,000 people are getting vaccinated a day.

While that number seems high, there are many people eligible for the vaccine who have no good way to get it. CBS 2's Jeremy Ross spoke to some seniors who right now find themselves left out.

"We're mostly senior citizens in this building, but we're not considered a nursing home," said Lincolnwood condo resident Diane Allen.

Between the traffic at Devon and Cicero, a Lincolnwood condo community finds itself stuck between the logistical COVID cracks of getting a vaccine. They are not part of an assisted living facility where COVID clinics, including Walgreens, come to them.

But like those communities, many including Joan Grogan, are medically fragile.

"I am a cancer patient and my husband has had cancerous things removed from his arms, face and neck," Grogan said.

"We would like it to deliver to our building," Allen said.

She said about 80 of her neighbors have essentially sheltered in place since the pandemic began and she's tried getting someone to her complex to help.

"And I do have a list of seniors who want the vaccine, but we can't get through to anyone," Allen said.

When she reached out to her local municipality, Cook County, a representative said for people to individually sign up. But many are having difficulty doing that online, and some of those who can get a vaccination appointment don't feel safe leaving and many can't drive or have limited driving ability.

"It blows my mind. I keep thinking how are we going to handle this," asked Grogan.

Lincolnwood does not have a health department. So people are leaning on the fire department to count up those in need including at this complex. But for now, there's no solution.

Walgreens, which is vaccinating people living in nursing homes, said it is looking into whether it can help. **The Cook County Health Department said it does not have enough vaccine to inoculate all seniors all at once.**



Here Are the Newest Vaccination Sites to Open in Illinois

February 1, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/here-are-the-newest-vaccination-sites-to-open-in-illinois/2426290/>

The state of Illinois [has added 41 new COVID-19 vaccination sites](#) in the last week, according to a news release from state health officials Monday.

More than 3.2 million of the state's residents are eligible for vaccinations under Phase 1B, which includes people age 65 years and older as well as "frontline essential workers."

In all, 310 vaccination sites have opened across the state.

The newly-established sites include 15 local health department locations, 17 Kroger stores in central and southern Illinois, six Mariano's locations in northern Illinois as well as three Illinois National Guard sites in Cook and St. Clair counties.

Health officials advise that despite the number of open sites, the current supply of vaccines remains limited.

Current vaccination sites in the state are available by appointment only, but the state plans to launch walk-in locations in the coming weeks, officials previously said.

For a complete look at how to make an appointment or receive vaccine information for your area, click [here](#).

Here's a full breakdown of the latest vaccination sites opening in Illinois:

Kroger and Mariano's Locations

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, Kroger has added 17 locations in southern and central Illinois and six Mariano's locations in northern Illinois.

Kroger's website said "limited quantities are available at select locations," particularly for seniors, health care workers, long-term care facilities' residents and staff, and non-health care frontline essential workers.

Click [here](#) to check appointment availability at a location near you.

Health Departments

Boone County Health Department
Calhoun County Health Department
Cumberland County Health Department
Grundy County Health Department
Jasper County Health Department
Lawrence County Health Department
Logan County Health Department
McDonough District Hospital Health Services
Southern 7 Health Department

Alexander County
Hardin County
Johnson County
Massac County
Pope County
Pulaski County
Union County
National Guard Locations

*(** designates which locations were new additions to the list)*

Belle-Clair Fairgrounds**

200 S. Belt E. #2650, Belleville

Cook County Health's North Riverside Health Center

1800 South Harlem Avenue, North Riverside

Cook County Health's Robbins Health Center

13450 South Kedzie Avenue, Robbins

Cook County Health's Morton East Adolescent Health Center

2423 South Austin Boulevard, Cicero

Cook County Health's Cottage Grove Health Center

1645 Cottage Grove Avenue, Ford Heights

Cook County Health Blue Island Health Center

12757 S Western Ave, Blue Island

Cook County Health Arlington Heights Health Center

3250 N. Arlington Heights Rd., Suite 300, Arlington Heights

Provident Hospital**

500 E. 51st St., Chicago

John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital**

1969 Ogden Ave., Chicago

Tinley Park Convention Center

18451 Convention Center Drive, Tinley Park



Signups for COVID-19 vaccine at River Grove site opens Tuesday morning

*WGN Web Desk
February 2, 2021*

<https://wgntv.com/news/signups-for-covid-19-vaccine-at-river-grove-site-opens-tuesday-morning/>

Suburban Cook County will begin signups Tuesday morning for the COVID-19 vaccination.

Appointments will be available at Triton College in River Grove starting at 9 a.m. Tuesday on the [Cook County COVID-19 vaccination](#) website. The appointments will be available to anyone who lives in works in suburban Cook County, is 65 years of age or older, or for people who are essential workers.

Appointments can be made at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Individuals without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Suburban Cook County vaccine signup opens at 9 a.m. Tuesday

*Daily Herald staff report
February 2, 2021*

<https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20210201/suburban-cook-county-vaccine-signup-opens-at-9-am-tuesday>

COVID-19 appointment slots will be available beginning at 9 a.m. Tuesday for people who live or work in suburban Cook County and are age 65 and older or essential workers.

The appointments at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov are for vaccinations at Triton College in River Grove, where the second mass vaccination site in suburban Cook County will open Wednesday, according to the Cook County officials. The other such site opened last week in Tinley Park.

People without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The Cook County Department of Public Health also has distributed vaccines to more than 90 locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano's, Walgreens, federally qualified health centers and hospitals that are offering vaccines by appointment. A complete listing can be found at www.cookcountypublichealth.org.

Those who are eligible include people 65 and older and [essential workers](#), including first responders, teachers, and those who work in the postal service, manufacturing, grocery stores, mass transit, correctional facilities, food processors, and adult day care or shelters.



New Cook County COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Site to Open Appointments

February 2, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/new-cook-county-covid-19-mass-vaccination-site-to-open-appointments/2426689/>

Appointments for suburban Cook County's second large COVID-19 community vaccination site, Triton College in River Grove, will open at 9 a.m. Tuesday morning, according to Cook County Health.

Appointments can be made at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Those without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call 833-308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Under Phase 1B, the current phase of Illinois' vaccination rollout, people age 65 years and older as well as "frontline essential workers," which includes first responders, education workers like teachers and support staff and grocery store employees, are eligible.

Suburban Cook County opened [its first mass vaccination site at the Tinley Park Convention Center on Tuesday, Jan. 26](#). Nearly 7,000 vaccines were administered at the convention center during the first week in operation, health officials said.

At Triton College, "when fully operationalized and when ample vaccine supply becomes available," more than 4,000 vaccines are expected to be administered weekly.

Vaccinations at all Cook County Health sites are by appointment only. Additional large vaccination sites throughout the county are expected to open in the following weeks.

In addition to the two mass vaccination sites, several Walgreens and Jewel-Osco locations are also among those offering appointments for residents eligible under Phase 1B.

Residents who are not eligible to receive the vaccine can sign up at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov to receive updates about phases and eligibility.

The move comes as suburban Cook County is poised to move to Phase 4 coronavirus mitigation rules on Tuesday if numbers continue trending in the right direction, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

According to IDPH, Region 10, which includes Cook County suburbs but not the city of Chicago, is meeting the metrics required to move to the less-restrictive rules that allow for indoor service at bars, expands group sizes and more.

Cómo programar una cita para vacunarte en las diferentes zonas del área metropolitana de Chicago

February 2, 2021

<https://www.univision.com/local/chicago-wqbo/como-programar-una-cita-para-vacunarte-en-las-diferentes-zonas-del-area-metropolitana-de-chicago-video>



En la ciudad de Chicago, este martes fue anunciada la plataforma www.zocdoc.com, donde las personas elegibles para ser inmunizadas contra el coronavirus pueden registrarse. Entretanto, en el condado Cook, los interesados pueden ingresar a la página www.vaccine.cookcountyil.gov o llamar al teléfono 833 308 1988. Por otra parte, en el condado Will puedes visitar www.willcountyhealth.org.



Frustration mounts amid balky vaccine rollout

Bob Uphues

February 2, 2021

<https://www.rblandmark.com/2021/02/02/frustration-mounts-amid-balky-vaccine-rollout/>

Victoria Aquin saw the headlines, as did her elderly mother, a resident of Riverside for 62 years. On Jan. 25 at noon, Illinois had entered Phase 1B of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and some 600,000 people in suburban Cook County could begin making appointments to receive the precious shots – the way back to normal for which they'd waited nearly a year.

Like many older senior citizens, Aquin's mom does not have home internet, nor does she own a smartphone. Her landline is her connection to the outside world. And no one was answering the phone on Jan. 25 when Aquin repeatedly called Cook County's vaccine hotline number.

"I finally got put on hold at 7:01 p.m.," Aquin said. "When I was able to talk to someone they told me there were no more appointments and that if I called tomorrow maybe they might have something."

Aquin's experience was a common one. Martha Almgauer, who works as a customer service relations clerk for the village of North Riverside was seeing the situation from both sides of the coin.

Along with her fellow employees at the North Riverside Village Commons, she has been fielding dozens of calls from senior citizens and caregivers looking for advice on how they might score a vaccine appointment while simultaneously trying to nail appointments down for her two elderly parents.

"It's been a tough situation," said Almgauer, who registered her parents through the county's vaccine appointment website at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov and awaits further notification from the county on when new appointments will come available.

"You wish you could do more," said Almgauer, who advises callers to check with their physicians to see if perhaps they might be able to receive vaccines that way. "Right now everybody is trying to get it."

Riverside Township Supervisor Vera Wilt has also been fielding calls from township residents, and she's also been trying to get a vaccine appointment for herself, since she qualifies for one as someone who is at least 65 years old.

"I am seeing a lot of frustration," Wilt said. "I personally did register with the county, but I haven't had any luck myself."

Illinois ranked 47th nationally

Those frustrations played out amid continued criticism late last week of the slow rollout of the state's vaccine effort.

The state on Jan. 29 reported 58,357 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine were administered over the previous 24 hours, setting a one-day high mark for the third straight day.

Still, only 26.4 percent of the 496,100 doses distributed to the federal Pharmacy Partnership Program have been administered to residents of long-term care facilities through nationwide pharmacy chains CVS and Walgreens.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker has faced criticism for the slow rollout of the vaccine to long-term care residents. Pritzker said Thursday that he had spoken to leaders from Walgreens and CVS, and said the companies plan to have the first round of vaccinations at assisted living and long-term care facilities complete by Feb. 15.

Employees and residents at both long-term care facilities in the Landmark's coverage area, Cantata Adult Life Services in Brookfield and Caledonia Senior Living and Memory Care in North Riverside, have already been administered both doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

On Jan. 28, Illinois Senate Republicans sent a letter to the governor requesting a "clear explanation" as to why Illinois ranked near the bottom of states – as of Friday it was 47th of 50 – in percentage of population that has received at least one dose of the vaccine. That was according to the New York Times, which showed only 5.1 percent of Illinoisans had received one dose of the vaccine as of Friday.

Pritzker responded to the lawmakers in a letter, noting his administration made \$25 million in grants available to beef up staff, training and rental space at the state's 97 local health departments through which it is coordinating the vaccination plan.

"In fact, as we have helped local health departments overcome their challenges, the state of Illinois is administering more doses a week than it is receiving from the federal government," Pritzker wrote in his response letter.

Pritzker said the New York Times showed Illinois was seventh in the nation for total number of doses distributed, which was right beside California, Texas, Florida, New York and Pennsylvania – states cited in the GOP letter.

"All but one of those states has received more vaccine on a per capita basis than Illinois has at the CDC's last count – and yet, we have kept up with them despite having less to work with," he said.

National supply 'completely inadequate'

While the Republican lawmakers criticized Pritzker for "blaming the previous president, the federal government and CVS/Walgreens," Pritzker said "having a partner" in the Biden administration will ensure a quicker rollout.

He pointed to an announcement Jan. 28 that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will provide Illinois with an additional \$43 million to "expand our mobile vaccination operations and offer more easy-access locations for our residents as the national vaccine supply increases." He also cited President Joe Biden's plan to secure 200 million additional vaccine doses.

"Of course, as I and governors across the political spectrum have made clear, the current national vaccine supply pipeline is completely inadequate for national demand – a product of the previous presidential administration, whether or not you'd like to name it as such," the governor wrote to the GOP lawmakers. "In a country of 330 million, the CDC estimates that only enough doses to fully vaccinate about 23 million people have even gone out the door – and that doesn't count delays in administration or reporting."

In total, the state has received slightly more than 1.8 million doses of the vaccines manufactured by either Pfizer or Moderna, with about 1.3 million distributed outside of the long-term care partnership program.

Of those outside of the partnership program, 59 percent, or 756,444, have been reported administered. Vaccine administrators have three days from when the shot is given to report it.

The vaccination rollout continues amid falling positivity rates. On Jan. 29, the state's rolling seven-day average case positivity rate was 4.3 percent, marking the 21st straight day it had decreased and the lowest it has been since Oct. 12.

But, that has not made the difficulty of obtaining appointments for vaccines any less frustrating for local senior citizens and their family members and caregivers, on whom they rely to navigate the process.

"The frustration is that they're letting elderly people know they're going to get this, but everyone makes it seem like it's going to be this week," Aquin said. "What do elderly people have to do if they don't have someone to call for them?"

Cook County officials renewed their calls for patience with the rollout, saying the vaccine supply is simply not enough to meet the immediate demand.

“As the governor, [Cook County Board] President Preckwinkle and others have explained, vaccination appointments will become available as additional doses are received,” said Kate Hedlin, communications manager for Cook County Health, said in an email. “In suburban Cook County, there are approximately 600,000 residents and essential workers eligible to be vaccinated in Phase 1B of the vaccination plan, which means not everyone will be able to get vaccinated immediately.

“We ask for patience and please know that we are committed to getting residents vaccinated. In addition, Walgreens, Mariano’s and Jewel-Osco are also offering vaccinations.”

An updated list of COVID-19 vaccination sites can be found at coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-location.

Niles Helps Seniors Navigate County COVID Vaccine Registration Website, Hotline

Tom Robb

February 02, 2021

<https://www.journal-topics.com/articles/niles-helps-seniors-navigate-county-covid-vaccine-registration-website-hotline/>

Niles Senior Center officials are offering assistance to seniors navigating the Cook County health department's COVID-19 vaccination registration website portal, vaccine.cookcountyl.gov.

Cook County rolled out that pre-registration website and telephone hotline Jan. 25 for those qualified in the 1B group, which includes all Illinoisians over the age of 65, along with frontline essential workers such as teachers, first responders, grocery store workers, transportation workers and others.

Village officials and many others said some have had difficulty navigating both systems. Seniors may call the senior center at 847-588-8420 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday for assistance from senior center staff.

"People look to their village government for guidance during uncertain times, and while the logistics and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine are outside of its purview, the village of Niles is stepping up to provide registration assistance and reassurance to those who may need it most," Mayor Andrew Przybylo said in a written statement.

"This is a difficult time for everyone, and we know it's the right thing to do to help however we can. I know for a lot of residents, having someone to talk to and get help from will go a long way towards staying positive and hopeful — and most importantly, getting the resources they need," John Jekot, village trustee who serves as chairman of the village's human services committee, said.

LA County COVID vaccine progress slow, but faster than other big counties, officials say

DAVID ROSENFELD

February 2, 2021

<https://www.dailynews.com/2021/02/02/la-county-coronavirus-vaccine-progress-still-slow-but-faster-than-other-big-counties/>

While still concerned about the sluggish coronavirus vaccine supply, Los Angeles County public health officials are touting their ability to get nearly 80% of the roughly 1 million doses received so far into the arms of residents, first to health care workers and long term care residents, and now those aged 65 and older.

“Although our doses are limited we have immunized so many among the most vulnerable in our communities,” said Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis, who later called the figures “remarkable.”

As the county’s vaccine scenario continued to evolve, its coronavirus numbers continued to inch lower. But Dr. Mark Ghaly, the state’s health and human services secretary, warned Tuesday that they’re still “not low,” and the county death toll eclipsed another grim milestone — 17,000 deaths.

The county Department of Public Health announced 205 virus deaths on Tuesday, raising the countywide cumulative total from throughout the pandemic to 17,057. Health officials noted that more than 7,000 COVID deaths have been reported over the past month, matching the total number of virus deaths that occurred between February and October of last year.

But while fatalities mounted in response to the winter surge of cases that began in November, the number of newly confirmed infections continued to fall. The county announced 3,763 new infections on Tuesday, down substantially from the early January totals that regularly topped 10,000.

Hospitalizations also continued a steady downward trend, with state figures showing a total of 5,165 people hospitalized in the county due to COVID, including 1,371 in intensive care. According to the county Department of Public Health, there were 830 available hospital beds as of Tuesday morning at the area’s 70 “911-receiving” medical centers, including 85 ICU beds.

The new COVID cases announced by the county raised the cumulative total since the pandemic began to 1,124,558.

Ghaly noted that prior to the winter surge that began in November, several counties — including Los Angeles — were on the verge of emerging from the restrictive “purple” tier of the state’s economic reopening matrix, with daily new case rates dropping to nearly 7 per 100,000 residents. But while numbers are declining, Los Angeles County’s adjusted case rate was listed at 38.7 per 100,000 residents as of Tuesday, five times the rate needed to move out of the “purple” tier.

“It’s just a reminder that COVID is still around in our communities,” Ghaly said. “We’ve got to keep our guard up. How likely is it that we’ll see another surge? I think again it comes back to the behaviors and our own sense of personal choices and personal responsibility on this.”

County comparisons

Compared to other counties of its size, for which there are relatively few, L.A. County has the highest administration rate, officials said. But the county has also received relatively fewer vaccines than other large counties, which officials have not really been able to explain other than blaming federal deliveries to the state.

County officials said Monday that as of late January, 7.9% of people in Los Angeles County had received at least a first dose of the vaccine, and the county had administered 79.8% of its supply. Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said that as of last week, the county had received 991,375 doses of the vaccination, and 790,902 shots had been administered.

Among the comparisons:

In New York City, a population of about 8 million people, roughly 1.35 million vaccines have been delivered and 823,670 were administered into people's arms so far, a rate roughly 60%;

In Cook County, Illinois, with about 5 million people, 1.95 million doses have been delivered and 1 million administered, for a rate of about 52%; and

And in Harris County, Texas with nearly 5 million people, 571,325 vaccines have been delivered and 290,312 administered for a rate of roughly 50%.

All of these numbers, reported by health departments, should be taken with some degree of error — they can fluctuate based on when the data was obtained (either before or right after a shipment was received, for instance). And in many cases, data gathering mechanisms might not be capturing all of the doses that are administered.

In smaller counties, the vaccine rollout appears to be going smoother as L.A. County officials have acknowledged that size is a detriment to this operation. The county currently has more than 300 sites delivering the vaccine.

In Orange County, health care workers have delivering 96% of vaccines received into people's arms, but those statistics came with a caveat with officials saying they might not fully account for doses hospitals and other health systems have on hand, driving up the percentage.

In Riverside County, roughly 86% of vaccines delivered have been administered so far with the county having received a little more than 200,000 doses, as of Tuesday.

Many seniors throughout Southern California were still struggling this week to set appointments for the limited number of vaccines being provided from the federal stockpile.

Ferrer acknowledged, however, that the limited availability of vaccine has dramatically slowed the overall effort in L.A. County.

The county's weekly allocations have varied greatly, but have been averaging around 140,000 doses. And of late, much of the new vaccine supply being received each week must be reserved to provide second doses to people who have already had the first shot.

Ferrer noted that more than 85,000 appointments at county vaccination sites have been reserved through Feb. 19 for second doses.

While L.A. County worked to shore up its own system, and connect to an existing statewide website, Ferrer said Monday to expect an upgraded state system that will replace the existing network with one administered by Blue Shield of California, with Kaiser Permanent participating too.

Some officials are concerned that such a move could disenfranchise those without health insurance. Supervisor Holly Mitchell (District 2) was among those who recently pressed public officials to ensure an equitable distribution of the vaccine.

Among the poorest neighborhoods, the rates of infection and death were roughly four times higher than the rates among wealthier communities. And Latinos remained the hardest hit ethnic groups, dying from COVID-19 at rates three times higher than whites.

"The same factors that keep these most vulnerable residents from accessing what they need to survive COVID, are also keeping them from accessing the vaccine," Mitchell said. "We have to figure out how to target those who are truly at most risk."

To improve access, additional vaccination centers were opened in South L.A. and other areas more heavily impacted by the virus

County officials still do not have any more clarity about how many vaccines they will receive more than a week out, although that was supposed to come this month. Last week, the county received 146, 225 doses with much of them reserved for second dose recipients. More than 85,000 appointments were now reserved through Feb. 19, Ferrer said.

“I do apologize for the many hardships people are experiencing trying to book appointments,” Ferrer said. “The biggest challenge is not having enough vaccine for everyone eligible to be vaccinated.”

So far, 991,375 vaccine doses have been received with 790,902 administered. The county will need roughly 4 million doses to vaccinate an estimated 1.4 million seniors aged 65 and older and to get through the remaining health workers.

The next phase after that will include teachers along with emergency service workers and those in food and agriculture professions, expanding eligibility to some 2.7 million people in L.A. County.

1.9 million hits in first hour for Cook website offering COVID-19 vaccination appointments

Marni Pyke

February 3, 2021

<https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20210202/19-million-hits-in-first-hour-for-cook-website-offering-covid-19-vaccination-appointments>

Illinois' daily tally of people getting COVID-19 vaccinations remained below the seven-day average, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported Tuesday, but it's not for lack of interest.

As proof, "our website this morning saw nearly 1.9 million hits in the first hour," [Cook County Department of Public Health](#) spokeswoman Deborah Song said. She was describing the onslaught of people trying to hook up with vaccinations at a second Cook County mass inoculation site opening Wednesday at Triton College in River Grove.

"We booked more than 3,400 appointments in the first 35 minutes," Song said. "At its peak, the website experienced 65,810 hits in a single minute, which can slow down some of the functionality."

Statewide, a total of 32,559 shots went into arms Monday compared to the seven-day average of 44,139.

The state has received 1,951,925 doses of vaccine since distribution began in mid-December, and 1,028,969 people have been inoculated. So far, 227,362 people -- 1.78% of Illinois' 12.7 million residents -- have been fully vaccinated. Vaccines manufactured by Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. require two doses several weeks apart.

The frenzy in Cook County is reflected across the region as residents report frustration with long waits on vaccination websites, only to learn appointments are unavailable.

"The demand for vaccines continues to outpace the supply that is currently in the United States," Song said. "We are as anxious to provide vaccinations as individuals are to receive them, but we are asking residents to remain patient."

Illinois infection rates and hospitalizations continue to trend down, providing optimism for Jonathan Pinsky, Edward Hospital's medical director of infection control and prevention.

"We've seen a large decrease (in admissions) in the last month," Pinsky said, noting 30 patients were admitted last week compared to 115 a week in mid-November, during the state's second virus surge.

Edward and other hospitals began vaccinating front line workers in mid- to late December. Now that many are fully inoculated, "I think people are really excited," Pinsky said. "They feel a bit safer taking care of patients and knowing that the end is in sight."

Another hopeful sign is that vaccinations for long-term care residents, who make up about 49% of COVID-19 deaths, are wrapping up, he said.

"We're really getting to the point where we would expect, either this week or in the next couple of weeks, for that population to have immunity," Pinsky said.

Illinois is currently inoculating four groups: health care workers, long-term care residents, people age 65 and older, and essential workers such as police, teachers and grocery store employees.

Cook County is promising four new mass vaccination sites in the coming weeks. But "at this time, appointment availability remains extremely limited," Song said. "We are building local capacity so that when supply increases in the coming weeks and months, we will have the infrastructure in place to ramp up immediately."

The state reported 47 more deaths from the virus Tuesday and 2,304 new cases. The seven-day infection average is 3,212.

Illinois hospitals were treating 2,447 COVID-19 patients as of Monday night. The seven-day hospitalization average is 2,624.

The state's seven-day average positivity rate is now at 3.9%.

Total cases statewide stand at 1,130,917, and 19,306 Illinoisans have died since the pandemic began.

Labs processed 60,899 virus tests in the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile, Chicago's Department of Health announced it was contracting with health care scheduling company Zocdoc to streamline COVID-19 vaccination appointments and offer real-time information about availability to help handle demand from residents.

Suburban restaurants cleared to serve bigger parties; bowling alleys and skating rinks can open

Mitchell Armentrout

February 2, 2021

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/coronavirus/2021/2/2/22262405/illinois-coronavirus-cook-county-phase-4-pritzker-reopen-bars-restaurants-cases-deaths-vaccine>

Suburban Cook County was cleared to return to Phase 4 of the state's coronavirus reopening plan Tuesday, meaning bars and restaurants can serve larger parties indoors.

The move down from Tier 1 COVID-19 mitigations also gives more leeway to local officials to expand indoor dining capacity beyond 25%, but Cook County health officials said they'd opt to keep that limit in place.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot drew the ire of the hospitality industry when she ordered the same as the city moved back to Phase 4 over the weekend, arguing that health officials need to gauge the potential impact of the initial Jan. 23 restaurant reopening before allowing more people to gather inside.

Party sizes can increase from four up to 10 in Cook County in Phase 4, though Chicago cut that to six people per table.

Phase 4 — which applied to all of Illinois until Gov. J.B. Pritzker instituted statewide mitigations in November amid a record-breaking case surge — also allows for bowling alleys and skating rinks to reopen at the lesser of 50 customers or 50% capacity.

As infection rates have fallen back to their lowest levels in about four months, eight of the state's 11 regions have shed the tiered mitigations. The Will-Kankakee county region did Monday. The two suburban regions composed of Kane, DuPage, Lake and McHenry counties are still under Tier 1 rules but are on pace to get to Phase 4 Wednesday.

Suburban Cook County earned the eased restrictions by reporting three consecutive days with a testing positivity rate below 6.5%, in addition to meeting other hospital metrics.

Statewide, the seven-day average statewide testing positivity rate, which experts use to gauge how rapidly the virus is spreading, is down to 3.9% — less than half what it was a month ago, and as low as it's been since Oct. 9.

On Tuesday, Illinois reported its smallest number of new cases (2,304) since Oct. 4, while COVID-19 hospital admissions are down about 60% from the November peak, with 2,447 beds occupied statewide as of Monday night.

The Illinois Department of Public Health also announced the virus killed 47 more residents, including 29 from the Chicago area. The death toll is up to 19,306 among the 1.1 million-plus residents who have been infected over the past year.

The virus has claimed 60 Illinois lives on average over the past week, but that fatality rate is down from 116 per day a month ago.

Despite the state's progress, officials are pleading with residents to keep masking and social distancing — especially since nine cases of the more infectious UK variant of the virus were identified in the Chicago area last month.

More than 1 million doses of coronavirus vaccines have gone into Illinois arms so far, Illinois Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike told a congressional committee, but only about 227,000 residents have received the required two doses. That's not even 1.8% of the population.

Ezike testified that the state needs the federal government "to align their efforts with ours to help solve practical operational issues."

"Of course we need increased supply of vaccine, as well as resources to quickly administer the vaccine," Illinois' top doctor said. "We need an improved communication channel and fixes to tools provided to states. The federal government should provide states with clear consistent projections for vaccine allocations, to allow and enable planning weeks into the future."

People are dying to get vaccinated

All I hear is excuses about the lack of vaccine from the federal government. What we want is a schedule that tells us: Am I Number 5 in line or Number 932,142?

*Phil Kadner
February 2, 2021*

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/columnists/2021/2/2/22262261/vaccination-covid-19-cook-county-supply-phil-kadner>

This entire COVID-19 vaccination process has been created to make me feel stupid. It's like one of those paintings where people say you can see the secret if you turn your head to the side, squint, make your mind a blank and stare until a mystery figure reveals itself.

Only, in this case, people are dying to get the COVID vaccine and the mystery is why public officials are doing nothing about it.

They talk about fighting a war, but it feels a lot more like our half-hearted effort in Vietnam rather than the all-out mobilization during World War II.

I remember a time when all the big-shot public health doctors were begging Americans to get the COVID vaccination because they feared many of us didn't trust the government or the science.

Well, there are now millions of us waiting out here, battering away at the websites, trying to schedule a shot and getting nothing.

Time after time I have received responses that the pharmacy, hospital, state or county (Cook County in my case) has run out of vaccine.

Fine. So why did I receive the following text message on Sunday evening?

"We are pleased to announce that Cook County Health has released additional availability of vaccine appointments to Phase 1A and 1B residents of Cook County...To find an appointment, please click" — and an internet link was provided.

I jumped for joy. Shouted to my wife that we were in. And clicked on the link.

Sorry, Charlie, there are no openings. Just toying with you, buddy.

The next day, in the morning, I received another text message:

"The additional availability of vaccine appointments at Cook County Health sites has been fully booked. More will be released as vaccine is received. Please be patient."

I was being patient until you folks sent out a text saying there were vaccination appointments to be had.

Somebody has compared this COVID-19 vaccine situation to the "Hunger Games" where everybody fights it out and only the fittest survive. That's apt because the rules in the "Hunger Games" changed all the time without notice.

I contacted a spokesman for the Cook County Health Department because I was sure its computer system must have been hacked. Why would there be text messages put out that did nothing but cause confusion, anxiety and frustration?

Well, there was no hacking.

This is the way the system is supposed to work.

I have seen Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle get COVID injections, allegedly to set an example for the public and illustrate the safety of the vaccine.

Well, has either of them tried to use the websites to get scheduled for a shot? I doubt it.

All I hear is excuses about the lack of vaccine from the federal government and the lack of planning by the Trump administration. Well, Trump is gone. We all know the supply is limited.

What we want is a schedule that tells us where and when we can get vaccinated. Am I Number 5 in line or Number 932,142? Should I go to Walgreen's or a public site patrolled by the National Guard?

I get the feeling people are skipping ahead of me in line. Pulling strings and using insider knowledge to bump the rest of us.

Be patient, they say. Then they say, "Keep trying all the time and eventually you will get an appointment."

Government officials demand more money to fight the war against COVID. They urge us to trust them. Well, we have trusted them with our lives.

People are dying to get their vaccinations.



Chicago looks to speed up vaccinations with this digital deal

A partnership with medical appointment booking site Zocdoc aims to advance the city's goal "to vaccinate as many residents as possible as fast as we can," Lightfoot said.

A.D. QUIG
February 2, 2021

<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/health-care/chicago-looks-speed-vaccinations-digital-deal>

The city of Chicago is partnering with a website to serve as its main platform for people to find and book COVID-19 vaccinations.

Zocdoc, which is known for making easy bookings with doctors, dentists and therapists, "will aggregate real-time appointment availability" from some of the city's mass vaccination sites, as well as from providers like Amita Health, Erie Family Health, Innovative Express Care and Rush University Medical Center, the city says in a statement.

"Our goal in Chicago is to vaccinate as many residents as possible as fast as we can," Mayor Lori Lightfoot said in the statement. "While vaccine availability is still very limited nationwide, this exciting new partnership with Zocdoc is another step toward empowering individuals and families as we fight this disease and lean into the historic recovery that is sure to follow."

Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady still encouraged people to try to get an appointment first through their primary care provider, local pharmacy or their employer. The Illinois Health & Hospital Association is encouraging its members to participate, the city says.

New York-based Zocdoc [is offering the service free](#) "to any city, state, or large care organization as a public health service."

"Demand for the vaccine is understandably high, and it is essential that we have tools that make it easy for eligible patients to get it safely and efficiently," Dr. Paul Casey, chief medical officer at Rush University Medical System, said in the statement. "At Rush, we are focused on ensuring that no drop of vaccine is wasted or sitting on a shelf, and this collaboration furthers that objective by connecting our work with vaccination efforts across the city of Chicago."

Chicagoans can visit [Zocdoc's website](#) to confirm their location and eligibility. Zocdoc will show nearby vaccination locations and real-time appointment availability. If no appointment is available, Zocdoc can email when a slot does open up. Chicago received 39,950 first vaccine doses last week (and 19,675 second doses). As more become available, Zocdoc will help manage matching already-strong demand with a growth in dose supply.

Arwady says the city's primary approach for reaching Chicagoans without internet is through their healthcare providers, who have been directed to reach out to patients directly. The city's Protect Chicago Plus program is also targeting at-risk neighborhoods, including with direct door-knocking.

Cook County's Department of Public Health, which is managing the vaccine rollout in Cook County's suburbs, has launched its own hotline—833-308-1988—reachable from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays. Thirty Cook County Health workers are staffing the hotline, and the county has plans to add more people as demand climbs. As of Jan. 28, the hotline had handled more than 10,000 calls that were successful in registration, department officials said.

Chicago's seven-day percent positivity has likewise fallen to 5.6 percent, down from 6.9 percent a week before. Its seven-day rolling case average is 577, down 18 percent compared to last week. Arwady has said she'd like to see that number below 400. The city has maintained somewhat tighter COVID mitigations than the state allows for that reason.

Hoy vacunas en Triton College en condado Cook

Hay citas abiertas para el nuevo sitio de vacunación masiva y se espera que en las próximas semanas se abran otros grandes sitios. Regístrese aquí:

February 2, 2021

<http://lanuevasemana.com/2021/02/02/noticias-de-las-9-246/>

Las citas para el segundo gran sitio de vacunación comunitaria COVID-19 en los suburbios del condado de Cook, Triton College en River Grove, se abrirán a las 9 am el martes por la mañana, según Cook County Health.

Las citas se pueden hacer aquí:

<https://vaccine.cookcountyil.gov>

Aquellos que no tengan acceso a Internet o que necesiten ayuda para programar un horario pueden llamar al 833-308-1988 de 7 am a 7 pm de lunes a viernes.

Recuerde: estamos en la Fase 1B y son elegibles las personas de 65 años o más, así como los “trabajadores esenciales de primera línea”, que incluye socorristas, trabajadores de la educación como maestros y personal de apoyo y empleados de tiendas de comestibles.

City launches online platform for vaccine scheduling; supply still low

Aaron Gettinger

Feb 2, 2021

https://www.hpherald.com/news/local/city-launches-online-platform-for-vaccine-scheduling-supply-still-low/article_aead4d1e-65a4-11eb-b3cd-431b38729858.html

Eligible Chicagoans can now visit zocdoc.com/vaccine to see a list of COVID-19 vaccine appointments, though supply and appointments are still limited and officials caution that it will take weeks before everyone can get their shots.

"One of the biggest concerns that we've heard from people is, 'I am having to do a lot of work to find vaccine appointments.' And again, many of our vaccines are in health care providers who are calling their existing patients," Dr Alison Arwady, commissioner of the Department of Public Health, said at a Feb. 2 press conference. "But where we do have publicly available appointments, we wanted to create a technology-based partnership that would make it easier for Chicago residents to find publicly available appointments."

Richard Fine with Zocdoc, a digital healthcare marketplace, acknowledged that the time it takes to spend hours checking different websites and making phone calls for appointments is a frustrating process that benefits "those with the most time and the most resources."

He pointed out that there will be times when people go on Zocdoc and there will be no appointments listed; indeed, there are few, if any, appointments currently listed. But people can register with their email addresses, and they will be notified when more appointments are made available. Zocdoc is adding more partners who are providing the vaccine as they sign up to offer appointments on the service.

"As we receive more vaccine, we'll be able to make more appointments available," Arwady said. "If it's full, put in your email address, and we'll be alerting you when they are available. But again, remember: Phase 1b does not mean that most people will get vaccinated that first week or this week. We've got more than 750,000 people who have just become eligible, and most people are going to get vaccinated (by) March."

This week alone, the city is getting around 40,000 first doses of vaccine. There are more than 360,000 Chicagoans who are 65 or older, and 350,000 more who are working frontline essential jobs aside from also-eligible health care workers who have yet to be vaccinated. Arwady said 9-10% of the city's vaccines have been given directly to pharmacies.

Several local vaccine providers are not currently listed on Zocdoc. Cook County Health sites have fully booked appointments for first doses of COVID-19 vaccines; more appointments will be released as more vaccines are received. Registration is open at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov.

Howard Brown Health — a network of federally qualified health clinics, including one in Hyde Park at 1525 E. 55th St. — is also fully booked for vaccine appointments. More appointments will be added as the network knows more about their vaccine supply.

Vaccines are also available by appointment through Walgreens and Walmart pharmacies.

Vaccine appointments are not available for the public at UChicago Medicine, and eligible patients cannot register for appointments themselves. If and when existing patients are eligible to receive a vaccine from the hospital, the hospital will contact them through MyChart messaging, phone calls and emails.

COVID-19 vaccination site at Tinley Park Convention Center administers 7,000 doses after one week

Mike Nolan

February 2, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/ct-sta-tinley-park-vaccination-site-st-0203-20210202-dx356dyomfaunaxapa4uhueyji-story.html>

Marketa Williams-Franklin said that nearly everybody in her family is skittish about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

After receiving her initial dose Tuesday at the Tinley Park Convention Center, which opened a week ago as a large-scale vaccination site, the Dolton resident said "I'm going to tell them 'Hey, get it.'"

Since it opened Jan. 26, the facility, staffed by members of the Illinois Army and Air Force National Guard, has administered more than 7,000 doses and has the capacity to give 18,000 shots a week.

The opening came as Cook County Health recently began the rollout of Phase 1b of vaccinations, which includes people 65 and older, essential workers including police officers and firefighters, and employees of grocery stores and pharmacies.

The county estimates that about 600,000 people in the suburbs are eligible for the vaccine under the in phase 1b.

Williams-Franklin serves as a caregiver for her husband, who is due to get his first shot Wednesday, and she said she was "kind of anti-vax at first," suspicious "that it was something that would give me the virus."

"My entire family, we were saying we were not going to get it," partly due to concerns about potential side effects, she said.

Orland Park resident Susan Heemstra, eligible due to her age, said she had no hesitation.

"I was eager to receive it," she said.

Heemstra said she is a registered nurse who worked in a dermatology office before being furloughed last March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A mix of National Guard personnel along with Tinley Park police, firefighters and emergency services personnel serve a steady stream of people coming into the convention center, off Harlem Avenue just north of Interstate 80.

National Guard personnel sit at dozens of registration desks getting patients' information before they're sent on to get the vaccination.

On those desks as well as the ones where the shots are given, an array of small flags of different colors can be used to notify a patient they have an available spot, or alert a technician if they are having computer trouble or running low on supplies.

After getting their dose, patients sit in chairs in an observation area for several minutes, with National Guard personnel checking them for possible reactions to the shot.

The site is averaging about 2,000 vaccinations a day, and the plan is to boost that to about 3,000 daily, according to Iliana Mora, chief operating officer for Cook County Health Ambulatory Services that is overseeing the community vaccination site initiative.

“There is significant demand for every single appointment slot,” she said.

Appointments at the Tinley Park and other Cook County Health vaccination sites, including county health clinics in Ford Heights and Robbins, can be made at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov.

There is also a phone line, 833-308-1988, that is staffed from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday to schedule appointments. The Tinley Park site is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Tinley Park assistant village manager Pat Carr can attest to the high demand for appointments.

Carr, who is also director of the village’s emergency management and 911 center operations, is supervising a dozen village employees staffing the site each day.

This past Sunday, he said, more than 10,000 appointment slots opened for the coming week, and they were all claimed within 11 minutes.

The village’s agreement with Cook County calls for the vaccination site to be in operation for at least six months, with virtually every corner of the 120,000-square-foot facility dedicated in some fashion to the vaccination mission.

“We’re all prepared to be here for the long haul, whatever it takes,” he said.

Ben Graunke, a Spanish teacher in Glen Ellyn Elementary District 41, was getting his initial shot Tuesday and said he was eager to be vaccinated.

“As soon as they announced it I wanted to get it as fast as could,” the 29-year-old Forest Park resident said.

He said that fellow teachers in his district are also on board.

“Every teacher I’ve talked to has been pro getting the vaccine,” Graunke said. “I have not seen anybody wishy-washy about it.”

As the next stage of vaccinations gets underway, health officials have asked people to be patient, noting that, for now, there is not enough supply of the vaccine to meet demand. Mora said health officials are also keeping an eye on supplies of another key ingredient in the process — syringes to deliver the vaccine.

Supply has not yet become an issue, she said.

“We hope it won’t be, but if the whole world is vaccinating, the whole world needs syringes,” Mora said.

Carr said an agreement with the county and coordination with other government agencies and the Illinois National Guard to get the site operating took a bit more than a week.

“I know a lot of people complain about government not doing anything, but it’s been an awesome display of how government can work when there is collaboration and cooperation,” he said.



Cook County Residents Run Into Issues While Trying To Book COVID Vaccine Appointments

Vi Nguyen

February 2, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/cook-county-residents-run-into-issues-while-trying-to-book-covid-vaccine-appointments/2427612/>

Frustration is growing as some people say they're running into problems while trying to book an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine through the Cook County Health website.

Chris Zotti is over 65 and has been trying for weeks to get an appointment anywhere for the COVID vaccine.

"I probably go in 15-to-20 times a day to all the different sites signed into and there's just nothing," she said.

She was hoping Tuesday morning would be different after Cook County Health opened up appointments at a second mass vaccination site.

"I was really excited when I saw the news about the new one for Triton College," said Zotti.

Zotti logged on and said she was finally able to select her date and time.

"There was just relief when I was able to get through the site and get there and when the spinning started I'm like no this can't be," she said. "They can't do this to us."

Zotti got a spinning arrow on her screen and after two hours of waiting she said the page timed out.

"It was all the emotions. It was anger. It was frustration and then just sadness," she said. "Because I knew I was not the only one going through this."

The website launched last week for those who live in suburban Cook County and as of Tuesday evening the first doses of the vaccine have already been booked. Health officials telling the public the demand is far greater than the supply.

"I'm going to keep trying until I get one," said Robert Hevey, who lives in Glenview.

NBC 5 reached out to the Cook County Department of Public Health about the issues. A spokesperson told NBC 5 in a statement the website saw nearly 1.9 million hits in the first hour and more than 3,400 appointments were booked in the first 35 minutes. At its peak, the website had 65,810 hits in a single minute, according to CCDPH.

"We continue to monitor the user experience and make adjustments to improve the service despite the limited availability of the vaccine," the statement read in part.

CCDPH is asking for everyone's patience and encourage residents to look for other vaccine providers in their area.

"The fact there isn't that much vaccines I think we all understand, but the fact the server is failing people, that's not acceptable," said Hevey.

Hevey said the server timed out on him while trying to book an appointment Tuesday morning for Triton College and the week before that for the Tinley Park Convention Center.

"I made it as far as the contact information," he explained. "Before the last step --filled it all in and it started, the little wheel spinning."

As for now those who are still waiting to get into the system through the Cook County website said it's like playing the lottery.

"I have to say given all that I've been through I don't hold out much hope that the system here they have set up is going to work for me," said Zotti.

The Cook County Department of Public Health said new appointments will be released every Friday at noon. You can go to vaccine.cookcountyil.gov or call 1-833-308-1988. The phone lines are opened Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

CCDPH said individuals who successfully booked an appointment through the website will receive a confirmation email or text.

Triton to become mass vaccination site

Michael Romain
February 3, 2021

<https://www.oakpark.com/2021/02/03/triton-to-become-mass-vaccination-site/>

Starting Feb. 3, Triton College, 2000 S. 5th Ave. in River Grove, will be a Point of Distribution site for COVID-19 vaccinations, college officials announced on Feb. 1. Cook County Health (CCH) will administer vaccinations Monday through Saturday by appointment only, officials explained.

“Triton College is here to serve, and this is just another example of how we fulfill our mission to serve the community,” said Mark Stephens, chairman of the Triton College Board of Trustees. “There are different ways for a community college to serve its communities, and we take pride in meeting needs in this capacity.”

“I am pleased that Triton College can serve as a vital resource at such a critical time,” said Mary-Rita Moore, president of Triton College.

Triton and the county identified approximately 8,000 square feet of space on the south end of the T Building on Triton’s East Campus to use for administering vaccines, officials said.

Residents seeking a vaccine can make appointments at: vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Those without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call 833-308-1988, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Cook County health officials have said that once it is fully operational and there’s an adequate supply of the vaccine, they expect to administer at least 4,000 shots a week at the Triton site.

Illinois is currently in Phase 1b of its vaccination plan, which means shots are available only to health care workers, first responders, essential workers (including teachers, support staffers and grocery store workers) and anyone over 65.

In addition to the Triton location, the other west suburban vaccination site is the Cook County Health Clinic, 1800 Harlem Ave. in North Riverside.

There are also 90 Walgreens, CVS and Jewel-Osco locations that will administer the vaccine, with many more locations set to open once the state starts receiving more ample supplies of the vaccine.



Mass Vaccination Site Opens at Triton College in River Grove

February 2, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/top-videos-home/mass-vaccination-site-opens-at-triton-college-in-river-grove/2428439/>



Cook County's newest mass vaccination location has opened at Triton College in River Grove. NBC 5's Sandra Torres reports.

What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine second dose: timely appointments, adequate supplies, knowledge of side effects

Madeline Buckley
February 3, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/vaccine/ct-covid-19-vaccine-second-doses-20210203-rs5idaxdmbcuvidm6y34jwqjzq-story.html>

When Brian Fogarty received his first shot of a COVID-19 vaccine at a Cook County Health clinic in suburban Ford Heights, he was given a slip of paper with a website and phone number and told to make his appointment for his second dose.

But when he called the number, Fogarty, a suburban school principal, was told there were no appointments at the site at Cottage Grove Medical Center. The website too, visited while Fogarty was still in the waiting room, showed no available slots.

Increasingly worried about not receiving his second shot in the appropriate time frame, Fogarty called the phone number 115 times. He was eventually able to make an appointment for a second dose.

Meanwhile, Fogarty heard from colleagues who received their shots from sites that would not let them leave without making their second appointment — the preferred *modus operandi* at most vaccine locations, including at Cook County Health, which says the clinic erred in not making Fogarty an appointment while on site.

As health care providers are ramping up first doses and preparing to administer second doses for the large, phase 1b contingent of senior citizens and essential workers, they are performing a complicated, logistical dance that involves signing patients up for appointments within the proper time frame, offering help to make sure patients can come to that appointment and carefully tracking inventory to be sure they have the second doses on hand.

As of Monday, just under 2% of the state's population had received both vaccine doses, according to data from the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Many clinics are making second dose appointments while people are on site, but at least one health care provider has received calls from people such as Fogarty, who were told they may not be able to receive a second dose at their original location, revealing cracks in a complex system.

"I was left on my own," Fogarty said. "Why isn't it the same procedure at every site?"

Health care experts are telling people to prioritize their appointments for their second shots, and not be afraid of any side effects that come during the next dose, which has resulted in a stronger reaction for some people.

"It's normal," said Dr. Emily Landon, an epidemiologist at the University of Chicago Medical Center. "Their immune system is doing a lot more work the second time."

What does the second shot do?

Landon likened the two-dose system to learning a new software. A new user might feel reasonably confident after the first day of learning the software, but it takes a second day of using it to completely catch on to the new program.

“That’s where the memory kind of sticks,” she said.

Because the immune system is doing that work, some people have reported feeling crummier after the second shot.

Landon herself was tired and spiked a fever for about a day, but she knew that was a normal response.

“Don’t be hesitant,” she said.

The Moderna vaccine recommends administering the second shot about 28 days after the first, while Pfizer’s recommendation is 21 days. A Johnson & Johnson vaccine that may soon be approved by the FDA only requires one dose.

The CDC recommends adhering to that time frame as closely as possible, but says the second dose can be given up to six weeks later.

“We want to them to stay as close to that three-week or 28-day cycle as possible,” said Kristin Ramsey, senior vice president and Wood-Prince Family Chief Nurse Executive at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. “It’s very important that we get them within the time frame.”

But there is likely some wiggle room, experts say.

Landon said the CDC’s bench mark of six weeks seems realistic.

“A couple weeks here or there is fine,” she said.

In the United Kingdom, health officials decided to delay the second shot to 12 weeks to give more people the first dose in the short term. Landon, though, said this approach is “a little bit more risky” because it is not yet totally clear how much immunity the first dose provides.

Another important factor for the second dose of the vaccine is the manufacturer. Experts have maintained that people should not mix and match vaccine brands.

“The short answer is, we don’t know how important it is so we are really encouraging people to get the same brand,” Landon said.

She recommended that people take a photo of their vaccination card so they have a digital copy with the first dose date and manufacturer information.

Logistics of the second shot

In the meantime, health care providers are closely monitoring their vaccine availability to balance first and second doses, as well as make sure people have the ability to show up to their appointments.

One health care network with clinics in the Chicago area has a fleet of vans that it uses to bring people in for appointments, while also partnering with ride-share companies.

“We recognize that transportation is one of the biggest barriers,” said Dr. Ali Khan of Oak Street Health, a national network of clinics that focuses on low-income seniors.

Oak Street also has mobile teams that can administer vaccines at people’s homes for those who aren’t able to come to the clinic, he said.

A number of hospitals and clinics spoken to by the Tribune say they make second-dose appointments while people are on site to avoid logistical problems later, and use text alert systems to make sure patients don’t forget the date.

Cook County Health spokeswoman Deb Song said vaccine sites are not supposed to let patients leave without making their second appointment. She did not know why Fogarty wasn’t given the opportunity to make an appointment on site.

“We are extremely sorry that happened,” she said.

Providers also need to be sure they have enough doses for everyone coming back for a second dose.

“The city, who supplies the doses, has assured us we will get second doses in time. So far that has happened,” said Dan Fulwiler, president & CEO of Esperanza Health Centers, a network of federal qualified health clinics in Chicago. “It could be that at some stage, there would be a supply interruption and we would have to reschedule (appointments).”

Fulwiler said the clinics send the city supplier numbers each week that includes the number of second doses needed.

The White House on Monday urged providers to not keep a vaccine reserve for second doses, [CNN reported](#), saying that the “efficiency of doses” should improve.

Doctors expressed hope that the White House’s commitment to sending three weeks of vaccine projections will better help them make appointments and plan ahead.

Landon said the U. of C. was previously receiving texts from FedEx with vaccine information 48 hours before arrival.

“You can’t really schedule and plan based on that,” she said.



Cook County's second largest COVID-19 vaccination site opens Wednesday

Glenn Marshall, Patrick Elwood
February 3, 2021

<https://wgntv.com/news/coronavirus/cook-countys-second-largest-covid-19-vaccination-site-opens-wednesday/>

Cook County's second largest COVID-19 vaccination site opened on Wednesday.

More than 4,000 vaccines are expected to be given at Triton College in River Grove on a weekly basis. Signups for the vaccine [opened up Tuesday morning](#), with most spots filling up quickly.

The vaccinations are available for people who are eligible under the 1B phase, which includes people over the age 65 and essential workers such as first responders, manufacturing employees, teachers and support staff and grocery store personnel.

Cook County officials said they have also distributed vaccines to more than 90 different partners which include Jewel-Osco, Mariano's and Walgreens.

This is all happening as Cook County enters its second day of Phase 4 restrictions. Phase 4 allows movie theaters to operate at 50% capacity or 50 people — whichever is less.

Stricter restrictions are in place for suburban Cook County-similar to what Chicago is doing. For example, restaurants must stay at a cap of 25 people or 25% capacity — whichever is less. Seating will be limited to tables of six. Bars and breweries that do not serve food-will stay closed.

The tighter restrictions are in place due in part to a new concern for health officials. Cook County's Department of Public Health officials said the new strains of COVID-19 could cause cases to spike like before.

"So we're really worried about opening up our movement too quickly and then potentially starting backsliding in our numbers," Dr. Rachel Rubin, Cook County Department of Public Health said. "Starting to maybe even see the emergence of a new peak, which we do not want."

While Cook County is in its second day of Phase 4 restrictions, Kane, DuPage, McHenry and Lake counties will start their Phase 4 restrictions Wednesday.

For more information on where to get the COVID-19 vaccine, visit wgntv.com/vaccine.



Nearly 1.9 million seek vaccine appointments at Cook County site in first hour of website launch

Mike Krauser

February 3, 2021

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/cook-county-covid-website-sees-1-9m-hits-in-first-hour>

Cook County has another mass-vaccination site opening Wednesday morning at Triton College in River Grove - the second of four such sites – and to say interest is high would be an understatement.

The Cook County vaccination website had nearly 1.9 million hits in the first hour of operation and 3,400 appointments were booked in the first 30 minutes, said Cook County Department of Public Health spokeswoman Deborah Song.

"At its peak, the website experienced 65,810 hits in a single minute, which can slow down some of the functionality," Song told the Daily Herald.

And as we heard from many, it leads to frustration.

"The demand for vaccines continues to outpace the supply that is currently in the United States," Song said. "We are as anxious to provide vaccinations as individuals are to receive them, but we are asking residents to remain patient."

The State of Illinois is still in vaccination Phase 1B, which includes those 65 and older, and frontline essential workers, like firefighters and police, teachers, and grocery store employees. Those who fell under Phase 1A - healthcare workers and nursing home residents - are also still being vaccinated.

Statewide, a total of 32,559 doses were administered Monday compared to the seven-day rolling average of 44,139.

A total of 1,455,825 doses of vaccine have been delivered to providers in Illinois, including Chicago. In addition, approximately 496,100 doses total have been allocated to the federal government's Pharmacy Partnership Program for long-term care facilities. This brings the total Illinois doses to 1,951,925.

A total of 1,028,969 vaccines have been administered in Illinois as of Monday night, including 163,592 for long-term care facilities.

IDPH reported Tuesday 2,304 new confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Illinois, including 47 additional deaths.

Currently, IDPH is reporting a total of 1,130,917 cases, including 19,306 deaths.

As of Monday night, 2,447 individuals in Illinois were reported to be in the hospital with COVID-19. Of those, 533 patients were in the ICU and 265 patients with COVID-19 were on ventilators.

The state's seven-day average positivity rate is now at 3.9 percent.

Meanwhile, Chicago's Department of Public Health announced it was contracting with health care scheduling company Zocdoc to streamline COVID-19 vaccination appointments and offer real-time information about availability to help handle demand from residents.

District 64 teachers, staff receive COVID-19 vaccines; high school superintendent questions equity of rollout

Jennifer Johnson
February 3, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/park-ridge/ct-prh-teacher-vaccines-tl-0211-20210204-s5qoq7pftvbhxiqepovqmjmgiag-story.html>

Teachers, administrators and staff members of elementary schools in Park Ridge and Niles received the first of two COVID-19 vaccinations last month, but a local high school superintendent is raising objections about the process.

More than 600 employees of Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 were vaccinated on Jan. 28 and Jan. 29 at Emerson Middle School in Niles and Lincoln Middle School in Park Ridge after voluntarily signing up to receive a vaccine, said District 64 Spokesman Pete Gill.

A “majority” of the district’s staff received the vaccine, District 64 Supt. Eric Olson told parents in a Feb. 3 email.

The Pfizer vaccines were supplied by a local Osco pharmacy after a pharmacy representative contacted the district, Gill said.

“This is something that was just offered to us,” he said.

Gill declined to share the location of the Osco store. He said store personnel will return in three weeks to provide the required second doses of the vaccination to District 64 staff.

A number of Niles and Park Ridge police officers and paramedics were also vaccinated, as additional vaccines were available during the two-day rollout, Gill said.

Maine Township High School District 207 had been working to establish Maine East High School in Park Ridge as a vaccination site for its own teachers and staff as well as those from elementary feeder districts, including District 64.

District 207 Supt. Ken Wallace said he understands why District 64 agreed to accept the vaccines, but expressed frustration with how some school districts are being selected over others. He called the process “ridiculous” and “more like the ‘Hunger Games’ than an equitable rollout.”

“I don’t blame any of the districts at all, but the problem is the process,” Wallace said. “It’s not right for individual pharmacists to choose the winners and the losers in this.”

Wallace suggested that “inside connections at the corporate level” are steering vaccines to teachers within some suburban school districts, leaving others without vaccines. He pointed to a partnership that Walgreens, which is based in Deerfield, made with Deerfield School District 109 to provide vaccines to its teachers. After leaders of other area school districts expressed concerns about equitable distribution of the vaccine, seven school districts in Lake County were added to the Walgreens partnership.

Wallace alleged that District 64 staff received the vaccine because an employee of the Osco pharmacy is a resident of District 64.

“It’s everything wrong about this roll out,” he said.

District 64 did not identify the person who offered the vaccines, but Gill said the individual was not a district parent.

Des Plaines District 62 teachers and staff received vaccines through Osco as well, Wallace said.

Wallace said he and other District 207 officials have been working for a month to secure vaccines for widespread vaccinations at Maine East, but ran into challenges with the Cook County Department of Public Health.

“It isn’t a problem of having the space or having the people,” he said. “We need a partner that will partner with us to deliver the vaccines.”

Wallace said he is hoping to establish a partnership with Advocate Aurora Health and the Cook County Department of Public Health so that township residents, as well as teachers and staff, can be vaccinated at Maine East if they are eligible under Phase 1B of the roll-out.

Many people eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine have shared difficulties in securing appointments through the Cook County Department of Public Health, individual pharmacies or hospital systems.



Time to meet the moment

Editorial

February 3, 2021

<https://www.rblandmark.com/2021/02/03/time-to-meet-the-moment/>

Last week's exhilaration at the news that suburban Cook County senior citizens and essential workers could begin making appointments at county health clinics and local pharmacies morphed into almost immediate frustration as it quickly became apparent that the system set up to begin this effort was not up to the task.

Senior citizens, many of whom depend on a traditional telephone land line to communicate with the outside world during this pandemic, especially felt betrayed by what appeared to be a hopeless effort to land an appointment.

Cook County Health officials and Gov. J.B. Pritzker continued to call for patience as vaccine supplies slowly come in from the federal government, but on Monday the state also reported some vaccine numbers that were troubling.

This particular angle had to do with the percentage of vaccine doses delivered to the state's pharmacy partners to vaccinate the state's long-term care home residents. As of Feb. 1, the pharmacy chains CVS and Walgreens had delivered just one-third of the doses they had received.

It's not clear at what rate selected CVS and Walgreens stores are vaccinating the Phase 1B population, but anecdotally it's been very difficult to find appointments – apps and special websites quickly developed to help people locate pharmacy appointment slots were so overwhelmed they crashed due to the traffic. If you are lucky enough to find an open appointment, you're lucky not to be sent miles and miles away from home.

Walgreens and CVS need to step it up. On Tuesday, the Chicago Tribune reported that Walgreens was paying its brand new CEO a \$1.5 annual salary and also gifted her with a signing bonus totaling nearly \$25 million.

So, we really don't want to hear about any hurdles with respect to the cost for ramping up vaccine distribution along the Walgreens chain. And we don't want to see local staff pharmacists simply given orders to step up the pace of vaccinating people to the detriment of their regular duties making sure people have the medications they need.

Hire, train and mobilize teams that can be deployed at pharmacies around the region and state, and make it easier for people to move through the process. If executive bonuses need to suffer as a result, well, we're fine with that outcome.

Another thing that has been mentioned by some local officials, is that the state could see vaccination rates increase if only they would reach out to municipalities, many of which employ paramedics and emergency medical technicians 24 hours a day, to help roll out the vaccines on a hyper-local level.

Municipal leaders are simply waiting for the call. They are eager to be part of this effort.

Big moments require big action. If there was ever a moment for federal, state and local governments and for the nation's largest pharmacy chains to rise to the occasion you'd think a global pandemic would be that moment.

'Mentally I feel better': Second mass vaccination site opens in Cook County.

Katlyn Smith and Marni Pyke
February 3, 2021

<https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20210203/mentally-i-feel-better-second-mass-vaccination-site-opens-in-cook-county>

Illinois set a new daily record for COVID-19 vaccinations, with 65,166 people getting them in the last 24 hours, climbing above the seven-day average of 45,787, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported.

And the daily total could increase with the opening of the second Cook County mass vaccination site Wednesday at Triton College in River Grove.

Lisa Meincke called Cook County's hotline at 6:59 a.m. Tuesday to reserve her slot at the college campus, and on Wednesday she received her first shot.

"I sat and sat and waited and redialed and redialed until I finally got through," the Arlington Heights woman said.

For Jeff Schwarz of Arlington Heights, getting the lifesaving vaccination provided relief.

"Mentally, I feel better," Schwarz said.

New cases of COVID-19 totaled 3,314 Wednesday and 69 more people died from the disease. Meanwhile, the state has now received 2,079,525 doses of vaccine since distribution began in mid-December, and 1,094,135 doses have been administered.

So far, 244,588 people -- 1.92% of the state's population -- have been fully vaccinated. Vaccines manufactured by Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. require two doses several weeks apart.

With 2 million doses sent to Illinois and everyone requiring two shots, there still is not enough vaccine for everyone who is eligible, which so far includes health care workers and long-term care residents -- Phase 1A -- and people 65 and older and front-line essential workers, such as police and teachers, in Phase 1B.

"That's just one-quarter of the 4.1 million people qualifying for the first two phases" of vaccinations, Gov. J.B. Pritzker said after touring a vaccination site in Champaign.

He added that the federal government this week is beginning to distribute 20% more vaccines to states. Also, a federal pilot program will begin on Feb. 11 to send additional vaccines directly to pharmacies, which means "39,000 more doses available each week to Illinoisans," Pritzker said.

Illinois hospitals were treating 2,469 COVID-19 patients as of Tuesday night. Of those currently hospitalized, 520 are in intensive-care units.

The state's positivity rate for COVID-19 cases is 3.5% based on a seven-day average, compared to 4.5% a week ago.

Total cases statewide stand at 1,134,231, and 19,375 Illinoisans have died since the outset of the pandemic.

Labs processed 96,894 virus tests in the past day.

IDPH officials announced Wednesday they will shift 97,000 vaccines designated for long-term care facilities in the first wave of inoculations to second-wave recipients.

The 97,000 doses will be taken from the supplies of pharmacies like Walgreens and CVS and redistributed to people in Phase 1B. Those pharmacies are part of a federal program in charge of inoculations at long-term care sites.

The rate of shots at long-term care facilities stands at about 36,000 a week, and 110,000 doses will remain allocated for their residents. That total is expected to be supplemented with new supplies of vaccines, officials said.

"The state is grateful for its partnerships with hundreds of providers and we are directing excess doses that otherwise would be sitting in the freezer three weeks from now to locations across Illinois to vaccinate our Phase 1B residents," IDPH Director Ngozi Ezike said in a statement.

About 35% of doses channeled to long-term care facilities have gone into people's arms. That's partly because doses were allocated based on beds per site, not actual residents, which is less. Also, federal planners "assumed every person offered would take the vaccine -- that has not happened," Pritzker said.

However, inoculations are complete at skilled nursing facilities, and all sites are expected to be vaccinated by Feb. 15, he said.

Remaining priorities include assisted living facilities, group homes and intermediate care facilities for individuals with developmental disabilities. The Illinois Department of Human Services is sending teams to help with inoculations at those sites this week, officials said.

Demand for vaccines from people in Phase 1B is far outstripping demand. On Tuesday, the Cook County Department of Public Health's website received nearly 2 million hits in the first hour that appointments opened for the Triton College site.

Residents who need help scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays.

The county health department intends to open additional, large-scale vaccination sites more frequently -- "hopefully, every week or two over the next month," said Dr. Gregory Huhn, CCDPH vaccine coordinator.



Triton College COVID vaccine site opens as 2nd Cook County mass vaccination site

Jessica D'Onofrio
February 3, 2021

<https://abc7chicago.com/covid-vaccine-triton-college-illinois-zocdoc-scheduling/10272685/>

The latest COVID-19 mass vaccination site in the Chicago area opened at Triton College in west suburban River Grove Wednesday.

The Triton College site is the second in suburban Cook County, with the first opening at the Tinley Park Convention Center.

The site is open by appointment only for people who live or work in suburban Cook and are age 65 and older or essential workers.

All vaccinations at the Tinley Park and other Cook County sites will be available by appointment only. If you are included in Phase 1A or 1B of Illinois' vaccination plan, you can [schedule an appointment by visiting the Cook County COVID-19 Community Vaccination Program website](#). You can also use that website to sign up for updates from Cook County about vaccination updates and scheduling future appointments.

If you do not have internet access, you can call 833-308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday for more information and to schedule an appointment if you are eligible.

"This is our opening day," said Cook County Health vaccination coordinator Gregory Huhn. "We're gonna vaccinate hundreds today and that's gonna scale up probably close to 800 perhaps on a daily basis."

Fran Shalin is getting vaccinated Wednesday after trying at other places for several weeks. She was surprised when she got through Tuesday to make the appointment.

"It was 10 o'clock on my cell phone so it was on speaker," Shalin said. "I was cleaning the house and my husband was in the room with the phone and he says, 'Why don't you give up already?' and I said, 'No. I'm not giving up' and within a few minutes, I got through. Very shocked."

Cook County is planning to roll out more sites out every week or two over the next month to maximize access and getting shots into arms on a large scale and the demand is great.

"We have a constrained vaccine supply right now," Huhn said. "We are working toward a greater capacity to manufacture vaccines rolling out vaccines really on a week by week basis."

Mario Ferrici and his wife arrived to get vaccinated, imagining what their lives will look like after a long hard year.

"A lot more socializing," he said. "Going places...we order a lot of food in. We're seniors, so it's going to be a whole lot easier then."

Meanwhile in Chicago, officials are trying to make it easier for people to get their shots, announcing a new website that connects people to vaccine appointments.

Instead of searching various provider websites, the online platform Zocdoc aims to streamline the process by searching those appointment logs for you.

"People are booking in under a minute and we're very proud of that," said Richard Fine with Zocdoc. "I think that's a tremendous improvement over the hours that people are spending and then not able to find vaccine at this time."

Providers include city of Chicago points of dispensing, AMITA Health, Rush University Medical Center, Erie Family Health and Innovative Express Care. More are expected to join.

"We're so excited to have a strong tech platform that, as vaccine availability rolls up, can grow with us," said Chicago Department of Public Health Dr. Allison Arwady.

JOURNAL & TOPICS

Triton To Serve As COVID Vaccine ‘Point Site’

Journal Staff

February 03, 2021

<https://www.journal-topics.com/articles/triton-to-serve-as-covid-vaccine-point-site/>

Beginning Wednesday, Feb. 3, Triton College in River Grove will serve as a Point of Distribution (POD) site for COVID-19 vaccinations. Cook County Health (CCH) will administer vaccinations Monday through Saturday by appointment only.

“Triton College is here to serve, and this is just another example of how we fulfill our mission to serve the community,” said Mark Stephens, chairman of the Triton College Board of Trustees. “There are different ways for a community college to serve its communities, and we take pride in meeting needs in this capacity.”

“I am pleased that Triton College can serve as a vital resource at such a critical time,” said Mary-Rita Moore, president of Triton College.

Triton worked with Cook County and identified approximately 8,000 square feet of space on the south end of the T Building on Triton’s East Campus to use for administering vaccines.

“It has been a pleasure working with the dedicated professionals at Cook County who are working so hard to get people vaccinated,” said John Lambrecht, Triton College associate vice president of facilities.

Appointments can be made at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Individuals without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 (from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday-Friday).



Second mass vaccination site in Cook County opens at Triton College

Nate Rodgers

February 3, 2021

<https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/second-mass-vaccination-site-in-cook-county-opens-at-triton-college>

Triton College is now the **second mass vaccination site** in Cook County. It's a partnership between the Illinois Department of Public Health and **the National Guard**.

The process is easy, with most people registering, receiving the vaccine and being observed afterwards in under 45 minutes.

However, getting an appointment has not been the easiest for some.

"I've gone online for past few days, haven't been able to get appointment," said Martin Coen, a Triton student. "It took me 50 speed dials to get through and then was on hold for half an hour before I got someone to talk to."

So far the health department has released 3,400 appointments for vaccinations at Triton.

Once more supply is in, more appointments will be released.

If you visit **Cook County's online vaccine signup site**, you may see the following message:

"First dose appointments fully booked."

This is because appointment slots are only released for the supply of vaccine available at the vaccination site.

Many people arrived at the vaccination site on Wednesday without an appointment and were sent home.

A person must have an appointment confirmation and QR code to present at the door in order to receive the vaccine.

Triton College in River Grove opens as Cook County COVID-19 vaccination site

Anna Kim

February 3, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/elmwood-park/ct-elm-triton-tl-0211-20210204-qlah7cua3vfydamaf04qeiztwu-story.html>

Triton College, a community college in west suburban River Grove, began serving as one of Cook County Health's COVID-19 vaccination distribution sites on Wednesday.

Iliana Mora, Chief Operating Officer for the Cook County Health system for ambulatory and vaccine sites, said they expect to give out 600 vaccines per day, or about 3,600 vaccines per week, when the site reaches its capacity.

Mora said in deciding on its locations, the department looked for areas where COVID-19 cases are high and locations dispersed throughout Cook County, to make access available to residents.

Under the health department's management, Illinois National Guard members are helping to register patients, administer the vaccine and remain in the observation area after the vaccine is administered, Mora said.

Triton College offered 8,000 square feet of space in the T Building, which houses the engineering technology, automotive technology and visual communications programs, to the health department.

Vaccinations are only available by appointment, and no walk-ins are being accepted.

Terry Valentino, 65, of Arlington Heights, received his first dose of the Pfizer vaccine at Triton College the day it opened. After 40 years as a firefighter, Valentino left his position as fire chief of the Rolling Meadows Fire Department for his scheduled retirement the day before Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced the stay-at-home order in March.

On Wednesday, he wore two masks and a face shield for protection and arrived at the campus for his vaccine. After screening and signing a waiver, Valentino was vaccinated by a National Guard medic.

National Guard medic Abigail Brandenburger prepares to vaccinate Nancy Davis of Park Ridge at Triton College on Feb. 3, 2021. The Cook County Health Department has set up the COVID-19 vaccination site and is planning to vaccinate several hundred people each day who qualify under state 1A and 1B guidelines. (Brian OMahoney / Pioneer Press)

He said he wants to continue doing his part to keep others safe by remaining socially distant—remaining out of stores and restaurants and mostly visiting with family over video—though, he added, he wishes others would more closely follow the guidelines for slowing the spread of COVID-19.

"I'm relieved that I have the first dose, and I will continue to be smart and safe, and kind. That's my theme," Valentino said.

Valentino said after he had an issue with the county health department's website sign-up for vaccinations, he started calling the helpline at 7 a.m. Monday.

After repeated tries, a representative answered and scheduled him for his Wednesday appointment. After he was vaccinated, a helper at the site scheduled him for his second dose. The Cook County Health helpline for vaccinations is 833-308-1988.

“Now that I see how they’re operating there, I would put everyone at ease who wanted to go to a mass distribution site... I was overly impressed by the organization, and the logistics of how it works.”

Mora said she encourages people to sign up using the website, vaccine.cookcountyl.gov, so they can receive notifications when appointments become available.

“I also understand the public’s frustrations, them wanting the vaccines,” Mora said. “...Our ability to provide appointments depends on what supply we receive, so once we have received supply, we then release appointments based on that.”

Cook County Health is recruiting volunteers to work as greeters, nurses for the observation areas and vaccinators, Mora said. To apply, visit illinoishelp.net.



80 New COVID Vaccination Locations Open in Illinois, State Announces

February 4, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/80-new-covid-vaccination-locations-open-in-illinois-state-announces/2429449/>

The state of Illinois has added 80 new COVID-19 vaccination sites, according to a news release from state health officials Thursday.

More than 3.2 million of the state's residents are eligible for vaccinations under Phase 1B, which includes people age 65 years and older as well as "frontline essential workers."

In all, 390 vaccination sites have opened across the state.

The newly-established sites include 78 additional Walgreens locations, as well as two Illinois National Guard locations in Cook and St. Clair counties.

Current vaccination sites in the state are available by appointment only, but the state plans to launch walk-in locations in the coming weeks, officials previously said.

Illinois recently started vaccinations at a number of drug store and grocery chain pharmacies in the state, including Walgreens, Jewel-Osco, Mariano's, Kroger and Hy-Vee.

In total, the chains make up more than 300 of the state's 390 locations. They include:

- [Hy-Vee](#)– 16 locations
- [Jewel-Osco](#) – 92 locations
- [Kroger](#)– 17 locations
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- [Walgreens](#) – 170 locations

[Eight Walmart locations in Chicago](#) were also administering COVID-19 vaccinations as of Wednesday, the company announced.

The two new National Guard sites bring the total number of state-supported sites to 12.

Here's the latest list of locations:

- Arlington Heights Health Center – 3250 N. Arlington Heights Rd., Arlington Heights
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- Tinley Park Convention Center – 18451 Convention Center Dr., Tinley Park
- Triton College – 2000 5th Ave., River Grove, T Building on the East Campus

Several local health departments are also providing the vaccine across the state.

Still, despite the added locations, Illinois officials continue to urge patience, saying vaccine supply is limited.

"While we are working to increase the number of vaccines administered daily, we are limited by the amount of vaccine available and allocated by the federal government," Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's office said in a release. "Vaccinations are available only by appointment at this time and we encourage people to check back frequently for open appointments. Until the supply is increased, there will be a great demand and we ask people to be patient. Individuals should be signing up for an appointment to receive their second dose while they are getting their first vaccination."



Tinley Convention Center Vaccine Site Administers 7K Doses Week 1

Yasmeen Sheikah
February 4, 2021

<https://patch.com/illinois/tinleypark/tinley-park-convention-center-vaccine-site-administers-7k-week-1>

As millions of Americans wait for their turn to receive a coronavirus vaccine and the nation's leaders vow to ramp up distribution, states have differed in how much of their supply has been used so far.

As of Thursday morning in Illinois, 1.98 million vaccine doses have been distributed, and 1.1 million — or around 55 percent — have been administered, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nearly 860,000 people in Illinois have received at least one dose of a vaccine, and 230,850 people have received both doses in the Prairie State, according to the CDC.

That's 1,822 fully vaccinated people per every 100,000 Illinois residents, or 6,779 people per every 100,000 who have gotten at least one vaccine dose.

The [Tinley Park Convention Center](#) was Illinois' first mass vaccination site, which opened in January. The Cook County Department of Public Health reported that there were over 7,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine administered at the site during the first week.

Residents in the 1b category can jump on the [Community Vaccination Program website](#) to see if they qualify to receive the vaccine at this time, make an appointment, get information and register for future notifications when the vaccine becomes available for other population groups.

Over 3.2 million Illinoisans are [eligible for Phase 1B](#) of vaccine distribution. Eligible residents, including everyone over age 65 and frontline essential workers, will be able to receive a vaccine at one of the Illinois National Guard assisted sites, at a site operated by a local health department, or at a partner pharmacy.

[Tinley Village Board Praises Vaccine Distribution Center In Town | Tinley Park, IL Patch](#)

Assistant Village Manager Pat Carr told the Tinley Park village board that the site was put together "very quickly," revealing around the clock work brought the site together in under two weeks.

"Our convention center has been vacant for the past nine months because of COVID. So we put together a plan with Cook County Health, Cook County Emergency Management [and] the Cook County Department of Public Health, to utilize our facility," Carr said. "Within a matter of days, this past weekend, with around-the-clock construction, we were able to transform the convention center into the first mega pod vaccination center in the state."

Carr said this is a historic event and that about 500 vaccines were distributed on day one of being open. He said the site will continue to vaccinate the public until further notice.

Visit the [Cook County Department of Public Health](#) for more information on vaccine distribution.



Pritzker Tours Vaccination Center at Morton East High School

February 4, 2021

<http://www.lawndalenews.com/2021/02/pritzker-tours-vaccination-center-at-morton-east-high-school/>

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker toured a state designated vaccination site on Thursday, Jan. 28th located at Morton East High school, 2423 South Austin Boulevard, in the Town of Cicero. Pritzker announced during the tour that the state will receive \$45 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to increase local health departments' vaccination efforts. "The capacity to deliver, to administer vaccines across the state is significantly increasing," Pritzker said. The governor cited a drive-thru facility located in Lake County he said will administer 1,000 vaccines a day.

Joining Pritzker during the tour was Morton High School Supt. Dr. Tim Truesdale, Morton High School Board President Jeffrey Pesek, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, State legislators Lisa Hernandez and Michael Zalewski, and Cicero officials including Clerk Maria Punzo-Arias, Senior Director Diana Dominick and the Illinois Adjutant General Major General Richard R. Neely.

Cicero's Health Department has administered 2,000 vaccinations during the past week at the Cicero Community Center. Individuals receiving the vaccination were required to schedule an appointment with the Health Department using the Town's website and completing a special vaccination form. But hundreds of people showed up hoping that vaccinations might be available to walk-ins and without an appointment. "It was important for the Governor to see how Cicero is doing everything it can to administer the vaccinations as efficiently as possible," Maria Punzo-Arias said. "The governor's presence here today shows that he wants to do everything he can to get everyone in the state vaccinated."

Under the Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines only individuals listed in the Category 1A and 1B designations can receive the vaccine. That includes first responders, health care workers, employees and individuals 65 years of age and older.

Diana Dominick said that the Senior Center was helping to coordinate the vaccinations among the town's senior citizen community. "We are helping seniors to schedule their appointments and as more vaccinations come in and are made available to the Town of Cicero, we will eventually be able to ensure that every senior gets their vaccination for the COVID-19 virus," Diana Dominick said. Also attending the tour with the governor were Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha, Jr., and Cook County Director of External Affairs Sandra Lewis.



Cook County Health Department updates us on vaccine registration

John Williams

February 4, 2021

<https://wgnradio.com/john-williams/cook-county-health-department-updates-us-on-vaccine-registration/>

Cook County Health Department Senior Medical Officer and co-lead Dr. Kiran Joshi joins John Williams to share ways to get the COVID vaccine, whose very high demand has surpassed its supply. The phone number to call when making a vaccination appointment is 833-308-1988.

Covid-19 Vaccine: What you need to know when you get the shot

*Alina Dizik of The Wall Street Journal
January 23, 2021*

<https://www.biznews.com/health/2021/02/05/covid-19-vaccine-8>

Those getting ready to roll up their sleeves for a Covid-19 vaccine shot will take part in the most ambitious vaccination effort in U.S. history. As efforts ramp up, here's advice from doctors involved with the vaccine rollout on how to prepare and what to expect.

What's involved in getting the first dose?

Many people will register for a timed appointment, aimed at keeping wait times and the potential for crowds to a minimum—although the patchwork rollout so far has also meant many waiting in long lines. After filling out consent forms and receiving the shot, you'll be monitored for adverse reactions for 15 or 30 minutes depending on your allergy history. In the case of a timed appointment, the entire process should take around an hour, says Julie Boom, co-chair of the Covid-19 Vaccine Task Force at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, which is now vaccinating eligible patients that already have records within the hospital system. Afterward, some people choose to go home and rest.

What should you bring with you to the vaccine site?

In most cases, you'll simply need your photo ID and proof of your appointment. Some places may require additional documents, such as employee badges for first responders to show they are eligible. Those getting vaccinated generally shouldn't be asked to pay, so do ask questions if payment is requested.

Should you consider differences between the Pfizer -BioNTech and Moderna vaccines?

For now, the two vaccines available in the U.S. are found to be similarly safe and effective, says Wafaa El-Sadr, professor of epidemiology and medicine at Columbia University in New York. Eventually, choosing one vaccine over the other may come down to scheduling conflicts, she says. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine is offered 21 days later, while Moderna is offered 28 days later. "The only thing I would consider is convenience," says Dr. El-Sadr.

Do you need to fast or avoid any certain food or drinks before the vaccination?

No food precautions are required. Staying well hydrated prior to the vaccine is encouraged for people who tend to feel lightheaded with vaccines or blood draws, says Gregory Huhn, vaccination coordinator for Cook County Health, a hospital system in Chicago.

Before the vaccination, should you take a fever-reducing drug?

Even if you are worried about side effects, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doesn't recommend taking fever-reducing drugs (known as antipyretics) before a vaccine shot. However antipyretics, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, can be used following vaccination to treat any fever or local discomfort, the CDC says.

Is there a risk of being exposed to the coronavirus while waiting for the vaccine?

In any public setting, there's a possibility of being exposed to the virus. The vaccine dose received that day won't offer additional protection, Dr. Huhn says. However, vaccine-site organizers are aware of the risks and take precautions throughout the process, which includes floor decals and furniture spaced at least six feet apart, along with strict masking and capacity limits, he says.

What happens after you get the shot?

People are asked to stay at the site to be monitored for adverse effects, including allergic reactions, though these are rare. Those experiencing any post-vaccine sensations can call over a medical professional to address concerns. The monitoring occurs "within the line of sight of our nurses," Dr. Huhn says. In some cases, Dr. Boom notes, feelings of faintness can relate to nervousness over getting the shot rather than side effects relating directly to the vaccine.

While those vaccinated are asked to stay between 15 and 30 minutes, it is possible to have an allergic reaction or worrying side effects after returning home, Dr. Huhn notes. "Anaphylaxis can occur hours after exposure," he says. If that happens, immediately seek medical help.

Will you get a record of your vaccination?

Adults will receive a vaccination card that includes the lot number and name of the administered vaccine along with a reminder to get their second dose. Those going for their second dose will need to bring this card with them. Your vaccination data is also recorded by the vaccine provider and stored electronically, Dr. Boom says. Later, you may need your vaccine document for work or travel purposes.

Do some people experience more side effects?

While many experience no side effects at all, some younger people with more robust immune systems often have a stronger immune response to the vaccine, which can take the form of side effects including fatigue, muscle aches and soreness at the injection site. In previous research, "those over age 55 had less reactogenicity, because their immune systems aren't as vigorous as those of younger individuals," Dr. Huhn says. Those who have previously had Covid may also have a stronger immune response, he adds.

How protected am I after the first shot alone?

Doctors say there is likely some protection from the first shot but, as the majority of participants in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine trials received two doses, there isn't yet enough data to say definitively how much protection and how long it lasts.

What is the purpose of the second shot?

The second dose enables the immune system to provide long-lasting protection. Doctors strongly advise getting both shots, in the recommended time frame.

How long does it take for the full vaccine protection to kick in?

It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination, the CDC says, and the vaccines that require two shots may not protect you until a week or two after your second shot. "The protective effect begins to be observed from two weeks after the second vaccine injection," Dr. El-Sadr says. She notes that the minimum follow-up for vaccine study participants was eight weeks and that information will evolve over time on the duration of protection.

Is it necessary to wear a mask and social distance after completing the vaccination?

Precautions including mask-wearing and staying away from others are important even after you've been fully vaccinated, as the vaccines aren't 100% effective, Dr. El-Sadr says. Late-stage trials showed Pfizer has 95% effectiveness while Moderna has 94.1%. Additionally, it is possible that even those who have been vaccinated can carry the virus without showing symptoms and pass it onto others. Research on this is still under way.



National Guard Oversees COVID-19 Vaccination Rollout in Illinois

The two new National Guard sites bring the total number of state-supported sites to 12

Charlie Wojciechowski

February 4, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/national-guard-oversees-covid-19-vaccination-rollout-in-illinois/2430007/>

The National Guard has been overseeing the coronavirus vaccination rollout across Illinois over the past month at several locations.

Earlier this week, a vaccination site opened at Triton College with the Illinois National Guard assisting in the distribution process.

Illinois National Guard Maj. General Rich Neely said officers are involved in the organizational aspects of the vaccine rollout.

"Our main strength is to bring a large number of people, organize, do logistics, and be able to support a large effort like this," Neely said.

Soldiers have been given various tasks to help accelerate the process. Senior Airman Smith Traylor will perform as many as 40 COVID-19 vaccinations Thursday alone.

"This is what I do. I'm a medic. I am in nursing school," Traylor said. "It's just very rewarding.

Neely said as of Thursday about 550 guardsmen were on duty, with that number increasing to 1,000 within the next few weeks across the state.

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'I'm going to cry now, happy tears:' Despite hurdles, seniors and essential workers get Covid vaccine shots

Dana Rebik

February 4, 2021

<https://wgntv.com/news/coronavirus/im-going-to-cry-now-happy-tears-despite-hurdles-seniors-and-essential-workers-get-covid-vaccine-shots/>

Despite the wintery weather, hundreds of people visited a National Guard vaccine clinic in River Grove which officials say aims to deliver 600 doses a day.

For Betty Palacz of Hoffman Estates, getting a vaccine appointment was a team effort.

"My neighbor did all the work because I don't have a computer, she did everything for me," Palacz said.

She's one of more than 400 Cook County residents being vaccinated Thursday at the National Guard clinic at Triton College.

"My daughters will be more at ease, they're so afraid for me and my husband," said Mt. Prospect resident Lulu Greenfield.

Currently, 550 national guardsmen are divided between 14 vaccine sites with most in Cook County. With larger shipments anticipated in the future, they hope to expand.

"To see everyone's face and how excited they are to get the vaccination and I love that honestly," National Guard Sgt. Jamilla Jackson said.

Major General Rich Neely said there is a push to pull some vaccines from the supply which is set aside for long-term care facilities, as that rollout has been slower than expected.

"The governor is working very hard with the new administration to make sure we have the supplies needed, how can we be more efficient," Neely said. "After the year we've had with COVID-19, now we can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

So far, Illinois has received 2.1 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, but only administered 1.15 million. Nearly 257,000 people or 2% of the state's population are fully vaccinated.

Illinois has added 80 new vaccine locations across the state, most of them at Walgreens pharmacies, for a total of 390 places where people can get vaccinated.

Finally getting a dose of the vaccine proved to be an overwhelming, emotional experience for many seniors.

Palacz said throughout the pandemic, not being able to see her great-granddaughter, or hug her daughter or son has been hard.

"I'm just so happy I got the shot," Palacz said. "I cried and I cried and I'm going to cry now, happy tears."

Anyone looking to make a vaccine appointment without internet access can call: 833-308-1988.

For some, COVID vaccination was a breeze — after mad scramble to get an appointment

Robert McCoppin

February 5, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/vaccine/ct-covid-how-i-got-vaccine-20210205-cu5cflrd5fbtfnl4i4nkq2utu-story.html>

As a nurse at a private school, Mary Dyra-Hamel was anxious to get a vaccine against COVID-19, but had a hard time lining up a vaccination appointment.

When her email chain of about 40 private school nurses alerted her to a Jewel-Osco pharmacy in Orland Park that was giving shots to medical workers, she jumped at the chance. She signed up on New Year's Eve, got her first shot by Jan. 2 and her second dose by late January.

"We were all desperately trying to get the vaccine since all our fellow nurses who work at hospital systems had already gotten them," she said.

She also got her 93-year-old grandmother vaccinated through Cook County's online registration. But the teachers at her school, the British International School of Chicago in the South Loop, are on standby to get shots through the Chicago Department of Public Health.

"They're very frustrated," Dyra-Hamel said. "That's become a big part of my job, trying to find somebody to vaccinate the teachers."

Across the state, nearly [1.2 million](#) doses had been reported as administered as of Thursday, but that was just slightly more than half of all doses received by the state. Many people have been frustrated just trying to get an appointment.

Among more than 150 readers who [told the Tribune in an informal online survey](#) about their experiences trying to get the vaccine, Dyra-Hamel was among the earliest to get it. Most of those who responded said the hardest part was trying to sign up for an opening, while actually getting the shot was easy. Many said they spent a long time scrambling to sign up online, and lucked out to get a slot.

One survey respondent (who didn't want his name used) described the process as "vaccine roulette."

Kathleen Porter had tried signing up through Walgreens, Elmhurst and Loyola hospitals, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, because her husband served in the Marine Corps in Vietnam. She had no luck with any of those venues.

But when she signed up with Oak Street Health in Bellwood, where her primary doctor works, the clinic called her back and scheduled immediate appointments for her and her husband. Still, her adult son, who has multiple medical conditions, has not been able to get an appointment anywhere.

"I know how fortunate I was," she said.

As an African American woman, she said she recognized [some people have concerns](#) about the vaccine. But having seen the benefits of vaccines ever since they were developed for polio in the 1950s, and after an acquaintance recently died of COVID-19, Porter felt it was important to protect herself.

Elizabeth Christofylakis was not so lucky seeking an appointment. She spent hours online over several days, clicking over and over on various websites, waiting and refreshing, searching for an opening. When she heard that Cook County

Department of Public Health opened a [new website](#) in January, she went online clicking over and over until she got through. She eventually got her shot at a North Riverside clinic — but then had to go online again to schedule her second dose.

“It’s ludicrous to me,” she said. “Scheduling was a nightmare. If you’re not tech savvy or don’t have the time, it’s very difficult. I can’t picture my older relatives doing it.”

At the vaccination site, staffed by the Illinois National Guard, vaccinators told her that when people didn’t show up for appointments, their doses were typically thrown out because they don’t last indefinitely. Chrystofylakis said there should be some system to provide those shots to others.

Efforts are underway at some sites to administer any unused doses by the end of the day before they spoil, Illinois National Guard officials said. As an example, Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Duhs said police, firefighters and previously registered qualifying patients have been called in to use up any leftover doses recently at a vaccination site in Arlington Heights.

In response to complaints about securing appointments, Dr. Rachel Rubin, of the Cook County Department of Public Health, said the demand for shots is far exceeding the supply. On Monday, the county website had 1.9 million visits in the first hour, which slowed down the ability to load the page. The county booked 3,400 appointments in half an hour.

Rubin thanked people for their patience, and suggested trying any of the more than 130 partner locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano’s and federally qualified health centers, listed at <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-location>.

In DuPage County, the health department noted that more than 200,000 people have registered through [its website](#), and it has sent appointment notifications to just 2,773 of them since last week.

Because some 330,000 people qualify under the current phase 1a and 1b, and supply is limited, county officials said, it will probably take several weeks before most people get an appointment.

The wait is frustrating many older people, who are most at risk of dying from the coronavirus. Linda Fay, a 75-year-old resident of the Irving Park neighborhood in Chicago, said her experience trying to get the shot as been “awful.”

She signed up on several sites online, including Cook County and several pharmacies, and been alerted to openings occasionally, but when she checks online, there are no openings.

Advocate Aurora Health officials emailed her to say they would notify her of any openings, but that’s the last she’s heard from them. Her doctor told her to try Walgreens, which was no help. She feels that older people have been overlooked unless they live in a nursing home.

“It’s like, don’t call us, we’ll call you,” she said. “It seems like we’re being forgotten. I’d like to live my life.”

Cook County Begins Vaccinating Jail Detainees, A Controversial Move Backed By Public Health Experts

Patrick Smith

Feb. 5, 2021

<https://www.wbez.org/stories/cook-county-begins-vaccinating-jail-detainees-a-controversial-move-backed-by-public-health-experts/c4dfd7ca-f718-403b-a281-82c945c11472>

Cook County health workers started vaccinating the 5,361 people locked up in the massive jail in Chicago this week. Inoculating inmates is based on the advice of public health experts, but it comes amid a national debate over whether incarcerated people should get priority as millions more wait for their shot at the COVID-19 vaccine.

The jail, where close quarters makes social distancing very difficult, has been a [hot spot for COVID-19](#) almost since the start of the pandemic. [Ten jail detainees have died](#) after testing positive for the virus, along with four correctional officers at the jail.

In December, Cook County Health spokeswoman Caryn Stancik argued to [the Chicago Sun-Times](#) that the jail should be prioritized because “it’s a very transient place, with staff and detainees in and out every day.

“Vaccinating them all would protect the population inside the jail and it would absolutely protect the population outside the jail,” Stancik told the *Sun-Times*.

The county’s position tracks with guidance from the federal government.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified jails and prisons as a place where COVID-19 outbreaks “are often difficult to control” and that those outbreaks can “lead to community transmission.”

The CDC recommends that jail staff and inmates get the vaccine at the same time, because each group faces the same level of risk.

Jail guards in Cook County [started getting vaccinated](#) on Jan. 20. A sheriff spokesman said as of Wednesday more than 2,200 staffers had gotten the first vaccine shot out of about 3,000 sheriff’s employees who work in the facility. Additionally, about 300 contract staff who work in the jail have gotten the vaccine.

Now jail detainees are being offered the Moderna vaccine, according to Stancik. As of Wednesday, health officials had given the first vaccine shot to 150 detainees.

Alexa Van Brunt, director of the MacArthur Justice Center Clinic at Northwestern Law School, represents jail detainees in a class-action lawsuit over COVID-19 inside the jail. She said it was essential that detainees get access to the vaccine because the jail population is up and the virus has run rampant inside the facility, with 125 detainees positive for COVID-19 as of Feb. 2.

But she also acknowledged that it could be difficult to convince many detainees to actually take it, pointing to vaccine skepticism in American society, particularly among Black people who have been victimized in the past by unethical medical practices.

“They cannot be forced to be vaccinated. So it’s really a public health campaign ... trying to get information to detainees about why the vaccine is safe and why it’s important and why they should get it,” Van Brunt said.

[Guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health](#) to prioritize detainees [has drawn criticism](#) as the [vast majority of Illinois residents](#) are still unable to access the coveted vaccine.

In Chicago for instance, the [difficulty teachers have had trying to get vaccinated](#) has played a major role in the ongoing battle over reopening schools.

The Illinois Republican Party [blasted Illinois' Democratic Gov. JB Pritzker](#) on Wednesday for putting incarcerated people near the top of the vaccination list.

“Governor Pritzker is prioritizing young healthy felons ... over high-risk adults. These decisions display a shameful lack of judgment by the Governor. He should reverse course.” state GOP Chairman Tim Schneider said in a statement.

Nationally, states have taken a varied approach to vaccinating people who are incarcerated, although the general consensus among public health experts is that people in jails and prisons should be vaccinated as soon as possible.

In New York, the state’s decision not to prioritize inmates [prompted a lawsuit](#), filed Thursday by a coalition of advocacy groups.



Chicagoans Prepare for Subzero Wind Chills

Vi Nguyen

February 6, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicagoans-bracing-for-subzero-wind-chills/2431624/>

In preparation for below-zero wind chills, the city of Chicago activated warming centers and urged residents to be careful as temperatures continue to drop this weekend.

Some people who work and live in the city told NBC 5 Saturday evening that they are taking the dangerously cold weather very seriously.

"I have about four layers on, I got on my frog togs," said University of Illinois at Chicago graduate student Lily Schreiner. "It keeps me really warm, safe from the snow, got my joggers on, got my snow boots."

The UIC graduate student and others alike are bracing for the arctic blast.

"Maybe tonight, but right now we feel the fingers," said George, who works valet for a restaurant in Greektown. "The fingers still okay it's not that cold."

According to the National Weather Service, [a wind chill advisory will go into effect at midnight, warning of wind chills of up to 30 degrees below zero.](#)

"I think everyone needs to keep an eye on the elderly, people with other problems can have problems with circulation, some medications may impede blood flow a little bit," said Dr. Trevor Lewis with Cook County Health.

Doctors also warn the extreme cold can lead to frostbite in just minutes if you're not protected.

Outreach groups have been trying to reach the homeless population across the city. The Night Ministry will be out again Sunday morning doing wellness check, offering winter clothing and other supplies.

"We're out there for a few minutes at a time you know how cold it is," said Night Ministry Senior Nurse Practitioner Stephan Koruba. "You know how it affects you, just imagine trying to spend all night out there."

As the arctic air moves through Chicago, Shuronda Turner told NBC 5 she is worried about her 85-year-old grandmother, who has been without heat for a week.

"She's a two-time cancer survivor and she's diabetic and she has high blood pressure so this is not a condition that she can stay in," Turner said.

Her grandmother lives at the Senior Suites in the Gage Park neighborhood. Turner said maintenance has been out several times to fix the heat. As of Saturday night, the heat was working, and Turner hoped it will stay on.

"I called, my sister, my brother called," she said. "We are very concerned about our grandmother and making sure things are done correctly."

Turner said she is going to stay with her grandmother for the night, and if the heat goes out again they will get a hotel.

NBC 5 reached out multiple times to Senior Suites for a comment, but hadn't heard back as of Saturday night.

Cook County public health co-lead Dr. Rachel Rubin loses both her parents to COVID-19 in 'surreal' two-week span

Alice Yin
February 7, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-rachel-rubin-coronavirus-parents-cook-county-public-health-20210206-nqjpi663wnqzdcndcsqkduduq-story.html>

When Dr. Rachel Rubin, co-lead of the Cook County Department of Public Health, said her last goodbye to her father in December, it was through a screen.

After not seeing him in-person since he was hospitalized with COVID-19, she logged onto a video chat, but he wasn't able to say much. He asked how her mother, who had also come down with the virus, was faring. Rubin was unsure whether he understood most of her responses.

Harvey Rubin, 93, died Dec. 23 of COVID-19 complications, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office. His wife Aviva Rubin, 91, died less than two weeks later of the same disease. The Rubins lived in Lincolnwood.

Rubin was able to see her mother in person two days before her death, but like her previous meeting with her father, it was quiet. Her mother slept through much of their reunion as Rubin held her hand while talking on the phone with her sister and brother.

"It's been extremely difficult. It's also been very surreal," Rubin said in a phone interview. "We can't really mourn or be with family for comfort the way one usually can be after a loss like this. And so it's still in some ways sort of sinking in."

As one of Cook County's authoritative voices on the coronavirus pandemic, Rubin spent nearly all of 2020 crafting mitigation policies as the virus claimed hundreds of thousands of American lives. In Illinois, COVID-19 killed more than 16,000 people and sickened over 960,000 by the end of the year.

Rubin also joined the rest of the nation's local public health leaders in December to mobilize for the arrival of a federally approved vaccine for the virus, a hopeful reprieve after months of mounting coronavirus cases and deaths. But amid the race to stop the virus' spread, Rubin was also talking to her parents' doctors every day, scrambling to keep up with their declining health.

It became draining for Rubin to watch the news on TV and hear each day's statistics of people dying from the virus. The specter of mortality, ever-present since the pandemic first swept the country, hit home as she thought about her parents who, despite rarely going outside or seeing people beyond their caregiver, could be next. She's left unsure how her parents contracted the disease.

"I never thought that this would happen to my parents because they were being so, so careful," Rubin said. "I just keep rethinking what happened. How did this happen?"

Aviva and Harvey Rubin met during the early 1950s in Chicago while they were both ushering for a play. Aviva Rubin was more serious, immersed in political activism, while Harvey Rubin filled the room with his droll sense of humor and grandiose character impressions. The two bonded over their love of theater, art and politics.

“It’s funny, they had a relationship where we would joke at home that they could argue about the placement of a fork on the table,” Rubin said. “My mother wasn’t going to give an inch. She was very much a feminist, and my dad I think really appreciated that in her.”

Aviva Rubin was born in Jerusalem but grew up in Missouri and Iowa before graduating high school at age 16 and attending the University of Iowa. She moved to Chicago following a stint in New York and became a speech pathologist at Chicago Public Schools.

Rachel Rubin remembers the imprint her mother’s political activism left on her when she was a young girl attending Nettelhorst Elementary School in Lakeview during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, the North Side neighborhood was home to a sizable Puerto Rican population, but threats of gentrification and entrenched school segregation loomed.

Aviva Rubin fought back and protested on behalf of a community group called the Lakeview Citizens Council. She once invited her daughter to testify in front of the Chicago City Council about working-class families being pushed out of Lakeview when she was about 12, one of many formative experiences Rachel Rubin said she had in understanding the fight for civil rights in America.

Harvey Rubin grew up in Humboldt Park, living above his grandfather’s bakery. He attended Wilbur Wright Community College for two years before transferring to the University of Illinois to study journalism. His career path entailed rising up in the advertising industry to become a creative director, but he also performed community theater in his spare time and could recite Shakespeare from memory.

“(His acting was) so alive and engaged,” Rachel Rubin said. “He would be that way anyway in his life, but he would almost be sort of larger-than-life, the way he acted.”

Harvey Rubin gave his performances 100% even when reading bedtime stories to his children during their younger years. When reading Maurice Sendak’s “Where the Wild Things Are,” he puffed his chest to make the right sound effects of the monsters and embodied each character with well-timed inflections.

The loss of Rachel Rubin’s parents doesn’t change what she’s said from the beginning of the pandemic: That mitigation guidelines such as social distancing, masking and getting vaccinated are the only way the nation can wrest control back from the pandemic.

“That’s sort of the public health message, but when it hits you personally like this, it makes those recommendations turn into imperatives,” Rubin said. “They’re not just, ‘oh you should do this,’ but it’s ‘you must do this.’ ”

The past month has left Rubin at times sleepless, waking up in the middle of the night and reminiscing about her parents. But cleaning out their apartment on Sunday also gave her closure as she and her sister collected photographs of their family to sift through.

One photo in particular caught Rubin’s attention that day: a snippet, cut from a Tribune newspaper where she was quoted giving remarks on COVID-19, laying on their living room table. In that photo, she was doing what her parents had always taught her in speaking up and leading through a crisis, she said.

“I think that they were proud,” Rubin said.



Cook County health's Dr. Rachel Rubin loses both parents to COVID-19

Sean Lewis

Feb 7, 2021

<https://wgntv.com/news/features/cook-county-healths-dr-rachel-rubin-loses-both-parents-to-covid-19/>

One of the leaders of Cook County's COVID-19 response is dealing with the loss of her parents, who both succumbed to the virus, within a two-week period.

Together for nearly 70 years, Harvey and Aviva Rubin first found their love at a theater in Chicago.

"They met because they were ushering on the same production," said Dr. Rachel Rubin, of Cook County Public Health. "They shared so many things – voracious readers, intellectual, movie and theatre-goers, museums and travel. And politics. The conversations were always rich and full of what was going on around us in the world."

Their bond, Rubin says, served as an inspiration to her career. Rubin, co-lead of the Cook County Public Health Department, never thought the task would become so personal, however.

"My dad had a fall and he went to the ER for a couple of hours," she said.

A couple of days later, he was diagnosed with COVID-19.

At 93, Rubin revealed that she knew what it meant for her dad's odds. Not long after, 91-year-old Aviva was also diagnosed. Soon, both were hospitalized. Her father died two days before Christmas on Dec. 23.

"After my dad died, my sister and I were able to go into the hospital to see [my mom] and we told her and we were able to be with her," Rubin said. "And we put my brother on the screen. She was able to see him a little bit. So we were with her when we told her about my dad."

While Rubin's mother has a slight rebound, ultimately her health deteriorated.

Rubin says she got to see her mother two days before she passed.

"I spent a couple of hours there with her and I held her hand and talked to her," she said. "It was sort of a quiet goodbye."

Reflecting on the loss, Rubin says if her parents were still alive, both would offer words of encouragement.

"I think my parents would tell me to be safe," she said. "Because they would be worried about me. But I could tell them I've now had the vaccine -both doses – and I think they would say 'just keep up the fight.'"

31 Black medical pioneers to know

Kelly Gooch and Morgan Haefner
February 8, 2021

<https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-management-administration/28-black-medical-pioneers-to-know.html>

In honor of Black History Month, here are 31 clinicians and healthcare professionals who advanced medicine and race relations in the U.S.

1. William G. Anderson, DO. First Black surgical resident in Detroit and the first Black president of the American Osteopathic Association. Dr. Anderson, a professor of surgery and senior adviser to the dean of the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine in East Lansing, became the first Black president of the American Osteopathic Association in 1994. He was also the first Black surgical resident in Detroit. During the civil rights movement, Dr. Anderson worked with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rev. Ralph David Abernathy to lead the Albany Movement calling for an end to community segregation.

2. Alexander Augusta, MD. First Black physician appointed director of a U.S. hospital. Dr. Augusta was born in Norfolk, Va., in 1825. In the 1850s, he earned his medical degree at Trinity Medical College in Toronto and established a successful medical practice in Canada before relocating to the U.S. in 1862. Drafted to serve in the Civil War, Dr. Augusta became the first Black man commissioned as a medical officer and the highest-ranking Black officer in the U.S. Army. He later became the first Black physician to direct a U.S. hospital — the old Freedmen's Hospital at Camp Barker, now Howard University Hospital, in Washington, D.C. Dr. Augusta became a professor at the Howard University Medical Department and was the first Black faculty member of a medical school.

3. Patricia Bath, MD. First Black female physician awarded a patent for a medical invention. Dr. Bath was born in 1942 and received her medical degree from Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C. She interned at Harlem Hospital in New York City from 1968-69 and later completed a fellowship in ophthalmology at Columbia University. Dr. Bath's accomplishments include the invention of a new device for cataract surgery known as the laserphaco probe, for which she was the first Black woman to receive a medical patent. She also was the first African American to complete a residency in ophthalmology, and the first female faculty member in the ophthalmology department at UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute in Los Angeles. Dr. Bath retired from her position at the UCLA Medical Center in 1993 and became an advocate for telemedicine.

4. Regina Marcia Benjamin, MD. First chair of the National Prevention Council. Dr. Benjamin served as the nation's 18th surgeon general from 2009-13. During her tenure, she was first chair of the National Prevention Council, a group of federal agencies focused on healthcare in the U.S. Before becoming surgeon general, Dr. Benjamin founded BayouClinic in Bayou La Batre, Ala., and in 1995 became the first African American woman and first person younger than 40 to be elected to the American Medical Association board of trustees. She also served as president of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama from 2002-03 and was the first African American woman to serve in that role at a state medical society.

5. Leonidas Harris Berry, MD. First Black physician on staff at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago. Dr. Berry, a specialist in digestive tract diseases who also devised a gastroscopic instrument, became the first Black physician on staff at Michael Reese Hospital and the first Black internist at Cook County Hospital, both in Chicago, in 1946. However, he struggled to be named to the attending staff of Michael Reese, even though he was well known in his field and had

taught gastroenterology at Cook County and Michael Reese hospitals for years. He made his first formal application to be named to the Michael Reese attending staff in 1959 and was repeatedly considered "not qualified." He finally received the rank in 1963, at age 61, after making a final plea to the hospital's trustee board committee. He spent the rest of his medical career as a senior attending physician at the hospital.

6. Robert Boyd, MD, DDS. President and co-founder of the first professional organization for Black physicians. The National Medical Association is the nation's oldest and largest organization representing Black physicians and healthcare professionals. Racial exclusivity and segregation laws at the turn of the 20th century made Black physician membership in America's other professional organizations, such as the American Medical Association, virtually impossible. Black physicians frustrated by professional disenfranchisement created the NMA to serve the Black medical community. Dr. Boyd, of Nashville, Tenn., co-founded the group in 1895 and was the first NMA president. He also was the first African American dentist and doctor to open a practice in Nashville.

7. Otis Boykin. Black inventor who improved the pacemaker. Born in Dallas in 1920, Mr. Boykin graduated from Fisk College in Nashville, Tenn., in 1941 and then worked as a lab assistant with the Majestic Radio and TV Corp. in Chicago. Later, he held a job with the P.J. Nilsen Research Laboratories and eventually began researching and inventing himself. His inventions include a wire precision resistor, for which he received a patent in 1959, and a control unit that improved the pacemaker, a device that controls a person's heartbeat. Overall, Mr. Boykin patented nearly 30 electronic devices during his career.

8. Lonnie Bristow, MD. First Black physician elected president of the American Medical Association. Dr. Bristow, a board-certified internal medicine physician, earned his medical degree from the New York University College of Medicine in New York City and went on to practice medicine in San Pablo, Calif. Dr. Bristow joined the American Medical Association in 1970 after the organization banned racial discrimination within its ranks and allowed Black membership in 1968. He later became the first African American to serve as a member of the American Medical Association board of trustees and the first Black chair of the board. In 1995, Dr. Bristow became the first Black physician to lead the organization as president. Under his leadership, the American Medical Association focused on many of the issues Dr. Bristow dedicated his career to, including sickle cell anemia, coronary care and socioeconomic issues affecting healthcare.

9. Alexa Canady, MD. First Black female neurosurgeon. Dr. Canady's interest in neurosurgery grew during her time in medical school at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. After attending medical school, she struggled to obtain an internship, but she eventually accepted a surgical internship at Yale-New Haven (Conn.) Hospital in 1975, becoming the program's first woman and first African American enrollee. By 1981, Dr. Canady had become the United States' first Black female neurosurgeon. She completed her residency at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis and went on to join the neurosurgery department at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. She served as chief of neurosurgery at Detroit-based Children's Hospital of Michigan from 1987 to 2001.

10. Ben Carson, MD. First neurosurgeon to successfully separate conjoined twins attached at the back of the head. Dr. Carson was among the youngest physicians to direct pediatric neurosurgery at Baltimore-based Johns Hopkins Hospital. He successfully completed the first surgical separation of occipital craniopagus twins in 1987. Dr. Carson served as secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development under former President Donald Trump. He earned his bachelor's degree at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., and, in 1977, his medical degree at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He later completed his residency in neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University's medical school in Baltimore.

11. Donna Christian-Christensen, MD. First female physician to serve in Congress. Dr. Christian-Christensen became the first female physician to serve in Congress and the first woman elected as a non-voting delegate to represent the U.S. Virgin Islands in the 1990s. She earned her medical degree from George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C., in 1970 and completed her residency in family medicine at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C., in 1974. Dr. Christian-Christensen served in Congress from Jan. 3, 1997, to Jan. 3, 2015. For 15 years, she served as

chair of the Congressional Black Caucus' Health Braintrust, an advocacy group that leads efforts to oversee and advocate for minority health issues on national and international platforms.

12. Rebecca Crumpler, MD. First Black woman awarded a medical degree from a U.S. college. Dr. Crumpler graduated from New England Female Medical College in Boston in 1864 as the first Black woman awarded a medical degree from a U.S. university. Dr. Crumpler achieved this feat at a time when women were largely barred from secondary education or higher learning opportunities. She published *Book of Medical Discourses* in 1883, which drew information from her clinical experiences to help women better care for the health of their families.

13. Helen Dickens, MD. First Black woman admitted to the American College of Surgeons. The only Black woman in her graduating class, Dr. Dickens earned her medical degree from the University of Illinois in Chicago in 1934. She completed her internship at Provident Hospital in Chicago, during which she treated patients with tuberculosis in impoverished communities. In 1945, Dr. Dickens was the first Black woman to receive board certification in obstetrics and gynecology in Philadelphia. Five years later, she became the first Black woman admitted as a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. She served as director of the obstetrics department at Mercy Douglass Hospital in Philadelphia from 1945-51 before joining the city's Women's Hospital and eventually becoming chief of obstetrics and gynecology there.

14. Charles Drew, MD. First to use blood plasma to store blood for transfusion. Dr. Drew pioneered methods of storing blood plasma for transfusion and organized the first large-scale blood bank in the U.S. during World War II. After the war, Dr. Drew began developing a blood storage program at the American Red Cross but resigned soon after officials decided to segregate the blood of African Americans. Dr. Drew went on to become chief surgeon at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., now Howard University Hospital, and the first Black examiner for the American Board of Surgery.

15. Joycelyn Elders, MD. First Black female physician appointed surgeon general. Born to a family of impoverished farmers in 1933, Dr. Elders grew up in a rural, segregated part of Arkansas. In spite of socioeconomic obstacles, Dr. Elders earned her medical degree from the University of Arkansas Medical School in Little Rock in 1960. She returned to the university for her residency in 1961, during which she became chief resident responsible for a team of all-white, all-male residents and interns. Then-Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton appointed Dr. Elders director of the Arkansas Department of Health in 1987. As U.S. president, Mr. Clinton appointed Dr. Elders the first Black U.S. surgeon general in 1993.

16. Roselyn Epps, MD. First Black president of the American Medical Women's Association. Dr. Epps graduated with honors from Washington, D.C.-based Howard University College of Medicine in 1951. Dr. Epps devoted her life to advocating for women's health and public health issues in underserved communities and made extraordinary contributions to public health organizations. Her achievements include presiding as the first Black president of the American Medical Women's Association in 1974 and serving as a scientific program administrator at the National Institutes of Health. In her lifetime, Dr. Epps wrote more than 90 articles in peer-reviewed journals and served as co-editor for both *The Women's Complete Healthbook* and *Developing a Child Care Program*.

17. Kenneth Frazier. First Black man to lead a major pharmaceutical company. In 1992, Mr. Frazier joined Merck & Co.'s public affairs division and was general counsel, helping to define the pharmaceutical giant's legal strategy over the next 10 years. He rose through the management ranks at Merck until he was appointed chair and CEO in 2011, becoming the first Black person to lead a major pharmaceutical company. He plans to retire from Merck on June 30, 2021. Mr. Frazier received his undergraduate degree from Pennsylvania State University in University Park and earned his law degree from Cambridge, Mass.-based Harvard Law School.

18. Solomon Carter Fuller, MD. First Black psychiatrist recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. Dr. Fuller pioneered Alzheimer's research during his career and advanced the study of many other neurodegenerative diseases, including schizophrenia and manic depression. After earning his medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine in 1897, Dr. Fuller became the first Black psychiatrist in the U.S. recognized by the APA. He eventually became an emeritus professor of neurology at Boston University. The mental health center for students at the university bears Dr. Fuller's name today in honor of his contributions to psychiatric research.

19. Marilyn Hughes Gaston, MD. First Black female director of a U.S. Public Health Service bureau. Dr. Gaston earned her medical degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine in 1964 and completed her internship in pediatric medicine at Philadelphia General Hospital. She is credited for her groundbreaking research in sickle cell anemia. Dr. Gaston was the first Black female physician appointed director of HHS' Bureau of Primary Health Care in 1990, where she focused on improving healthcare access for underserved and minority communities. National and international organizations have recognized Dr. Gaston for her social and scientific achievements. She received each type of award given by the U.S. Public Health Service as well as the National Medical Association's most prestigious honor, the NMA Scroll of Merit.

20. Patrice Harris, MD. First Black woman to be president of the American Medical Association. Dr. Harris became the first Black woman to lead the American Medical Association as president in 2019. Prior to her appointment, she had served on the AMA's board of trustees since 2011, and was chair from 2016-17. Dr. Harris currently oversees the AMA's efforts around the opioid epidemic and has chaired the association's opioid task force since 2014. Dr. Harris is a psychiatrist from Atlanta. She earned her medical degree from West Virginia University in Morgantown in 1992.

21. William Hinton, MD. First Black physician to teach at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Hinton graduated from Boston-based Harvard Medical School in 1912, after which he worked in Harvard's Wassermann Laboratory. He became the first Black person promoted to the rank of professor at Harvard Medical School in 1949. The appointment came more than 30 years after joining the faculty and only a year before he retired. Dr. Hinton was a world-renowned expert in the diagnosis and treatment of syphilis. He was the first Black person to write a medical textbook in the U.S. Published in 1936, it was called *Syphilis and its Treatment*.

22. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD. First Black female president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey has more than 30 years of experience as a medical practitioner, policymaker, professor and nonprofit executive. In 2003, she became the first Black female president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, one of America's largest philanthropic organizations devoted to public health and healthcare. She served in that role until 2017. Before joining the foundation, Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey served as a professor of medicine and healthcare systems at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, directed Penn's Institute on Aging and was chief of geriatric medicine at University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine.

23. Miles Vandarhurst Lynk, MD. Co-founder of the first professional organization for Black physicians. After graduating from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., in 1891, Dr. Lynk became the first Black physician in Jackson, Tenn. He continued to break barriers throughout his life, including founding the first medical journal published by an African American, *The Medical and Surgical Observer*. Perhaps he is most notable for co-founding the National Medical Association for African American Physicians in 1895. The NMA is the nation's oldest and largest organization representing Black physicians and healthcare professionals.

24. Mary Mahoney, RN. First Black woman awarded a nursing degree. Ms. Mahoney is credited as America's first Black professional nurse. She graduated from Boston-based New England Hospital for Women and Children's training school for nurses in 1879 and became one of the first Black members of the American Nurses Association. In addition to her pioneering efforts in nursing, Ms. Mahoney is recognized for her role in the women's suffrage movement. She was among the first women to register to vote in Boston after the ratification of the 19th Amendment on Aug. 26, 1920.

25. Herbert W. Nickens, MD. First director of the HHS Office of Minority Health. Dr. Nickens was an advocate for justice in medical education and healthcare equity for racial and ethnic minorities. In 1986, he became the first director of the HHS Office of Minority Health. He later became the founding vice president of the Association of American Medical Colleges community and minority programs division, now Diversity Policy and Programs. Dr. Nickens also played a key role in the association's Project 3000 by 2000, which launched in 1991 to enroll 3,000 underrepresented minority students in medical school annually by 2000.

26. Barbara Ross-Lee, DO. First Black woman to be appointed dean of an American medical school. Dr. Ross-Lee is credited with helping pave pathways for minorities and women in the osteopathic profession. In 1993, Dr. Ross-Lee became the first Black woman to lead a U.S. medical school as dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine of Ohio

University in Athens. She held that role until 2001. She was appointed by the Institute of Medicine to join the Consensus Committee on the Governance and Financing of Graduate Medical Education in 2012. Dr. Ross-Lee graduated from the East Lansing-based Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1973.

27. Velma Scantlebury, MD. The first Black female transplant surgeon in the U.S. Dr. Scantlebury served as the associate director of the kidney transplant program at Christiana Care in Newark, Del., from 2008-20. Her research includes the results of donation and transplantation in Black communities, increasing organ donation in Black communities through education and awareness, increasing the incidence of living donor transplantation and treating viral kidney infections. Dr. Scantlebury previously worked at the University of South Alabama's regional transplant center, where she was a professor of surgery, assistant dean of community education and director of transplantation. She has performed more than 2,000 transplants.

28. James McCune Smith, MD. First Black man to practice with a medical degree in the U.S. Dr. McCune Smith was an American physician, abolitionist and author. He earned his medical degree from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, in 1837, and returned to New York as the first Black man in the U.S. to hold and practice with a medical degree. He was also the first Black physician to establish and run a pharmacy. Dr. McCune Smith used his training in medicine and statistics to refute misconceptions about race, intelligence, medicine and society in general.

29. Louis Wade Sullivan, MD. The only Black student in his class at Boston University School of Medicine. Dr. Sullivan received his medical degree in 1958 from Boston University School of Medicine, where he was the only Black student in his class. He went on to complete his residency at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center in New York City, and later served on the faculty of Boston University School of Medicine from 1966-75. In 1975, he returned to his hometown, Atlanta, where he served as the first dean of the Morehouse College Medical Education Program, which later became Morehouse School of Medicine. He left Morehouse to become secretary of HHS from 1989-92, and in 2003 was appointed by President George W. Bush to chair the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

30. Daniel Hale Williams, MD. One of the first physicians to perform a successful open-heart surgery; founded the first interracial and Black-owned hospital. Dr. Williams opened Provident Hospital in Chicago in 1891, the first Black-owned hospital and the first medical facility with an interracial staff. He was one of the first physicians to complete a successful pericardial surgery, also known as open-heart surgery. He later became chief surgeon at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Dr. Williams was the first Black member of the American College of Surgeons and co-founded the National Medical Association with Robert Boyd, MD. He earned his medical degree from Chicago Medical College.

31. Jane Wright, MD. First woman elected president of the New York Cancer Society. Dr. Wright was a pioneering cancer researcher and accomplished surgeon. Her work is largely responsible for elevating chemotherapy from a last-ditch effort at treating cancer patients to a viable treatment option. She completed her residency at Harlem Hospital in New York City, where she later served as chief resident. In 1964, working as part of a team at New York University School of Medicine, Dr. Wright developed a nonsurgical method using a catheter system to deliver heavy doses of anticancer drugs to previously hard-to-reach tumor areas in the kidneys, spleen and elsewhere. Dr. Wright served as associate dean and head of cancer chemotherapy department at New York Medical College in New York City in 1967.



Cook County public health co-lead Dr. Rachel Rubin loses both her parents to COVID-19 in ‘surreal’ two-week span

*Alice Yin (Chicago Tribune)
February 8, 2021*

<https://news.yahoo.com/cook-county-public-health-co-113000520.html>

When Dr. Rachel Rubin, co-lead of the Cook County Department of Public Health, said her last goodbye to her father in December, it was through a screen.

After not seeing him in-person since he was hospitalized with COVID-19, she logged onto a video chat, but he wasn't able to say much. He asked how her mother, who had also come down with the virus, was faring. Rubin was unsure whether he understood most of her responses.

Harvey Rubin, 93, died Dec. 23 of COVID-19 complications, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office. His wife Aviva Rubin, 91, died less than two weeks later of the same disease. The Rubins lived in Lincolnwood.

Rubin was able to see her mother in person two days before her death, but like her previous meeting with her father, it was quiet. Her mother slept through much of their reunion as Rubin held her hand while talking on the phone with her sister and brother.

"It's been extremely difficult. It's also been very surreal," Rubin said in a phone interview. "We can't really mourn or be with family for comfort the way one usually can be after a loss like this. And so it's still in some ways sort of sinking in."

As one of Cook County's authoritative voices on the coronavirus pandemic, Rubin spent nearly all of 2020 crafting mitigation policies as the virus claimed hundreds of thousands of American lives. In Illinois, COVID-19 killed more than 16,000 people and sickened over 960,000 by the end of the year.

Rubin also joined the rest of the nation's local public health leaders in December to mobilize for the arrival of a federally approved vaccine for the virus, a hopeful reprieve after months of mounting coronavirus cases and deaths. But amid the race to stop the virus' spread, Rubin was also talking to her parents' doctors every day, scrambling to keep up with their declining health.

It became draining for Rubin to watch the news on TV and hear each day's statistics of people dying from the virus. The specter of mortality, ever-present since the pandemic first swept the country, hit home as she thought about her parents who, despite rarely going outside or seeing people beyond their caregiver, could be next. She's left unsure how her parents contracted the disease.

"I never thought that this would happen to my parents because they were being so, so careful," Rubin said. "I just keep rethinking what happened. How did this happen?"

Aviva and Harvey Rubin met during the early 1950s in Chicago while they were both ushering for a play. Aviva Rubin was more serious, immersed in political activism, while Harvey Rubin filled the room with his droll sense of humor and grandiose character impressions. The two bonded over their love of theater, art and politics.

“It’s funny, they had a relationship where we would joke at home that they could argue about the placement of a fork on the table,” Rubin said. “My mother wasn’t going to give an inch. She was very much a feminist, and my dad I think really appreciated that in her.”

Aviva Rubin was born in Jerusalem but grew up in Missouri and Iowa before graduating high school at age 16 and attending the University of Iowa. She moved to Chicago following a stint in New York and became a speech pathologist at Chicago Public Schools.

Rachel Rubin remembers the imprint her mother’s political activism left on her when she was a young girl attending Nettelhorst Elementary School in Lakeview during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, the North Side neighborhood was home to a sizable Puerto Rican population, but threats of gentrification and entrenched school segregation loomed.

Aviva Rubin fought back and protested on behalf of a community group called the Lakeview Citizens Council. She once invited her daughter to testify in front of the Chicago City Council about working-class families being pushed out of Lakeview when she was about 12, one of many formative experiences Rachel Rubin said she had in understanding the fight for civil rights in America.

Harvey Rubin grew up in Humboldt Park, living above his grandfather’s bakery. He attended Wilbur Wright Community College for two years before transferring to the University of Illinois to study journalism. His career path entailed rising up in the advertising industry to become a creative director, but he also performed community theater in his spare time and could recite Shakespeare from memory.

“(His acting was) so alive and engaged,” Rachel Rubin said. “He would be that way anyway in his life, but he would almost be sort of larger-than-life, the way he acted.”

Harvey Rubin gave his performances 100% even when reading bedtime stories to his children during their younger years. When reading Maurice Sendak’s “Where the Wild Things Are,” he puffed his chest to make the right sound effects of the monsters and embodied each character with well-timed inflections.

The loss of Rachel Rubin’s parents doesn’t change what she’s said from the beginning of the pandemic: That mitigation guidelines such as social distancing, masking and getting vaccinated are the only way the nation can wrest control back from the pandemic.

“That’s sort of the public health message, but when it hits you personally like this, it makes those recommendations turn into imperatives,” Rubin said. “They’re not just, ‘oh you should do this,’ but it’s ‘you must do this.’ ”

The past month has left Rubin at times sleepless, waking up in the middle of the night and reminiscing about her parents. But cleaning out their apartment on Sunday also gave her closure as she and her sister collected photographs of their family to sift through.

One photo in particular caught Rubin’s attention that day: a snippet, cut from a Tribune newspaper where she was quoted giving remarks on COVID-19, laying on their living room table. In that photo, she was doing what her parents had always taught her in speaking up and leading through a crisis, she said.

“I think that they were proud,” Rubin said.

POLITICO

SURPRISE! IT'S SEN. SIMMONS — TRACY NAMED GOP CHAIR — TEACHER STRIKE AVERTED?

Shia Kapos

February 8, 2021

<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/illinois-playbook/2021/02/08/surprise-its-sen-simmons-tracy-named-gop-chair-teacher-strike-averted-491674>

— **U.K. coronavirus variant spreading rapidly through United States, study finds:** “The coronavirus variant that shut down much of the United Kingdom is spreading rapidly across the United States, outcompeting other strains and doubling its prevalence among confirmed infections every week and a half, according to new research made public Sunday,” by the Washington Post’s Joel Achenbach.

— **Biden’s vaccine ad campaign hits roadblock: Not enough doses:** “Administration officials are wary of launching a promised campaign promoting vaccination while doses are still in limited supply,” by POLITICO’s Adam Cancryn.

— **Highly contagious UK coronavirus strain detected in Lake County:** “Someone who traveled internationally during December tested positive for the first known Lake County Covid-19 case with the highly contagious variant first detected in the United Kingdom, according to a weekend news release from the Lake County Health Department. While the person was abroad, they came in contact with someone who was sick, according to the release,” Lake County News-Sun’s Steve Sadin reports.

— **Cook County public health co-lead loses both her parents to Covid-19 in ‘surreal’ two-week span:** “As one of Cook County’s authoritative voices on the coronavirus pandemic, Dr. **Rachel Rubin** spent nearly all of 2020 crafting mitigation policies as the virus claimed hundreds of thousands of American lives. In Illinois, Covid-19 killed more than 16,000 people and sickened over 960,000 by the end of the year,” by Tribune’s Alice Yin.

The Daily Line

Hundreds of Cook County Jail detainees receive COVID-19 vaccine in effort to snuff out community spread

Alex Nitkin

February 8, 2021

<https://thedailyline.net/chicago/02/08/2021/hundreds-of-cook-county-jail-detainees-receive-covid-19-vaccine-in-effort-to-snuff-out-community-spread/>

Cook County health officials had vaccinated 300 jail detainees by Friday with hundreds more in line for shots, as county officials look to crush the coronavirus inside a facility widely blamed for helping spread the virus across the county.

With the first round of doses getting to detainees last Monday, more than 5 percent of the jail's population had received Moderna shots by Friday, according to a spokesperson for the Cook County Health system, which is overseeing the immunization effort at the jail.

Niles Senior Center helps members register for COVID-19 vaccine notifications from county

Jennifer Johnson
February 8, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/niles/ct-nhs-seniors-vaccine-tl-0211-20210209-mdfpn5zp2nb33g52o65ksqzzi-story.html>

Cook County residents over 65 may qualify for a COVID-19 vaccine, but finding an available appointment can be a challenge, especially for those without internet access.

Staff at the Niles Senior Center on Feb. 1 began calling members without internet to find out if they needed help to sign up for a vaccine through the [Cook County Department of Public Health](#).

Within three days, the center had contacted 291 members and assisted more than 100 additional individuals who had reached out to the center for help, said Kelly Mickle, Senior Center director.

“We are asking members if they signed up on the Cook County site for a vaccine and, if not, would they like assistance in signing up,” Mickle said. “Some don’t want assistance, but a majority do.”

Staff is signing up members to receive notifications from the Cook County Department of Public Health when a vaccine appointment is available at a designated county site, she explained. Members will use their cellphones can then receive text messages letting them know an appointment is available.

Actual vaccinations are not being provided at the Niles Senior Center at this time.

Mickle acknowledged that very few actual appointments were secured during the first week the Niles Senior Center helped seniors with registrations due to the limited supply of COVID-19 vaccines.

Many citizens who have reached out to the Senior Center have expressed frustration about the process of signing up for vaccines, Mickle said.

“The majority are just so thankful because they don’t know what to do,” she said.

In Park Ridge, seniors will be able to use computers at the Centennial Activity Center to sign up or search for appointments, said Margaret Holler, spokeswoman for the Park Ridge Park District.

Computers in the center’s library at 100 S. Western Ave. were scheduled to be available by appointment starting Feb. 8, Holler said.

In January, the Frisbie Senior Center in Des Plaines worked with Jewel-Osco to provide COVID-19 vaccines to individuals over age 65 or who qualify for vaccination as essential workers, the senior center said on its website.

“Although this was a ‘one off’ event with very limited availability and there are no plans for future vaccinations, we continue to pursue opportunities to increase access to this much-needed intervention,” the center said.



Segunda dosis vacuna COVID-19: ¿Qué efectos secundarios podría tener?

February 9, 2021

<https://www.telemundochicago.com/videos/videos-noticias/segunda-dosis-vacuna-covid-19-que-efectos-secundarios-podria-tener-2/2152685/>

La doctora Vimarie Rodríguez del hospital de Condado Cook explica cuál es la diferencia entre la primera y segunda dosis y los efectos secundarios reportados por algunas personas.



Cook County residents confused by COVID vaccine texts; Here's what they mean

Mike Krauser

February 9, 2021

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/heres-what-cook-countys-covid-vaccine-sign-up-texts-mean>

Residents of suburban Cook County who signed up to receive alerts for COVID-19 vaccinations have been getting confusing text messages.

Cook County's computer system sent autogenerated messages containing vaccination registration codes to those primarily in vaccination group 1C, who are not yet eligible. The state is still working through group 1B.

The message led some to believe it was their turn for the shots and others were notified they are not eligible.

A Cook County spokesman told the Chicago Tribune the county's system is automatically sending sign up codes to everyone who filled out a Cook County Department of Public Health online survey in recent weeks, giving information that indicated they may be eligible for group 1C.

While the codes are real, it does not allow for residents to immediately sign up for vaccination appointments.

The county's spokesman said when people who have signed up are eligible they will be informed.

The text message from Cook County said, in many cases, "COVID Vaccine Updates. You are in priority group 1C" and included sign-up numbers. When people in 1c become eligible for shots, they can use those sign-up numbers to schedule appointments with Cook County at <https://vaccine.cookcountyil.gov/>.

Some people also received messages saying they were not eligible for vaccinations in suburban Cook County after filling out the survey. People who live or work in suburban Cook County are eligible for shots through the Cook County Department of Public Health, except for those in Chicago, Stickney, Skokie, Evanston, and Oak Park, which have their own health departments.

If people did not fill out the survey, but want sign-up numbers, they can get those by calling 833-308-1988.

Illinois COVID-19 questions answered: Should people wear 2 masks? Will everyone be able to get a vaccine by April? Will more mass vaccination sites be opening?

Alison Bowen, Christen A Johnson, Darcel Rockett
February 17, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-life-covid-questions-chicago-illinois-cb-20210209-cmmfplejbfeljgx5ojfjwqzcu-list.html>

Should people wear 2 masks to lower the risk of spreading the coronavirus?

Researchers found that two masks are better than one in slowing coronavirus spread.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reported on Feb. 16 the results of a lab experiment that spaced two artificial heads 6 feet from each other and checked to see how many coronavirus-size particles spewed by one were inhaled by the other.

The researchers found that wearing one mask — surgical or cloth — blocked about 40% of the particles coming toward the head that was breathing in. When a cloth mask was worn on top of a surgical mask, about 80% were blocked.

When both heads were double-masked, more than 95% of the particles were blocked, according to the CDC's Dr. John Brooks. However, health officials stopped short of recommending that everyone double up on masking.

— *Darcel Rockett*

Will vaccines be available to everyone by the end of April?

In a "[CBS This Morning](#)" interview Feb. 17, U.S. infectious disease chief Dr. Anthony Fauci said the plan to have vaccines available to "everybody and anybody" who wants to take them (beyond those eligible under 1a, 1b and 1c guidelines) by the end of April has shifted. Johnson & Johnson's one-dose vaccine will likely not be available for "another couple of months after that," he said. However, Fauci said he's pretty confident that J&J's doses will be in the pipeline by the end of June or the beginning of July.

"I'm sure we'll get them by that time," he said. He knows uniformity and consistency with vaccination dissemination has been difficult so far. "Right now the demand far exceeds the supply. As we get into the later months, April, May, June and July, those kind of difficulties and discrepancies will disappear."

— *Darcel Rockett*

Will more mass vaccination sites be opening in Illinois?

Gov. J.B. Pritzker launched three additional state-supported mass vaccination sites — two in Carbondale and another in Springfield. The Springfield site (opened Feb. 17) and the combined Carbondale sites (opening Feb. 19) will each launch with an allocation of 4,000 doses per week with plans to ramp up to the full capacity of 2,700 doses daily, pending increases in federal vaccine shipments.

The new sites build upon the state-supported mass vaccination infrastructure at the Tinley Park Convention Center in Cook County and the Belle-Clair Fairgrounds and Expo Center in St. Clair County.

— *Darcel Rockett*

As news of COVID-19 variants spreading continues, is there an entity keeping track of their development?

Cases of COVID-19 mutations of the coronavirus have been popping up in Illinois.

Last week, [22 cases](#) of the B.1.1.7 variant were identified in Illinois, according to public health officials. And a case of variant B.1.351 was reported in [Rock Island](#).

[Rush University Medical Center](#) will launch an advanced molecular laboratory in March to study and monitor the spread of coronavirus strains in Chicago, determining which strains are transmitting quickest and tracking them as they spread, according to university officials.

White House coronavirus coordinator Jeffrey Zients has called U.S. tracking of virus mutations “totally unacceptable,” saying the nation ranks 43rd in the world.

Currently, there is [legislation advancing in Congress](#) that would provide \$1.75 billion for genomic sequencing or mapping the DNA of coronavirus mutations. Sequencing could take COVID-19 precautions to the next level, according to U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin.

“Variants represent a growing threat. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing our testing capacity was essential to our ability to track and slow the spread of the virus — the same is true for finding and tracking these variants,” she said.

— *Angie Leventis Lourgou and Associated Press*

Will community health centers directly receive more vaccines from the federal government?

On Feb. 9, President Joe Biden announced the Federally Qualified Health Center program, which will directly provide more vaccines to community health clinics.

According to the White House, starting Feb. 15, federally qualified community health centers will [begin directly receiving vaccines](#). The initial phase will include at least one community health center in each state.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker noted the program Jan. 10 and said it would ramp up over the coming weeks.

When will pregnant women be eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

In Illinois, pregnant women will be eligible when phase 1b expands to include medical conditions such as pregnancy on Feb. 25.

Pregnant women are [commonly excluded from research](#), and were not included in initial clinical trials for the coronavirus vaccine, despite groups like the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists calling for their inclusion. This is an issue, said Dr. Kathleen Neuzil, co-director of the National Institutes of Health’s COVID-19 Prevention Network, because many in the health care field are women.

A Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine statement recommended that health care workers be offered the vaccine if pregnant, and that in general, pregnant women should have access to vaccines in future vaccine campaigns.

Dr. Emily Miller, assistant professor in the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine at Northwestern Medicine’s Feinberg School of Medicine, said unknowns have to be “balanced against the risk of not getting the vaccine, which is the risk of acquisition of (COVID-19), which has concrete and well-documented risks. ... Through that lens, if we can remember that there is no zero-risk option, then the balance at this point favors receiving the vaccine.”

Should breastfeeding moms receive a vaccine?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, along with American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [guidance](#), says lactating women should be offered the vaccine.

Because breastfeeding and lactating women were not included in initial trials, data is limited about how the COVID-19 vaccines might impact them. The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine [noted the limited data](#) but also noted that vaccines generally do not affect the safety of breastfeeding.

Despite the CDC guidance that women should be able to speak with their provider and make their own decisions regarding the vaccine, some localities might exclude them. Last week, Kane County reversed a decision that had [denied vaccines to pregnant and breastfeeding women](#) even if they were otherwise eligible.

I completed my doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Days later, I was prescribed a steroid and antibiotic. I am concerned this might blunt or diminish the vaccine. How can I determine if the vaccine will still be effective? Should I get an antibody test to determine efficacy?

Dr. Michael Lin, a Rush University Medical Center infectious disease specialist, said that right now, antibody testing is not recommended to assess immunity to COVID-19 after vaccination, partly because reliable tests are not commercially available.

Many of the antibody tests are not designed to test for the vaccine-generated antibody, he said, so these tests would be expected to have negative results, which could lead to false anxiety.

As far as medications, Lin said that, in general, medications will not interfere with COVID-19 vaccines. “A potential exception would be medications designed to suppress the immune system, such as steroids,” he said. “At this time, data are not available to establish vaccine safety and efficacy in people who are taking immune-suppressive medications.”

But he added that he agrees with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [statement](#) that people with immunocompromising conditions might be at increased risk for severe COVID-19, and that they may receive the vaccine if “they have no contraindications to vaccination.”

CDC guidance adds, “However, they should be counseled about the unknown vaccine safety profile and effectiveness in immunocompromised populations, as well as the potential for reduced immune responses and the need to continue to follow all current guidance to protect themselves against COVID-19.”

It’s hard scheduling a vaccination appointment. Is there a site that makes it easier?

The hunt for COVID-19 vaccines has seemed like a part-time job for some, and stories of people venturing to other neighborhoods to get them are plentiful. Starting Feb. 2, Chicago began promoting use of Zocdoc, a [national website](#) that allows people to find and schedule COVID-19 vaccination appointments from some local vaccination sites, including those operated by AMITA Health, Erie Family Health, Innovative Express Care and Rush University Medical Center.

Don’t be worried if appointments for February are already full, said public health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady. The process is going as expected, Arwady said, and residents should register their emails for notifications about future availability. Zocdoc will allow people to sign up to be notified when new appointments are available.

Suburban Cook County residents can make appointments through the Cook County Public Health [site](#). Illinoisans can go through the [Illinois Department of Health](#) and enter their ZIP code to find vaccination locations and get appointment information.

— Gregory Pratt, Alice Yin

What if I get one dose of the vaccine but don’t follow up for the second?

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association ([JAMA](#)), it is not known what will happen if a person gets only one dose — partial immunity and a higher risk of susceptibility to a variant that causes COVID-19 are two possibilities. There is no evidence that people who get only one dose have adequate long-term protection against COVID-19 infection.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) recommends the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine be given within three weeks of the first dose for the Pfizer vaccine and within four weeks for the Moderna vaccine. No more than six weeks should lapse between doses.

If the second dose is not given during these time frames, it can be given without the need to repeat the first dose. Earlier doses of the second shot are not recommended, but if a person needs to get a second dose earlier, giving the second dose up to four days ahead of schedule is allowed.

Is anyone studying how vaping affects a COVID-19 outcome?

[Dr. Nora Volkow](#), director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (part of the National Institutes of Health), says there is [research/data](#) being collected from the vaping population. While relatively new, there are [published reports](#) that look at the association between vaping and the risk of getting infected with coronavirus and/or developing symptoms. A national online survey conducted in May 2020 of people aged 13-24 revealed those with a history of e-cigarettes and vaping showed a significant increased risk of being infected with COVID-19, five times higher.

“Vaping poses inflammatory changes in the pulmonary airway,” Volkow said. “And if you have an inflammation, you are much more vulnerable to being infected with viruses or bacteria.

You have two conditions – vaping and COVID-19, both of them harming the pulmonary epithelium, and you can see why it is very likely that in this case, if you are vaping you are at higher risk of not just infection but worse, the outcome. The recommendation across the world of pulmonary specialists is try to avoid smoking, vaping or putting anything in your lungs, that can harm them.”

How can I schedule my second shot?

The second dose of the Moderna shot is supposed to be given 28 days after the first, and the second dose of the Pfizer shot is supposed to be given 21 days after the first.

Many pharmacies and health systems are scheduling second shots, on-site, right after people receive their first ones. University of Chicago Medicine is typically scheduling people for their second shots when they get first doses, and if they don't schedule at that time, they get electronic reminders to do so. At Rush University Medical Center, the clinician who gives a person a shot also books that person for their second one, Quick said.

Some people reported trouble scheduling a second shot at Walgreens, but the Walgreens website has been updated to allow people to schedule first and second doses at the same time, said spokesman Phil Caruso. People who already got a first shot at Walgreens without being able to schedule a second one will be contacted with steps to make their second dose appointments, he said.

Mariano's, Jewel-Osco and Walmart are scheduling second shots when people get their first shots.

— *Lisa Schencker*

What if I can't get my shot 21 days or 28 days after the first?

People shouldn't panic if they can't get their second doses on day 21 or 28, said Dr. Michelle Prickett, an associate professor of medicine in pulmonary and critical care at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine.

Those are the recommended times for the second doses, but there is wiggle room. Those second doses may also be given, if necessary, up to four days earlier than the recommended time or as late as within six weeks of the first dose, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As long as people receive their second doses within that six-week time frame, “It should be effective,” Prickett said.

— *Lisa Schencker*

Do all Cook County ZIP codes work for the county’s vaccination program?

Yes. Despite a technological snafu Jan. 27, all Cook County ZIP codes should work on the website for the Cook County Community Vaccination Program, where people can sign up for vaccine updates, distribution locations and notification of when vaccine administration is open to your phase.

Put in your ZIP code for more information here: <https://vaccine.cookcountyil.gov>. People should get an email with their phase and a confirmation number.

Do I have to prove I’m 65 or older or an essential worker to get a shot?

In some places, yes, and in other places, no. Loyola, for example, is asking older patients to bring an ID with date of birth, and essential workers to bring proof of their employment, such as a letter from their employer, a pay stub, a work ID or a uniform to their vaccination appointments, Gupta said. Loyola is turning away people who cannot prove they’re eligible.

Cook County Health asks for proof from essential workers when they check in at the county’s mass vaccination sites, such as staff IDs, professional license numbers or certificates, pay stubs, signed letters from employers or a uniform.

Others, however, are taking a different approach. Rush is asking people to bring a photo ID, but otherwise is not asking essential workers for proof of employment, Quick said.

Walgreens’ website says people should bring work IDs or other documents showing proof of employment to their vaccination appointments if they’re front-line, essential workers.

— *Lisa Schencker*



COVID In Chicago: With COVID-19 Vaccine Hard To Find, Vaccine Hunters Step Up On Social Media To Help Secure Doses

Meredith Barack
February 9, 2021

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2021/02/09/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-hunters/>

More than 1.4 million doses of the [COVID-19 vaccine](#) have been given here in Illinois, but less than 2 1/2 percent of the state's population has been [fully vaccinated](#).

We still have a very [long way to go](#). But as CBS 2's Meredith Barack reported Tuesday, a movement on social media is hoping to take away some of the legwork.

Vaccine hunters are aiming to score a coronavirus vaccine – but not just for themselves. They are also looking to help others do the same.

“I thought I won the lottery when I got my first appointment,” said Julee Brennan.

Brennan received her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine through the Cook County Health Department. The occupational therapist from Glenview said she was surprised when a second appointment wasn't immediately scheduled.

“Next Wednesday will be 21 days for me, and it's still not scheduled,” she said.

In what she said feels like a race against the clock, Brennan has been searching everywhere for a coveted appointment.

It's a situation in which many people across the Chicagoland area are finding themselves – qualified for the shot, but unable to get it.

Enter Roger Naglewski.

“I came across [Vaccinehunter.org](#) and they have this website for all over the United States,” Naglewski said. “I was like, great, I'll just click on the Chicago chapter or whatever – and there was no Chicago chapter.”

So Naglewski, who is searching for a vaccine himself, took it upon himself to start the Chicago Vaccine Hunters Facebook group on Sunday.

Since then, more than 100 people have joined – all with the same mission to find a way to get the vaccine.

“I love the fact that it's not just me posting stuff on the site. It's not just me doing the research,” Naglewski said. “It's all these people that have joined the group and they're like: ‘Hey, I've got an idea. I found this. They just opened up appointments on this site.’”

Some of the suggestions, Naglewski said, may require members to go to great lengths, literally, to get their shot.

Mississippi has a location down there, where if you're meeting the requirements, they're open.

Members like Ellena Vranas said the group is proving to be successful – even without a cross-country road trip.

“Somebody had posted there that Walgreens, you know, opened up at 6 a.m. for accepting appointments, so I was like, what?” Vranas said.

The dentist already has both her shots, but was able to book an appointment for her 69 year-old husband, who owns a bar and restaurant in the South Loop.

“This just takes a lot of weight off of my shoulders, and my daughter's also, because he's kind of a one-man show there right now,” Vranas said.

Vranas said it is unfortunate so many people are having such a tough time finding appointments, but the group gives her, and Naglewski, hope.

“Even after I get the vaccine, I need to keep this going,” Naglewski said. “When I hear from other people saying: ‘Wow, you're helping me. This is releasing some of my anxiety,’ and I can identify with that, it makes me feel good.”

There is also a Midwest Vaccine Hunters group on Facebook, where members post about vaccines available in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan.

Meanwhile, [VaccineHunter.org](https://www.vaccinehunter.org), which Naglewski mentioned suggests searching local vaccination standby lists, calling local vaccination providers, and even visiting a local vaccine provider around closing time in the event they have excess vaccines to distribute.

Chicago COVID-19: Phase 1C could be delayed due to vaccine scarcity, city's top doc warns

InterNewsCast
February 9, 2021

<https://internewscast.com/chicago-covid-19-phase-1c-could-be-delayed-due-to-vaccine-scarcity-citys-top-doc-warns/>

Many people continue to experience confusion and frustration as they try to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Now some are wondering if there are enough available vaccines to go around and if the next phase will be delayed.

We're only two weeks into Phase 1B, and for frontline workers and those 65 and older, getting an appointment is still incredibly difficult.

And yet, over the weekend some people living in Suburban Cook County got text messages with registration numbers, advising them they are in Phase 1C. The health department is clearing up what that all means.

"This is a legitimate message. It's not a scam," said Deb Song, with Cook County Health.

The text messages went out over the weekend from an unidentified number. Some wondered whether they were real or whether it was about to be their turn.

It's not. Cook County, like others across the state, continues to vaccinate those in Phases 1A and 1B.

"We wanted to notify those who are in the category 1c that we are getting ready and when we are ready we will send another message to make your appointment," Song said.

In Suburban Cook, as in the rest of the state, the biggest issue continues to be availability. In Chicago, 1 in 13 people have now received at least the first does of the vaccine. But Chicago's public health director warned Tuesday they are still not getting enough doses to meet demand.

"If we don't get significantly more vaccine, like we're anticipating, it's possible we may have to push the date for 1C back, but at this point, we're going with the projections," Dr. Allison Arwady said.

Chicago's projected date for 1C, which would include additional categories of essential workers and those with pre-existing conditions, continues to be March 29. At the moment however, the city is receiving only 42,000 doses a week.

In Will County, vaccine delivery is also a concern, even phone lines are overrun with those trying to make appointments.

"It's been sporadic," said Steve Brandy, spokesman for the Will County Health Department. "We might be told you're going to get a shipment sometime later this week, but we're not told what day, we're not sure how much, and sometimes something comes up and it goes somewhere else. So that's what we hope will change."

Source: ABC7 Chicago



Chicago COVID-19: Phase 1C could be delayed due to vaccine scarcity, city's top doc warns

Michelle Gallardo and Eric Horng

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

<https://abc7chicago.com/health/chicago-phase-1c-could-be-delayed-due-to-vaccine-scarcity-top-doc-warns-/10324418/>

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Dr. Arwady said some have tried to help others jump the line by passing the QR code for their second dose appointment to a family member or friend.

"And then we get people coming in, trying to take up our second dose slots to get their first dose," she said. "So, we have ways to track that. We've been able to tell people, sorry, this is only for the second dose. We've got to hold it. But I can't emphasize enough: don't try to game the system."

Dr. Arwady told a City Council committee about attempts by non-residents to get vaccinated in Chicago. Her department is now discussing whether to require a piece of mail be brought to appointments. Some aldermen want safeguards.

"At the end of the day, we need to know what the scope of the issue is and how CDPH and other lead departments and officials in the city are crafting solutions," 47th Ward Ald. Matt Martin said.

Officials said they've completed plans for the use of Wrigley Field, the United Center and McCormick Place as mass vaccination sites. But right now, there's not enough vaccine.

"We only get 6,000 doses a day right now across all of Chicago, and so it doesn't make sense to put 5,000 of those in a mass vax site," Dr. Arwady said.

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Numerous frostbite cases seen in Chicago area during bitter cold

Mike Krauser

February 9, 2021

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/numerous-frostbite-cases-seen-in-chicago-during-bitter-cold>

The bitter cold has resulted in numerous cases of frostbite in the Chicago area, including an extreme case in which a man had to have a double amputation below the knees.

Dr. Stathis Poulakidas, the Director of Burn Surgery at Cook County's Stroger Hospital, said there have been a lot of amputations, more digits than limbs, meaning fingers and toes.

"We've had a lot of young people this year coming in with frostbite, and that troubles us quite a bit. You never want to see a young person come in with frostbite and end up losing limbs or digits," he said.

He said besides children, they have recently seen frostbite cases with homeless people, people who were intoxicated, and people who work outside.

In one extreme case, a homeless man had both legs amputated below the knees.

"Obviously we take this very much to heart, because we always try to salvage limbs and not do away with limbs, but his limbs were so bad and infection started to overwhelm him that we had to look at it as a life over limb type scenario," Dr. Poulakidas said.

He said people need to take the cold seriously.

Frostbite, which he said is a fourth-degree burn, occurs when small blood vessels and skin cells freeze, blood flow is terminated, tissues die, and muscle and bone are irreparably damaged.

Dr. Poulakidas said it starts with pain, and that's where you need to stop it. If it gets to numbness, severe damage can be occurring, and you need to get to a warm place. You could have frost nip, not frostbite, but with prolonged numbness, he said, irreparable damage is occurring.



Coronavirus Restrictions Relax In Suburban Cook County

Yasmeen Sheikah

February 10, 2021

<https://patch.com/illinois/homewood-flossmoor/coronavirus-restrictions-relax-suburban-cook-county>

The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) issued a COVID-19 mitigation order on Wednesday that will ease mitigation measures in suburban Cook County, according to a news release. The relaxed restrictions go into effect Thursday, with the exception to Evanston, Skokie, Oak Park, and Stickney Township, serving 127 municipalities.

The order increases capacity limits in bars, restaurants and event spaces to the lesser of 25 percent or 50 people. The order also reinforces that those two and older that are able to tolerate mask wearing, do so when out in public.

"We are cautiously optimistic about relaxing some restrictions – but it is imperative that we are careful in light of the new, very transmissible variants we are seeing," said Dr. Rachel Rubin, Senior Medical Officer and Co-Lead, Cook County Department of Public Health. "We must also continue to wear masks, watch our distance, and wash our hands to continue the gains we are making."

The release states that health departments will continue to ease restrictions as progress is made in metrics including positivity rates, daily COVID-19 case counts and hospital use.

"We are aligned with the Chicago Department of Public Health and Stickney Township in our approach," said Dr. Kiran Joshi, Senior Medical Officer and Co-Lead, Cook County Department of Public Health. "Working together, we will continue to monitor metrics and make steps that protect the safety and health of Cook County residents."

For information on mitigation orders, vaccine distribution and to make an appointment to be inoculated, [visit the Cook County Department of Public Health](#).



Cook County Jail Detainees, Officers Now Receiving Coronavirus Vaccinations

Pascal Sabino

February 10, 2021

<https://blockclubchicago.org/2021/02/10/cook-county-jail-detainees-officers-now-receiving-coronavirus-vaccinations/>

Coronavirus vaccinations have started for people detained and working at Cook County Jail.

People detained at the jail are part of Phase 1B of the city and state's vaccination campaigns, which means they were eligible for vaccinations starting Jan. 25. They were included in the phase after [a push from community groups](#) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended people at detention centers be vaccinated.

Cook County health officials had vaccinated 300 people detained at the jail as of Friday. There are 5,376 people incarcerated at the jail, according to data from the Sheriff's Office.

Correctional officers and other staffers at the jail began getting immunized Jan. 20. More than 2,000 of the about 3,000 Sheriff's Office employees at the jail have been vaccinated.

People who are incarcerated live in crowded conditions with limited access to medical care, and they have a high prevalence of chronic illness, advocates have said.

"Just like people in nursing homes, they live in congregate settings, with no ability to social distance," said Alan Mills, executive director of the Uptown People's Law Center, which spearheaded calls for state and local governments to commit to the vaccinations.

The jail was one of the largest hot spots for coronavirus cases early in the pandemic.

Ten people detained at Cook County Jail have died from complications related to COVID-19 since March. As of Sunday, 107 detainees at Cook County Jail are positive for coronavirus, according to the Sheriff's Office. Nearly 1,300 detainees currently at the jail previously tested positive, but they have since recovered.

Four correctional officers and a deputy have died from coronavirus. Thirty-five officers currently have the disease, and 1,108 Sheriff's Office employees have recovered from coronavirus since March, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Tom Dart has been an advocate for vaccinating detainees and officers at the jail, said spokesman Matt Walberg. Vaccinating both is essential because "providing vaccinations for staff without obtaining them for detainees limits the effectiveness of the vaccinations at protecting both groups of people," Walberg said.

Detainees are being offered the Moderna vaccine at divisional clinics, where staffers bring the vaccines to other units at the jail. Administration started with the highest-risk detainees, said Caryn Stancik, Cook County Health spokesperson.

Most people detained at Cook County Jail stay for a short period of time, but the Moderna vaccine requires a second shot 28 days after the initial dose. Detainees are given a vaccination record card and a flyer for community clinics where the vaccination is offered so they may get their second dose elsewhere if they are transferred or released from the jail, Stancik said.

The sheriff and the county health department are running an education campaign to inform detainees about the vaccines and the benefits of choosing to be immunized, Stancik said.

But due to challenges accessing quality medical care while incarcerated, Mills anticipates overcoming skepticism toward the vaccine will be a tremendous hurdle.

Imprisoned and detained people must be allowed to speak with medical professionals so they have thorough information about the benefits and risks to getting immunized, Mills said. Correctional facilities should also have trusted peer educators on each tier of the jail, since “peer education works much better than top down education,” Mills said.

Shortly after inmates and detainees were moved up the priority list, [a West Side legal group spearheaded a campaign to inform prisoners about vaccines](#).

“There’s a lot of distrust of medical personnel in both the jails and the prisons because of the years of bad care that’s been given,” Mills said.



Suburban Cook County Increases Indoor Dining Capacity in Alignment With Chicago's Coronavirus Guidelines

February 10, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/suburban-cook-county-increases-indoor-dining-capacity-in-alignment-with-chicagos-coronavirus-guidelines/2434858/>

Suburban Cook County is increasing indoor dining capacity at restaurants and bars to bring the county into alignment with new guidelines the city of Chicago announced Wednesday.

The Cook County Department of Public Health announced Wednesday that it will increase capacity limits in bars, restaurants and event spaces to the lesser of 25% or 50 people in alignment with Chicago's new guidelines.

Chicago is expanding indoor dining capacity, Mayor Lori Lightfoot also announced Wednesday, releasing a new framework and metrics to lift some of those mitigations.

Effective Thursday, indoor service at bars, restaurants and events in Chicago can expand to the lesser of 25% capacity or 50 people per room or floor, Lightfoot said in a statement.

Additional restrictions can be lifted - including the increase of indoor capacity up to 40% - once the city reaches a "moderate risk" level in certain metrics: COVID-19 cases diagnosed per day and test positivity, among others officials said.

The metrics required to increase capacity to 40% under the new plan are as follows:

COVID cases diagnosed per day: currently averaging 466, in the "High-Risk" level. This number must be below 400 new cases per day to reach the "Moderate-Risk" level.

COVID test positivity: currently averaging 4.7%, in the "Low-Risk" level

Emergency Departments visits for COVID-like illness: currently averaging 69 per day, in the "Moderate-Risk" level

ICU beds occupied by COVID patients: currently averaging 148, in the "Moderate-Risk" level

Capacity can then increase to 50% after two weeks of successfully maintaining "moderate risk" levels across all four metrics, according to the city.

"We are definitely trending in the right direction today, and I thank the residents and businesses that continue to do what is necessary to save lives," Lightfoot said in a statement. "The tragedy of this pandemic unfortunately continues but there's hope at the end of this long journey. This path to 50% capacity ensures that we move forward with hope and confidence but also with the necessary precautions in place to ensure that the rush to reopen doesn't endanger our progress."

City officials noted that the positivity rate of 4.7% as of Wednesday was at its lowest point since early October and that cases, hospitalizations and deaths have all "dropped considerably" since the second surge of the pandemic in the fall.

"While we're excited to be making this move today and further re-opening Chicago, it needs to be done the right way or we risk seeing an uptick in cases and having to tighten restrictions yet again," Chicago Department of Public Health

Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady said in a statement. "I'm proud of how far we've come as a city and I know we can do this smartly and safely."

While capacity expands, other regulations still remain place, city officials said. Those include:

Food must be available at all times in order to offer indoor service. This means that bars, taverns or breweries without a food license can reopen indoors as long as they partner with a food establishment so that food is available to patrons at all times (e.g., making menus available and allowing delivery, allowing patrons to order from third-party delivery services).

Maximum of six patrons at indoor or outdoor tables

Patrons can sit at bars, with six feet of social distancing between parties

Face coverings must be worn at all times, except when patrons are seated and actively eating or drinking

Patrons must be seated whenever they are eating or drinking

Tables must be six feet apart

Establishments must close for on-site service at 12:00am

The sale of alcohol must end at 11:00pm, including alcohol sold for on-site consumption, delivery or carry out

Chicago's new plan was announced days after Lightfoot hinted that the city was considering expanding indoor dining capacity with Valentine's Day weekend around the corner.

The city entered Phase 4 of Illinois' coronavirus mitigations on Jan. 31, which allows indoor dining capacity to increase, among other changes, under the state's guidelines.

But as restrictions were relaxed as Chicago entered Phase 4, [Lightfoot and Chicago officials decided not to increase the indoor dining capacity limit in according with state guidelines](#), leaving it at the lesser of 25% or 25 persons per room.

In explaining the decision to curtail the state's Phase 4 guidelines, Chicago health officials said it was "standard public health practice" to monitor the impact of any significant mitigation change for a minimum of two weeks.

Sunday, Feb. 14 marks two weeks since Chicago entered Phase 4 mitigations. Partial indoor dining resumed in the city on Jan. 23, when the city reached the threshold to move from Tier 2 to Tier 1 mitigations under the state's reopening framework.

At a news conference on Monday, Lightfoot acknowledged that the restaurant and hospitality industries have been extremely hard hit during the pandemic and hinted at an announcement this week.

"There's ground to be made up," she said. "I'm very well aware that we're in daily conversations with the leading trades for the restaurants. This is something that we spent some time talking about over the course of the weekend."

As the city entered Phase 4, Illinois Restaurant Association President Sam Toia said restaurants were confident they could safely serve more guests - and needed to in order to survive.

"As one of the most highly regulated industries in terms of health and safety — and with enhanced precautions introduced during COVID-19 — Chicago restaurant operators know how to protect the wellbeing of their guests and team members," Toia said earlier in the week. "The industry needs more to survive this crisis."

On Wednesday, Toia said the new announcement increasing capacity came at a "critical time."

"We have been advocating tirelessly on this point, and appreciate Mayor Lightfoot and President [Toni] Preckwinkle's continued dialogue and action on this issue. It is estimated that 20% of restaurants will permanently close as a result of the pandemic," Toia said. "Today's announcement comes at a critical time, and is another step towards recovery. Restaurants need this increase, as well as federal relief, more than ever."

Could Covid cause HICCUPS? Doctors believe 48-year-old's two-week bout of hiccups were caused by the illness

EMILY WEBBER

February 10, 2021

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9241327/Could-Covid-cause-HICCUPS-Doctors-believe-two-week-bout-hiccups-caused-illness.html>

Hiccups could be a symptom of Covid, doctors have claimed.

Medics who treated an infected man who had hiccups for two weeks believe his symptoms were a 'rare presentation' of the illness.

Experts say Covid can attack the diaphragm — the muscle that controls breathing — causing it to spasm, leading to hiccups. Hiccups have also been linked to other infectious diseases including flu and tuberculosis.

The 48-year-old, from [Egypt](#), first developed a fever, which he treated with over-the-counter medicine.

But then his persistent bout of hiccups kicked in, becoming even more severe over the course of the week. The unidentified man then also developed a sore throat and sought medical help. Doctors noted his fever had returned.

In order to understand what was causing his hiccups, medics in Cairo ordered an abdominal ultrasound after the bout became more severe and frequent. But they found nothing unusual.

His fever — a tell-tale sign of infection — led them to carry out a CT scan. It showed he had the characteristic signs of Covid, with white patches on the scan showing the pools of fluid built up in the lungs that are caused by viral pneumonia.

Doctors swabbed him for the coronavirus and put him in an isolated room — the test came back positive.

He was put on a drip which included fever-reducing drugs and hydroxychloroquine — the controversial anti-malarial touted by former US President Donald Trump as a 'game changer'.

Because his hiccups were becoming frustrating, doctors gave him three extra drugs to try to help him breathe easier.

He slowly began to improve after medics increased the dosage of baclofen, which is used to treat muscle spasticity and persistent hiccups.

Hiccups are caused by sudden, involuntary contractions of the diaphragm. People should seek medical help if their bouts last longer than 48 hours, according to the NHS.

Ten days after was admitted to one of Cairo University Hospitals, the man was discharged following a negative Covid test.

In the study, published in the journal *Respiratory Investigation*, the team said hiccups could be a 'direct effect of the infection'.

But the medics, led by Nader Bakheet at Cairo University, also admitted they could have been a 'coincidence' because they could not confirm a link with Covid.

However the team urged medics to keep a 'high level of suspicion' when faced with patients with uncommon Covid symptoms and to use PPE.

Other similar cases of hiccups and the coronavirus have been noted.

A 62-year-old man from Chicago who tested positive for Covid had persistent hiccups but he improved after just three days of treatment.

Doctors from Cook County Hospital treated the man in July last year after he had been hiccupping for four days but showed no other signs of illness.

The man was kept in for three days, treated with drugs and then sent home – and it was only when the infection started to clear that his hiccups finally stopped.

Other scientific reports talk of sudden hair loss, ringing in the ears, double vision and even trouble passing urine as possible first signs of Covid infection.

Scientists believe the bizarre symptoms could be linked to the ACE2 receptor – the target which the virus aims for when it is trying to break into healthy cells so it can use them to reproduce.

It is found everywhere from the brain, stomach and lungs to the skin, bone marrow and kidneys.

'There's still a great deal we do not understand about this virus,' says Dr Stephen Griffin, a virologist at Leeds University School of Medicine.

'But one thing we do know is that the ACE2 receptor is found on lots of different tissues around the body. And post-mortems have shown the virus can reach all sorts of places.'

Professor John Oxford, a virologist at Queen Mary University, London, says many viruses would probably have the same variety of effects seen with Covid. The difference now is simply the scale of infection.

'We are probably seeing these more unusual symptoms mainly because of the sheer numbers of people being infected,' he says.

'Symptoms that might be overlooked during an epidemic within one country or region tend to be much more noticeable during a pandemic across continents.'



Can Covid cause HICCUPS? Doctors believe the disease caused hiccups for two weeks

Jacky

February 10, 2021

<https://whatsnew2day.com/can-covid-cause-hiccups-doctors-believe-the-disease-caused-hiccups-for-two-weeks/>

The hiccups could be a symptom of Covid, doctors say.

Doctors treating an infected man who suffered from hiccups for two weeks believe his symptoms were a “rare presentation” of the disease.

Experts say Covid can attack the diaphragm – the muscle that controls breathing – causing spasm, which can lead to hiccups. Hiccups have also been linked to other infectious diseases, including influenza and tuberculosis.

The 48-year-old from Egypt developed a fever for the first time, which he treated with over-the-counter medicines.

But then his persistent bout of hiccups began, which got worse over the week. The unidentified man then also developed a sore throat and sought medical attention. The doctors noted that his fever had returned.

To understand what caused his hiccups, medics in Cairo ordered an abdominal ultrasound after the attack became more severe and frequent. But they found nothing unusual.

His fever – a clear sign of infection – prompted them to run a CT scan. It showed he had the characteristic symptoms of Covid, with white spots on the scan showing the fluid build-up in the lungs caused by viral pneumonia.

Doctors treating an infected man who suffered from hiccups for two weeks believe his symptoms were a ‘rare presentation’ of the disease (file image)

Doctors cleaned him for the coronavirus and placed him in an isolated room – the test was positive.

He received an IV of fever-reducing drugs and hydroxychloroquine – the controversial anti-malaria touted by former US President Donald Trump as a game changer.

As his hiccups started to get frustrating, doctors gave him three more medications to help him breathe more easily.

It slowly began to improve after doctors increased the dose of baclofen, which is used to treat muscle spasms and persistent hiccups.

WHAT SYMPTOMS ARE THE MOST COMMON?

Data from the Office for National Statistics for England, between October and January, shows that these were the most common symptoms in people who tested positive for the coronavirus:

Cough

Fatigue weakness

Headache

muscle strain

Lost taste / smell

Fever

Sore throat

Loss of taste

Loss of smell

Gastrointestinal

Short of breath

Nausea / vomiting

Diarrhea

Stomach ache

Hiccups are caused by sudden involuntary contractions of the diaphragm. People should seek medical attention if their attacks last longer than 48 hours, according to the NHS.

Ten days after he was admitted to one of Cairo University Hospitals, the man was discharged after a negative Covid test.

In the study, published in the journal Respiratory Investigation, the team said hiccups could be a “ direct effect of the infection. ”

But the medics, led by Nader Bakheet at Cairo University, also admitted it could have been ‘ coincidence ’ because they couldn’t confirm a link with Covid.

However, the team urged medics to maintain a ‘ high level of suspicion ’ when faced with patients with unusual Covid symptoms and to use PPE.

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The man was held for three days, treated with medication, then sent home – and it wasn’t until the infection became apparent that his hiccups finally stopped.

Other scientific reports speak of sudden hair loss, ringing in the ears, double vision and even difficulty urinating as possible first signs of Covid infection.

Scientists believe the bizarre symptoms may be related to the ACE2 receptor – the target the virus strives for when it tries to break into healthy cells so it can use them to reproduce.

It is found everywhere from the brain, stomach, and lungs to the skin, bone marrow, and kidneys.

“ There is still a lot we don’t understand about this virus, ” said Dr. Stephen Griffin, a virologist at Leeds University School of Medicine.

‘But what we do know is that the ACE2 receptor is found on many different tissues in the body. And post-mortems have shown that the virus can reach all kinds of places. ‘

Professor John Oxford, a virologist at Queen Mary University in London, says many viruses would likely have the same variety of effects as with Covid. The difference now is simply the extent of the infection.

“We probably see these more unusual symptoms mainly because of the large number of people infected,” he says.

“Symptoms that may be overlooked during an epidemic within a country or region are generally much more noticeable during a pandemic across all continents.”

Coronavirus symptoms update: Hiccups could be a symptom of Covid doctors warn

Jessica Knibbs

February 10, 2021

<https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/1396121/coronavirus-symptoms-update-hiccups-covid-19>

According to research, it is possible that hiccups are a rare symptom of [COVID-19](#). A recent case study saw an Egyptian man experience sudden hiccups which prompted a Covid test which came back positive. This comes after a previous case study involving a 64-year-old man who was found to have persistent hiccups as the only symptom of COVID-19.

A man from Egypt began to suffer with persistent hiccups which became more severe.

Alongside his hiccups, a fever and a sore throat were felt, two major symptoms of COVID-19.

In order to understand what was causing his hiccups, medics in Cairo ordered an abdominal ultrasound after the bout became more severe and frequent.

After a CT scan it was relieved the man was indeed infected with COVID-19.

His scan showed white patches with pools of fluid built up in the lungs that are caused by viral pneumonia.

Medics who treated the infected man who had hiccups for two weeks believe his symptoms were a “rare presentation” of the illness.

The reasons for the sudden and prolonged hiccups, according to experts, is due the virus attacking the diaphragm which is the muscle that controls breathing.

This causes it to spasm, leading to hiccups.

Hiccups have also been linked to other infectious diseases including flu and tuberculosis.

Hiccups could be a sign that the virus has entered the body, according to another report published in the American Journal of Emergency Medicine by doctors from Cook County Hospital in Chicago.

Doctors treated a 62-year-old man who had been hiccupping for four days but showed no other signs of illness.

When they took an X-ray and CT scan of his chest, they found the characteristic signs of COVID-19 which included tiny white patches, that resemble ground glass, scattered around the lungs.

The man was kept in hospital for three days, treated with drugs and then sent home.

It was only when the infection started to clear that his hiccups finally stopped.

The doctors at Cook County Health urged “physicians [to] keep COVID-19 infections on their differential as more cases are discovered through atypical presentations.”

They added that doctors should also remain “vigilant and maintain personal protective equipment to avoid exposure from the undifferentiated patient.”

It is now recognised that COVID-19 attacks the diaphragm, the wall of muscle that controls breathing, and which goes into spasm, and the result is hiccups.

When are hiccups considered serious?

Hiccups should only last a few minutes and you can usually sit for them to go away.

There's often no obvious reason why a person gets hiccups, says the NHS, but some people find certain things trigger them such as stress, strong emotions like excitement, and eating and drinking.

But the health body advises to see a GP if your hiccups last longer than 48 hours or come back very often and are affecting your life.

If you have experienced sudden and prolonged hiccups it's imperative to be vigilant of any new symptoms which could indicate an infection.

COVID-19 vaccination site opens at T.F. South High School in Lansing, gets high grades from area educators

Mike Nolan

February 10, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/ct-sta-thornton-fractional-vaccination-site-st-0211-20210210-w6sqswxhnnenln7p2ldzroiha-story.html>

A new COVID-19 vaccination site set up at Thornton Fractional South High School in Lansing will administer 400 shots a day to teachers and other school district employees in the south and southwest suburbs, Cook County public health officials said Wednesday.

Staffed by members of the Illinois National Guard, the site is the first in suburban Cook County to vaccinate public school workers.

It's not a walk-up site and appointments are being scheduled by Thornton Fractional Township High School District 215, which is contacting teachers and other school staff.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and other elected officials said it is for now a pilot vaccination site and could eventually be opened to vaccinate others eligible for the vaccine in Phase 1b.

The site will also vaccinate employees of elementary districts that feed into the high school district as well as 66 south and southwest suburban districts that come under the umbrella of the Chicago Heights-based South Cook Intermediate Service Center. Eventually, as vaccine supplies increase, some 5,000 school employees in the Southland region are expected to be vaccinated at the school.

Some, such as school nurses, fall under the 1a category that includes health care workers while 1b includes other educators and school employees.

District 215 Superintendent Sophia Jones-Redmond said the establishment of the vaccination site is "quite an emotional moment. This is history."

But health officials continued to urge patience as the supply of vaccine is, at this point, falling short of demand.

"We still do not have enough vaccine for everyone who is eligible," Preckwinkle said.

"We know this is a difficult time for everyone," said Israel Rocha Jr., Cook County Health's chief executive.

Among those getting their first vaccine doses was Sandy Stotts, a physical education teacher at T.F. South. She acknowledged that there is skepticism among some about being vaccinated, but that "if you don't, the outcome could be a lot worse."

Jessica Brennan, who works as a registrar and accounts receivable employee in the South Cook office, received her initial dose.

The 26-year-old Homewood resident said she hoped that by getting a shot "it would help put this (pandemic) to an end."

Homer Thomas, a 74-year-old Phoenix resident who is athletic director at Southland College Prep Charter High School in Richton Park, said that nobody in his family has qualms about getting the vaccine and the most of his fellow educators are on board.

Cook County Health has a large-scale vaccination site at the Tinley Park Convention Center, which is administering [about 2,000 doses daily](#), and the county expects to add other pilot sites similar to Lansing that will focus on vaccinating suburban first responders.

TF South becomes ‘designated vaccination site’ for District 215 personnel

Melanie Jongsma
February 10, 2021

After a day of set-up and a day of testing appointment and registration systems, TF South officially opened as a designated COVID-19 vaccination site for District 215 staff Wednesday morning, February 10. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle is planning to hold a press conference at the TF South location later in the day.

The District 215 Board of Education approved the agreement with Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) at a special meeting last week. The agreement designates TF South as a vaccination site for teachers and staff in District 215, as well as teachers and staff from feeder schools in the region. Depending on vaccine supplies, registration may later be expanded to members of the South Suburban Conference.

“This is our first site that is serving a designated population,” explained Caryn Stancik of Cook County Health, stressing that TF South is not a public vaccination site. Appointments are given via personalized email link only to employees of District 215 and feeder schools. Anyone checking in for their appointment is required to show District 215 identification or credentials before receiving the vaccine. Members of the general public who show up hoping for a vaccination will be turned away.

Essential workers, limited supply, detailed process

Education personnel are considered frontline essential workers and became eligible to receive the vaccine when Illinois entered Phase 1B on January 25. Each time District 215’s administrative office was notified about a vaccination site opening in the area, that information was distributed throughout the district. However, many staff reported they were unable to get an appointment—even though they called immediately—because the supplies are limited and the demand is high. Having a designated vaccination site will reserve a supply of vaccines specifically for District 215 personnel.

Choosing TF South

“I am thrilled that TF South has been chosen by Cook County Health to be a designated vaccination site for south suburban school employees,” said TF South Principal Jacob Gourley. “This is a significant development for all schools in our area as we work toward relegating this unforgettable pandemic to the history books.”

District 215 School Board President Michael Bolz credited Superintendent Sophia Jones-Redmond “for her really tireless efforts in pursuing this on behalf of the district and the staff and community members that are making this possible. It is no small endeavor.”

Bolz added, “Making the vaccine available to our teachers and staff is one critical step toward safely reopening our district’s buildings to our students. It also supports efforts to slow community spread of the virus.”

Not a public vaccination site

Both the School Board and Cook County Health are exercising great caution to avoid problems experienced at other vaccination sites. “We do not want to say anything that will lead folks to misunderstand that this is a ‘public’ site,” wrote Stancik in an email. Bolz affirmed, “We want to make sure people know that they will *not* be able to just show up and get a vaccine.” In fact, he added, people who show up without appointments only serve to slow down the vaccination process, as staff have to be diverted to deal with interruptions.

TF South High School to serve as mass vaccination site

Mike Clark

Feb 10, 2021

https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/tf-south-high-school-to-serve-as-mass-vaccination-site/article_812ac24e-cd36-569f-a002-5b97984a4ee9.html

The fight against COVID-19 is coming to TF South High School.

Teachers and support staff from around the south suburbs will be able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the school beginning this week, officials announced at a Wednesday news conference.

TF South, at 18500 Burnham Ave., has been selected by Cook County Health to be a pilot Educational Point of Distribution (POD).

"It's going to be pretty amazing when you think of all the kids going back to school — it's of the utmost importance to get their teachers vaccinated," Lansing Mayor Patty Eidam said.

To know that Lansing will be at the forefront of the battle to contain the pandemic makes Eidam proud.

"I didn't feel like we had a little village today," she said. "I felt we were an enormous village because we were able to host this."

County officials said when more doses become available, up to 400 teachers and other personnel a day in District 215, its feeder schools and other South Suburban Conference schools will be eligible for vaccination.

As many as 26,000 educators and support staff could be vaccinated over the next several months, Eidam said.

Eligible individuals will be contacted by District 215 to set up a vaccination appointment. "Following completion of this group and assuming adequate vaccine supply, officials expect to expand vaccinations to families of students in the area who are eligible under Phase 1a or 1b," Cook County Health officials said in a news release.

"We know that schools serve as a trusted anchor in their communities and deeply appreciate the partnership with Thornton Fractional as we look to achieve an equitable distribution of vaccine in an area that has been severely impacted by COVID," Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said in a release.



Cook County COVID vaccine site at South Suburban College opening Thursday

*ABC 7 Chicago Digital Team
February 11, 2021*

<https://abc7chicago.com/covid-vaccine-illinois-cook-county-south-suburban-college-site/10329756/>

Another Cook County mass vaccination site will be opened at South Suburban College in South Holland Thursday.

Appointments can be made on [Cook County's Health Department website](#) for those in groups 1A and 1B. Those without internet access or need help scheduling an appointment can call (833) 308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Cook County Department of Public Health says it has distributed vaccines to more than 100 partner locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano's, Walgreens as well as health centers and hospitals.

This comes as the number of people eligible to get their vaccine, under [Phase 1B is set to double two weeks from now.](#)

Starting February 25, people in Illinois as young as 16 who have diabetes, cancer, and other high-risk health conditions will be eligible for the shot.

However, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle said in a statement Thursday that the city and county would not be expanding Phase 1B eligibility.

"Doing so in Chicago and Cook County would add well over one million additional people to 1b, and the result would be that those currently eligible, including seniors, frontline essential workers and those in our most heavily COVID-burdened communities, would have an even harder time getting a vaccine," Lightfoot and Preckwinkle said in a statement.



Chicago, Suburban Cook County Increase Indoor Dining Capacity for Restaurants and Bars

February 11, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicago-suburban-cook-county-increase-indoor-dining-capacity-for-restaurants-and-bars/2435541/>

Chicago and suburban Cook County are expanding indoor dining capacity at restaurants and bars Thursday, looking to ease restrictions put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced Wednesday that indoor service at bars, restaurants and events can expand to the lesser of 25% capacity or 50 people per room or floor effective Thursday.

Additional restrictions can be lifted - including the increase of indoor capacity up to 40% - once the city reaches a "moderate risk" level in certain metrics: COVID-19 cases diagnosed per day and test positivity, among others officials said.

The metrics required to increase capacity to 40% under the new plan are as follows:

COVID cases diagnosed per day: currently averaging 466, in the "High-Risk" level. This number must be below 400 new cases per day to reach the "Moderate-Risk" level.

COVID test positivity: currently averaging 4.7%, in the "Low-Risk" level

Emergency Departments visits for COVID-like illness: currently averaging 69 per day, in the "Moderate-Risk" level

ICU beds occupied by COVID patients: currently averaging 148, in the "Moderate-Risk" level

Capacity can then increase to 50% after two weeks of successfully maintaining "moderate risk" levels across all four metrics, according to the city.

"We are definitely trending in the right direction today, and I thank the residents and businesses that continue to do what is necessary to save lives," Lightfoot said in a statement. "The tragedy of this pandemic unfortunately continues but there's hope at the end of this long journey. This path to 50% capacity ensures that we move forward with hope and confidence but also with the necessary precautions in place to ensure that the rush to reopen doesn't endanger our progress."

City officials noted that the positivity rate of 4.7% as of Wednesday was at its lowest point since early October and that cases, hospitalizations and deaths have all "dropped considerably" since the second surge of the pandemic in the fall.

"While we're excited to be making this move today and further re-opening Chicago, it needs to be done the right way or we risk seeing an uptick in cases and having to tighten restrictions yet again," Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady said in a statement. "I'm proud of how far we've come as a city and I know we can do this smartly and safely."

While capacity expands, other regulations still remain place, city officials said. Those include:

- Food must be available at all times in order to offer indoor service. This means that bars, taverns or breweries without a food license can reopen indoors as long as they partner with a food establishment so that food is available to patrons at all times (e.g., making menus available and allowing delivery, allowing patrons to order from third-party delivery services).
- Maximum of six patrons at indoor or outdoor tables
- Patrons can sit at bars, with six feet of social distancing between parties
- Face coverings must be worn at all times, except when patrons are seated and actively eating or drinking
- Patrons must be seated whenever they are eating or drinking
- Tables must be six feet apart
- Establishments must close for on-site service at 12:00am
- The sale of alcohol must end at 11:00pm, including alcohol sold for on-site consumption, delivery or carry out

The Cook County Department of Public Health announced a similar lifting of mitigations for suburban portions of the county in conjunction with the city on Wednesday, increasing capacity limits in bars, restaurants and event spaces to the lesser of 25% or 50 people in alignment with Chicago's new guidelines.

Chicago's new plan was announced days after Lightfoot hinted that the city was considering expanding indoor dining capacity with Valentine's Day weekend around the corner.

The Chicago Restaurants Coalition, which represents hundreds of Chicago restaurant owners and other businesses, expressed "disappointment in Mayor Lori Lightfoot's decision [Wednesday] not to increase restaurant indoor dining to 50% capacity in time for Valentine's Day weekend."

"Having lost millions of dollars in sales during the pandemic - - in part due to City Hall indoor dining shutdowns - - most restaurants remain on the verge of financial collapse," the group said in a statement. "Today, Lightfoot announced that her Jan. 23 indoor dining restriction of 25% capacity will remain, but restaurant rooms can hold up to 50 people instead of 25 people, whichever is lower. For most of Chicago's 7,300 family-owned restaurants, this doesn't help."

The city entered Phase 4 of Illinois' coronavirus mitigations on Jan. 31, which allows indoor dining capacity to increase, among other changes, under the state's guidelines.

But as restrictions were relaxed as Chicago entered Phase 4, Lightfoot and Chicago officials decided not to increase the indoor dining capacity limit in according with state guidelines, leaving it at the lesser of 25% or 25 persons per room.

In explaining the decision to curtail the state's Phase 4 guidelines, Chicago health officials said it was "standard public health practice" to monitor the impact of any significant mitigation change for a minimum of two weeks.

Sunday, Feb. 14 marks two weeks since Chicago entered Phase 4 mitigations. Partial indoor dining resumed in the city on Jan. 23, when the city reached the threshold to move from Tier 2 to Tier 1 mitigations under the state's reopening framework.

At a news conference on Monday, Lightfoot acknowledged that the restaurant and hospitality industries have been extremely hard hit during the pandemic and hinted at an announcement this week.

"There's ground to be made up," she said. "I'm very well aware that we're in daily conversations with the leading trades for the restaurants. This is something that we spent some time talking about over the course of the weekend."

As the city entered Phase 4, Illinois Restaurant Association President Sam Toia said restaurants were confident they could safely serve more guests - and needed to in order to survive.

"As one of the most highly regulated industries in terms of health and safety — and with enhanced precautions introduced during COVID-19 — Chicago restaurant operators know how to protect the wellbeing of their guests and team members," Toia said earlier in the week. "The industry needs more to survive this crisis."

On Wednesday, Toia said the new announcement increasing capacity came at a "critical time."

“We have been advocating tirelessly on this point, and appreciate Mayor Lightfoot and President [Toni] Preckwinkle’s continued dialogue and action on this issue. It is estimated that 20% of restaurants will permanently close as a result of the pandemic,” Toia said. “Today’s announcement comes at a critical time, and is another step towards recovery. Restaurants need this increase, as well as federal relief, more than ever.”



Cook County Announces Mass Vaccination Site at SSC

Patrick Rush

February 11, 2021

<https://patch.com/illinois/oakforest/cook-county-announces-mass-vaccination-site-ssc>

SOUTH HOLLAND, IL – Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County Health System CEO Israel Rocha announced today that Cook County will open its third large scale vaccine administration site at South Suburban College to continue vaccinations for individuals eligible under 1b.

Phase 1b includes individuals age 65 and older and essential workers such as first responders, manufacturing employees and grocery store personnel. While an estimated 600,000 suburban individuals are eligible for vaccine under Phase 1b, officials continue to remind the public that there is currently not adequate vaccine supply to vaccinate everyone.

"While current vaccine supply does not meet the demand and in fact has been exhausted – we are standing up large scale sites now to ensure that we are ready as vaccine supply is expected to increase in the weeks and months ahead," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

South Suburban College, located in South Holland, is the third large-scale site Cook County has operationalized following the Tinley Park Convention Center on January 26, 2021 and Triton College on February 2, 2021. When fully operationalized and when ample vaccine supply becomes available, Cook County Health estimates it will be able to provide more than 4,000 vaccines weekly at South Suburban College. To date, Cook County Health has provided nearly 70,000 vaccine doses which is only a fraction of what is needed to get us to the next phase.

"The South Suburban College Board of Trustees and our executive leadership team are proud to collaborate with Cook County to provide a safe, convenient, COVID-19 vaccination site right here at our main campus in South Holland," said Frank M. Zuccarelli, Chairman of the SSC Board of Trustees. "We applaud President Preckwinkle, the Board of Commissioners and medical professionals of Cook County Health for your tireless efforts to protect our community."

Vaccinations at all Cook County Health sites are provided by appointment only. Cook County Health will continue to only offer appointment slots based on the amount of vaccine expected and will add appointments as new vaccine shipments arrive. At this time, Cook County Health has exhausted its vaccine supply and cannot open new appointments.

"We are equally as frustrated as the community with the lack of vaccine that has been distributed. We are asking Cook County residents for their continued patience as we work to ramp up one of the largest County-operated vaccine programs in the country," said Israel Rocha, CEO, Cook County Health.

When vaccine becomes available, Cook County Health will announce the availability of new appointments which can be made at vaccine.cookcountylil.gov. Individuals without internet access or who need assistance scheduling may call (833) 308-1988 (from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday – Friday).

In addition to Cook County Health sites, the Cook County Department of Public Health has distributed vaccines to more than 90 partner locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano's, Walgreens, Federally Qualified Health Centers and hospitals who are also offering vaccines by appointment. Additional sites can be found at <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-location>.

In the weeks ahead and pending vaccine availability, Cook County plans to open several additional large sites across the suburbs. County officials expect Phase 1b to take some time and caution residents to remember that moving through

the various phases is contingent on the availability of vaccine. Residents not yet eligible for vaccine can also sign up at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov to receive updates on their phase and for information on dozens of additional vaccination sites across Cook County.

New mass vaccination site opens at South Suburban College

February 11, 2021

<https://exbulletin.com/world/health/732625/>

South Holland, Illinois — A new COVID-19 vaccination site was opened at South Suburban College in the village of South Holland, Illinois on Thursday. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle will be toured and spoken Thursday afternoon by Israel Rocha Jr., Chief Executive Officer of Cook County Health Department, a local elected official, and the Illinois Guard. I did.

“Yesterday we were able to launch another site dedicated to production, teachers and school staff,” Preckwinkle said. “Thanks to Governor Pritzker for helping to deploy the Illinois Guard. We cannot confront these mass vaccination sites without guards.”

The site has been COVID-19 test location Preckwinkle confirmed on Thursday that it would remain one for several months and until May.

Starting February 25, Illinois will target 16-year-olds in high-risk health conditions such as diabetes and cancer.

However, Preckwinkle said Chicago and Cook County have not yet expanded their Phase 1B eligibility.

“Other parts of the state may be ready to move on to the next stage, but Chicago and Cook County are not,” Preckwinkle said Thursday. “Cook County Health is administering over 60,000 doses and is only a fraction of the amount needed to pass Phase 1B. I’m as frustrated as the vaccine-deficient community, but continue to be. Launch the site, so that we can respond immediately when more vaccines are available. “

“Expansion into larger groups at this time is not fair to those prioritized by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At this point, we can’t even predict, so we’re ready to go beyond them. At age 65 and above, frontline staff is essential. We continue to work to provide vaccines to as many individuals as possible in Cook County. Again, please wait for a while. “



Triton College Serves as COVID-19 Vaccination Site

February 11, 2021

<http://www.lawndalenews.com/2021/02/triton-college-serves-as-covid-19-vaccination-site/>

Beginning this month, Triton College will serve as a Point of Distribution (POD) site for COVID-19 vaccinations. Cook County Health (CCH) will administer vaccinations Monday through Saturday by appointment only. "Triton College is here to serve, and this is just another example of how we fulfill our mission to serve the community," said Mark Stephens, Chairman of the Triton College Board of Trustees. "There are different ways for a community college to serve its communities, and we take pride in meeting needs in this capacity.

"I am pleased that Triton College can serve as a vital resource at such a critical time," said Mary-Rita Moore, President of Triton College. Triton worked with Cook County and identified approximately 8,000 square feet of space on the south end of the T Building on Triton's East Campus to use for administering vaccines. Appointments can be made at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Individuals without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 (from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday – Friday).



COVID In Illinois: Hours Limited At 3 Coronavirus Vaccination Sites Due To Lack Of Vaccine

February 11, 2021

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2021/02/11/covid-in-illinois-hours-limited-at-3-coronavirus-vaccination-sites-due-to-lack-of-vaccine/>

CHICAGO (CBS) — Hours are being limited at three coronavirus vaccination sites in suburban Cook County due to a lack of vaccine.

The Cook County Department of Public Health said on Thursday that the Tinley Park Convention Center vaccination site will operate only on Friday and Monday, the Triton College site in River Grove will only operate on Friday and Saturday, and the South Suburban College site in South Holland will only operate on Friday.

Gov. JB Pritzker announced this week that in about two weeks, anyone in Illinois with an underlying health condition or disability will be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of their age. But Chicago and the Cook County suburbs will not be participating because of a lack of vaccine to go around.

The city of Chicago, which receives vaccine doses from the federal government separately from the state, said it will not be expanding vaccine eligibility yet due to the limited supply of doses already available. Suburban Cook County also will not expand eligibility.

“While we are making progress every day with vaccinating people in 1a and 1b, at this time we are not being supplied with enough doses that would allow us to expand eligibility in these phases,” Mayor Lori Lightfoot and County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said in a joint statement Thursday morning. “Doing so in Chicago and Cook County would add well over one million additional people to 1b, and the result would be that those currently eligible, including seniors, frontline essential workers and those in our most heavily COVID-burdened communities, would have an even harder time getting a vaccine.”

Lightfoot and Preckwinkle said they look forward to expanding eligibility for the vaccine once supplies increase.

Cook County opens new vaccination site at South Suburban College in South Holland

February 12, 2021

<https://hfchronicle.com/article/2021/feb/12/cook-county-opens-new-vaccination-site-south-suburban-college-south-holland>

A new COVID-19 vaccination site in the South Suburbs was announced Thursday.

The site at South Suburban College in South Holland was heralded by Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller (D-6th), County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha, Chairman of the SSC Board of Trustees Frank M. Zuccarelli and other elected officials.

As with other sites, vaccinations at SSC will be provided by appointment. Appointments for individuals in Phase 1B, which includes essential workers and residents over age 65, can be scheduled at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Anyone without internet access or who needs assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7p.m. Monday through Friday.

Cook County Health will only offer appointment slots based on the amount of vaccine on hand and will add appointments as new vaccine shipments arrive.

“We have all been working together at all levels of government since the beginning to fight this pandemic, and perhaps the most essential aspect of this fight is the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines, and getting shots in arms as quickly as supply allows,” said Miller “I am very pleased that we are bringing more sites online especially here in the Southland, which has been hit hard by this virus.”

When fully operationalized and when ample vaccine supply becomes available, Cook County Health estimates it will be able to provide more than 4,000 vaccines weekly at South Suburban College.

In addition to Cook County Health sites, the Cook County Department of Public Health has distributed vaccines to more than 90 partner locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano’s, Walgreens, Federally Qualified Health Centers and hospitals who are also offering vaccines by appointment. A complete listing of these sites can be found at www.cookcountypublichealth.org.

“I encourage everyone to get vaccinated when it’s their turn, I’ve signed up already at our dedicated website, and when my turn comes I’ll be getting vaccinated,” said Miller.

Residents not yet eligible for vaccine can also sign up at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov to receive updates on their phase and for information on dozens of additional vaccination sites across Cook County.

Each month, at the Cook County Health & Hospitals Committee Meeting, representatives from the Cook County Department of Public Health will share a briefing on Covid-19 Vaccination Plans for suburban Cook County. You can watch this meeting and many others at www.cookcountyil.gov/service/watch-live-board-proceedings.



The Search For a COVID Vaccine: What People Are Doing to Get Vaccinated

Vi Nguyen

February 13, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/the-search-for-a-covid-vaccine-what-people-are-doing-to-get-vaccinated/2437377/>

The process of getting an appointment for the COVID vaccine can be frustrating, and now people are trying to find different ways to get the shot -- some showing up at vaccination sites before closing.

More than 5,000 people have already been vaccinated at Triton College.

"I'm so happy because I've been trying for two months I have cancer and I wanted to get the shot," Chicago area resident Mary Ann Mallahan said.

The mass vaccination site in River Grove, like many others in suburban Cook County, requires an appointment.

"There's never an appointment available so it's just incredibly difficult to get one," Sharon, woman who lives in the area, said.

But some people told NBC 5 they're "getting lucky" just by walking in.

"We had some friends that told us they came down here a few days ago and were able to get on a waitlist," said vaccine-recipient Mitchell Greenburg.

Greenburg and his wife said they didn't have appointments, but got vaccinated after the clinic had extra doses at the end of the day.

"You know I got nothing to lose," said Stacy Greenburg, Mitchell's wife. "Took a drive we waited a little over an hour until we got into the room and they took us right in."

A spokesperson for Cook County Health said some sites will occasionally have additional vaccines at the end of the day because of missed appointments or if workers are able to pull extra doses from the vials. Cook County Health said when that happens they'll work to find eligible people, who may be on site to get the shot so it doesn't go to waste.

"I'm grateful that I was able to be the lucky one and get in there," she said.

The search hasn't always been easy, which is why many are turning to social media for help on getting the shot.

"I had no idea that all these other people were going through some of the same stress and anxiety and try to filter through the complexities of getting the vaccine," Roger Naglewski, Chicago-area resident, said.

Naglewski started a Facebook group called "Chicago Vaccine Hunters" after seeing a similar group set up in New Orleans.

"It's so nice to have a community and it's nice to see people share their successes," he said. "It's nice to see people that share their frustrations."

The Facebook group launched last weekend and has grown to more than a 1,000 members.

"The biggest joy I get from it is when I see people helping each other out and somebody may be commenting the next day saying, 'thank you so much for posting that information because of that my father got the vaccine'," Naglewski said.



Social Graces: I'm eligible for a vaccine but still can work from home. Should I get one or forgo my dose?

February 15, 2021

<https://news.yahoo.com/social-graces-m-eligible-vaccine-110000586.html>

Q: I'm eligible for a vaccine but still can work from home. Should I get one or forgo my dose?

A: When it comes to the vaccine, we appreciate people's interest in forgoing the vaccine for someone who may need it more. But we just need to follow the public health algorithms to get everybody who is indicated to have the vaccine.

Working from home is safer, but it still isn't zero risk. We still have interactions in our buildings, communities, delivery services and mail.

A single incident of exposure to a cloud of aerosolized COVID-19 is enough to get infected. So people who have that contact happening 30 or 40 times a day are much more likely to get it than somebody who has it once a day or a few times a week, but it's still happening.

For us to get our life back to some normalcy, we need everybody to get vaccinated when their number comes up. We're encouraging people to get vaccinated as soon as they can.

— Dr. Mark Loafman, chair of family and community medicine, Cook County (Ill.) Health

A: This is a common question that people ask: "I don't really come in contact with people, so do I have to do this?" And the answer is yes, because collective vaccine distribution results in a community being more healthy and having a stronger immune response collectively than one individual.

Even if you are working from home, you will still interact with your community. It's not a question of do you ever step out of your house. It's more of when you step out of your house, are you at risk? And the answer again is yes. If you step out your house every Friday, that means every Friday you're at risk.

Also, just because you receive a second dose of the vaccine does not mean you can take your mask off, because we don't want to go backward. We're moving in a good direction. Wear your mask and get your vaccine, so we can continue to move forward.

— Dr. Christopher Colbert, assistant emergency medicine residency director and professor of clinical emergency medicine at the University of Illinois at Chicago



Thousands of New COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments Open Tuesday in Cook County

February 15, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/thousands-of-new-covid-19-vaccine-appointments-open-tuesday-in-cook-county/2438678/>

A total of 5,000 first-dose COVID-19 vaccination appointments will open for Cook County residents at noon Tuesday, according to a news release from Cook County Health.

Appointments can be made at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Those without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call 833-308-1988 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Under Phase 1B, the current phase of Illinois' vaccination rollout, people age 65 years and older as well as "frontline essential workers," which includes first responders, education workers like teachers and support staff and grocery store employees, are eligible.

The state expects to increase eligibility beginning Feb. 25, allowing for people with "a high-risk medical condition" or comorbidity to be vaccinated.

Vaccinations at all Cook County Health sites are by appointment only. As of Monday, three large-scale vaccination sites were open: South Suburban College in South Holland, the Tinley Park Convention Center and Triton College in River Grove.

Additional vaccination sites throughout the county are expected to open in the following weeks.

For a complete look at how to make an appointment or receive vaccine information for your area, [click here](#).

In addition to the mass vaccination sites, select Jewel-Osco, Mariano's and Walgreen's locations are also among those offering appointments for residents eligible under Phase 1B.

Cook County Health has provided more than 85,000 vaccines to residents as of Monday and "remains committed to ensuring that every person who wants a vaccine will be able to get one, as supplies allow."

Residents who are not eligible to receive the vaccine can sign up at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov to receive updates about phases and eligibility.



Several Cook County Vaccine Program sites closed Tuesday due to weather

Meghan Dwyer, Erik Runge
February 15, 2021

<https://wgntv.com/news/coronavirus/weather-causing-delay-of-vaccine-shipments-to-chicago-area/>

CHICAGO — The massive winter storm talking place across the country is causing a shipment delay of COVID-19 vaccines to the Chicago area.

Additionally, Cook County Department of Health announced Monday night that they are closing several of their vaccination sites Tuesday due to the winter storm.

Vaccinations will continue at John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital, Provident Hospital, and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center. However, other locations, including all large-scale vaccination sites, will be closed.

Large scale sites are located at South Suburban College in South Holland, Triton College and at the Tinley Park Convention Center.

If your shot is being canceled, they will call you Monday night and then again to reschedule within 48 hours.

According to an email sent Monday from city officials to vaccine providers, no vaccine shipments are expected to arrive to the Chicago market on Tuesday.

Given the ongoing shortages of vaccine supply, the Cook County Vaccine Program will have a limited release of 5,000 new first-dose appointments on February 16. Appointments will be available beginning at noon at <https://vaccine.cookcountyil.gov>.

“Providers,

CDC and McKesson held a call today to discuss the impacts on COVID vaccine shipments from the storm that is hitting Chicago and around 20 other states. Here is what we know right now.

No COVID vaccine shipments are expected to arrive to the Chicago market tomorrow. This is not just a Chicago issue but also issues in Tennessee where most of the shipments originate from.

Updates will occur daily so I do not want to speculate beyond what we do know as of now. When you are planning for any potential effects that this might have on your vaccination events or appointments please consider the possibility of this extending past tomorrow so you are more prepared for all outcomes. That said, all COVID shipments were requested as overnight shipping so when this does resolve it will likely catch up quickly.

CDPH is not able to send doses to providers in the interim. So please base your plans on doses you have on hand only.”

However with still plenty of doses Monday, Illinoisans were still coming out to get vaccinated in the midst of a winter storm.

The Illinois Department Public Health closed its mobile vaccine sites, but everyone else was up and running.

After weeks of trying to get a vaccine appointment, 92-year-old Camille Frole wasn't going to get frigid conditions get in her way.

"We're on so many websites you wouldn't believe," Frole said. "Hopefully we don't get sick. That's how we're gonna celebrate."

A local physician said Monday that the weather hasn't stopped people from coming out.

"Interestingly, everyone who had an appointment today has shown up. So I know there are emergencies, and I know last week couldn't get out of drive ways or alleys, but most of them made it," said Dr. Rahul Khare. "So people really want this shot."

Dr. Khare said he has enough vaccines in reserve to give people their shots as scheduled this week, but other places might run out.

Walgreens and Jewel-Osco said they are both operating like normal and that's the plan for Tuesday as well. If people need to cancel their shots, they can reschedule them. But the logistics of that might be complicated as getting an appointment in the first place.

If people do not show up, the goal is to make sure nothing get wasted.

"Under no circumstances do we let weather or anything else cause wastage of vaccines," Dr. Arwady said.

If you can't get out Tuesday and need to reschedule, you can call Innovative Express Care and your local Walgreens. If you're scheduled through Jewel-Osco, you need to go online.



Most Cook County COVID-19 Vaccination Sites To Be Closed Tuesday Because Of Snowstorm

February 15, 2021

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2021/02/15/most-cook-county-covid-19-vaccination-sites-to-be-closed-tuesday-because-of-snowstorm/>

CHICAGO (CBS) — Cook County health officials announced late Monday that they will be closing several coronavirus vaccination sites Tuesday due to the snowstorm pounding the Chicago area.

Vaccinations will continue at Stroger Hospital of Cook County, Provident Hospital of Cook County, and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center. But all other locations – including large-scale sites – will be closed Tuesday.

The decision was made due to the prospect of dangerous travel conditions because of the snowstorm.

Patients who have appointments for vaccination on Tuesday will be contacted and rescheduled this week. Those with questions may call (833) 308-1988 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

At the sites that will still be open, the Cook County Vaccine Program will conduct a limited release of 5,000 new first-dose appointments on Tuesday.



City Of Chicago-Operated COVID-19 Vaccination, Testing Sites To Be Closed Tuesday Due To Snowstorm

February 15, 2021

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2021/02/15/city-of-chicago-operated-covid-19-vaccination-testing-sites-to-be-closed-tuesday-due-to-snowstorm/>

CHICAGO (CBS) — All COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites operated by the City of Chicago will be closed Tuesday due to the snowstorm.

The Chicago Department of Public Health said people who made appointments for Tuesday will be notified of changes.

The city is assessing overall impact from the storm and will make decisions about testing and vaccine operations on a day-to-day basis.

Cook County health officials also announced late Monday that they will be closing several coronavirus vaccination sites Tuesday due to the snowstorm pounding the Chicago area.

Vaccinations will continue at Stroger Hospital of Cook County, Provident Hospital of Cook County, and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center. But all other locations – including large-scale sites – will be closed Tuesday.

City of Chicago COVID-19 vaccination, testing sites close due to winter storm

Sophie Sherry

February 15, 2021

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/2021/2/15/22285104/city-of-chicago-covid-19-vaccination-testing-sites-close-due-to-winter-storm>

All COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites operated by the City of Chicago will close Tuesday due to inclement weather, officials announced late Monday night.

Anyone with an appointment scheduled for Tuesday should be notified of the change, according to a statement from the Chicago Department of Public Health.

As the snow continues, the city plans to make decisions regarding site operations on a day to day basis.

Cook County Health announced they will also close several vaccination sites Tuesday due to weather.

All locations, including large-scale sites, will be closed, except for John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital, Provident Hospital, and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, according to a statement from the Cook County Department of Public Health.

Patients scheduled to receive vaccinations at one of the Cook County Health locations will be contacted to reschedule



Cook County Health Vaccination Sites Closed Tuesday Due to Snowstorm

February 15, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/cook-county-health-vaccination-sites-closed-tuesday-due-to-snowstorm/2438652/>

Cook County Health will close the majority of its COVID-19 vaccination sites Tuesday as several more inches of snow are expected to result in dangerous travel conditions.

Vaccinations will continue, however, at John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital, Provident Hospital and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, according to a news release from Cook County Health.

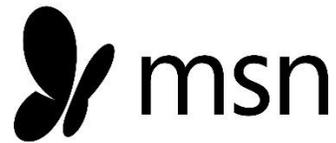
The closure applies to all remaining vaccination facilities, including the large-scale sites at South Suburban College in South Holland, the Tinley Park Convention Center and Triton College in River Grove.

Those who are scheduled for appointments on Tuesday will be contacted and rescheduled this week.

The following Cook County Health vaccination sites will also be closed: Arlington Heights Health Center, Blue Island Health Center, Cottage Grove Health Center, Morton East Adolescent Health Center, North Riverside Health Center and Robbins Health Center.

In all, more than 85,000 vaccines have been administered to Cook County residents. Furthermore, on Tuesday, those eligible for the vaccine will be able to sign up for one of 5,000 new first-dose appointments.

Appointments will be available starting at noon on the Cook County Health website.



Most Cook County COVID-19 Vaccination Sites To Be Closed Tuesday Because Of Snowstorm

CBS Chicago

February 16, 2021

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/most-cook-county-covid-19-vaccination-sites-to-be-closed-tuesday-because-of-snowstorm/ar-BB1dHYD5>

Cook County health officials announced late Monday that they will be closing several coronavirus vaccination sites Tuesday due to the snowstorm pounding the Chicago area.

Vaccinations will continue at Stroger Hospital of Cook County, Provident Hospital of Cook County, and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center. But all other locations – including large-scale sites – will be closed Tuesday.

The decision was made due to the prospect of dangerous travel conditions because of the snowstorm.

Patients who have appointments for vaccination on Tuesday will be contacted and rescheduled this week. Those with questions may call (833) 308-1988 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.



City of Chicago COVID-19 vaccination, testing sites close due to winter storm

Sun-Times Media Wire
February 16, 2021

<https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/city-of-chicago-covid-19-vaccination-testing-sites-close-due-to-winter-storm>

All COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites operated by the City of Chicago will close Tuesday due to inclement weather, officials announced late Monday night.

Anyone with an appointment scheduled for Tuesday should be notified of the change, according to a statement from the Chicago Department of Public Health.

As the snow continues, the city plans to make decisions regarding site operations on a day to day basis.

Cook County Health announced they will also close several vaccination sites Tuesday due to weather.

All locations, including large-scale sites, will be closed, except for John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital, Provident Hospital, and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, according to a statement from the Cook County Department of Public Health.

Patients scheduled to receive vaccinations at one of the Cook County Health locations will be contacted to reschedule.



Chicago, suburban counties' COVID-19 vaccination, testing sites close due to winter storm

February 16, 2021

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/chicago-covid-vaccination-testing-sites-close-due-to-snow>

Due to the Winter Storm Warning in effect until noon Tuesday for the City of Chicago, all COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites operated by the City of Chicago will be closed on Tuesday.

People with scheduled appointments Tuesday will be notified of changes.

As the snow continues, the city plans to make decisions regarding site operations on a day to day basis.

Cook County Health also announced they will also close several vaccination sites Tuesday due to weather.

All locations, including large-scale sites, will be closed, except for John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital, Provident Hospital, and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, according to a statement from the Cook County Department of Public Health.

Patients who are scheduled for appointments on Tuesday, Feb. 16 will be contacted and rescheduled this week. Those with questions can reach out to us at 833-308-1988, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Chicago, Cook County will not expand COVID vaccination eligibility for Phase 1B like rest of Illinois

Cook County's first educational mass COVID vaccination site for school staff opens in Lansing

The Lake County Health Department also announced it is closing the Lake County Fairgrounds COVID-19 vaccine site and the Lowell and Lake Station COVID-19 testing sites.

The department anticipated resuming normal operations by Wednesday.

**BUFFALO
GROVE
COUNTRYSIDE**

Seniors getting COVID-19 vaccines through residential facilities and public health partners, helping them return to enjoying ‘the simple pleasures in life’

Elizabeth Owens-Schiele

February 16, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/buffalo-grove/ct-bqc-seniors-covid-vaccine-tl-0218-20210216-brltsitkpbqghdcqzc27acxqta-story.html>

Joyce Young, 83, has been a resident of Belmont Village Senior Living in Buffalo Grove since August. She is among thousands of senior citizens over the age of 65 in both Lake and Cook counties who have been vaccinated in recent weeks against the novel coronavirus – the disease that causes COVID-19 – under the Illinois Department of Public Health’s phase 1b category of inoculation eligibility.

Although vaccines are often in short supply, northwest suburban senior living communities, hospitals and public health departments are making elderly people a priority for getting the shots.

Young was among 98% of Belmont Village residents vaccinated this month at the senior living facility, according to Executive Director Brian Adelman.

The facility held a vaccine clinic Feb. 2, partnering with Walgreens to administer the vaccine from the Pfizer pharmaceutical company.

He said that with the seniors getting the shots, quarantine restrictions can begin to loosen for them, some of whom have been confined to isolation amid concerns over the ongoing pandemic.

“It was a turning point day for us and gave the residents, for the first time, some hope and some energy,” Adelman said. “Now that they’re protected, residents can start thinking about what’s next and can’t wait to go back out for dinner, go to the library, go to the theater, the simple pleasures in life.”

Young said having to quarantine has been rough on many of her neighbors, but she finds solace in reading and listening to music. Although she’s been able to do “window visits” with her nieces and nephews, she misses their touch.

“I want to be able to be with my family and friends and the more people who take the vaccine, the better chance we’ll be with our family and friends,” she said. “The more of us that are vaccinated, the safer it’s going to be for everyone.”

Adelman said about 75% of his staff have also been vaccinated, and the second round of vaccines are planned for Feb. 23.

Rex Paisley, corporate communication director for Lutheran Home in Arlington Heights, which also partnered with Walgreen, said signs of hope are important for seniors moving forward.

“At Lutheran Home in Arlington Heights, 95% of residents and 76% of team members have been vaccinated,” Paisley said.

He said the first vaccine clinic was Dec. 29 and most residents and team members were days away from getting their second dose of the Pfizer medicine.

“With weekly testing continuing, and no positive cases yet in February, the campus is cautiously optimistic and advancing to phase 2 of reopening guidelines from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services,” Paisley said. “This opens the door to scheduled family visits, which has been a greatly anticipated celebration within the community.”

But other seniors not living in senior living communities are finding their wait time to get vaccinated a bit longer. Amy Jo Steinbruecker, spokeswoman for Northwest Community Healthcare in Arlington Heights, confirmed that 100,000 seniors over the age of 65 who are active patients of NCH are in group 1b and eligible for vaccinations.

“We have reached 10,000 who have been vaccinated in our first round,” Steinbruecker said, with staff administering shots Feb. 1 at the hospital.

She confirmed 4,500 NCH employees were inoculated as part of the first round of vaccinations, where the vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna pharmaceuticals were used.

“We estimate several months to complete the 1b population,” said Steinbruecker. “We are at the whim of the state and we don’t set up appointments if we don’t have the vaccine to back it up. ... The big thing is asking people to be patient, because fortunately, there is a very high demand.”

At Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington, which also serves Lake Zurich and surrounding northwest communities, staff has administered 8,198 doses of vaccine, said Kristen Johnson, spokeswoman for Advocate Health Care.

“More than 600,000 of our patients across Wisconsin and Illinois are 65 and older,” she said.

Johnson explained that seniors who make an appointment to get vaccinated through Advocate are called in to get the shot based on “age, co-morbidities, and other risk factors including those who live in ZIP codes disproportionately impacted by COVID. ... Some of the health conditions considered include, but aren’t limited to, obesity, diabetes, asthma, lung disease and heart conditions.”

County health departments are also helping to vaccinate seniors.

“In suburban Cook County, there are more 300,000 people ages 65 and older and more than 20% have received at least one dose of the vaccine,” said Cook County Department of Public Health spokesman Don Bolger.

Bolger said individuals who live or work in Cook County and are considered eligible under phase 1b can make an appointment to be vaccinated.

“At this time, appointment availability in suburban Cook County remains extremely limited as the demand for vaccines continues to outpace the supply that is currently available in the United States,” Bolger said,

He encourages residents to look for other vaccine providers in their area.

“In addition to Cook County Health sites, the Cook County Department of Public Health has distributed vaccines to more than 130 partner locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano’s, Walgreens, Federally Qualified Health Centers and hospitals who are also offering vaccinations by appointment,” Bolger said. “We are adding more vaccination sites each week so that when supply of the vaccine increases in the coming weeks and months, we will be prepared to ramp up immediately.”

In nearby Lake County, seniors are also beginning to receive vaccines from the Lake County Department of Public Health.

According the Lake County Health Department Director of Health Informatics Jefferson McMillan-Wilhoit, there are 96,031 community members registered in the AllVax system who live and work in Lake County who have indicated they are over the age of 65. AllVax is the online portal the county set up for residents to register to receive the vaccine.

“It is critical to the health and well-being of those who live in Lake County for us also to assure those who work here are vaccinated,” McMillan-Wilhoit said. “Without that key component, COVID-19 could continue to spread in our community even with the majority of our residents vaccinated.”

He said 8,920, or 9.3%, of seniors 65 and older registered in AllVax have received the first Of the two-dose vaccine and 498, or 0.5%, have been fully vaccinated. An additional 1,128, or 1.1%, are either eligible to make an appointment at one of the county's distribution sites or already have their first or second dose appointment scheduled.

"It is critical to point out that the Health Department alone will not be able to administer the vaccine at the pace that is needed to meet our very ambitious goals for the community," McMillan-Wilhoit said. "As a result, we are relying on our partners in the community to continue to vaccinate our population as quickly as we can."



Cities and States Delay COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Because of Winter Storms

CNN

February 16, 2021

<https://www.kdrv.com/content/news/573803502.html>

Vaccine distribution slowed in many areas because of winter storms engulfing much of the country Monday and Tuesday. Here are the localities and states that have delayed or postponed distribution so far:

Alabama

Some county health departments closed their vaccination clinics Tuesday, the Alabama Department of Public Health said.

Colorado

Colorado is among the states that had to delay vaccinations because of the storm's impact on a Tennessee distribution hub, officials said.

'Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is working with Colorado's health care providers and local public health agencies across the state to make adjustments over the coming days to make sure appointments and clinics do not need to be canceled,' a news release from the state read.

Ahead of the Presidents Day weekend, Colorado requested and received doses on Friday that had been scheduled for this week, but the state's allocation of 133,000 vaccines expected to arrive Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday will be impacted.

'This decision helps us have enough on hand to work with providers to move doses around to prevent cancellations,' the press release said.

Florida

Approximately 2,000 people in Miami-Dade County will not receive their scheduled second dose due to weather-related supply delays, according to Rachel Johnson, mayor's office communications director.

The second doses of the Pfizer vaccine that were scheduled to be administered on Thursday have not arrived, Johnson tells CNN.

All those affected have been notified about the delay, Johnson said, and have been told that as soon as the vaccine arrives, their appointment will be rescheduled.

Georgia

The Georgia Department of Public Health received a notification from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that Pfizer and Moderna vaccines scheduled to arrive early this week would be delayed by the manufacturers because of the inclement winter weather, DPH said in a news release.

'As a result, many providers statewide, including health departments, are being forced to reschedule appointments for vaccination. Rescheduling appointments will depend on when shipments resume and when the vaccine arrives in Georgia. Delays are expected to continue through the week,' the DPH release said.

Illinois

In Chicago, all city-run vaccine sites were closed Tuesday because of the winter weather and appointments there will be rescheduled, city officials said.

The Cook County health system, which includes the Chicago suburbs, told CNN all of its vaccination sites would be closed, except for three that the system operates within the city limits.

The postponements came after Covid-19 shipments coming into the area were delayed when more than a foot of snow fell between Sunday evening and Tuesday morning, the Chicago Department of Public Health said.

In advance of winter weather and adverse road conditions, Illinois ordered the Covid-19 vaccine to be delivered to its 'Strategic National Stockpile Receipt, Store, and Stage site,' according to a state news release.

The state also said it has been informed by the federal government it should anticipate vaccine delivery delays this week because of the winter storms, the news release said.

JOURNAL & TOPICS

Journal & Topics Media Group | Serving Chicago's Great Northwest Suburbs

New Trier High School May Serve As COVID Vaccination Site

Tom Robb

February 16, 2021

<https://www.journal-topics.com/articles/new-trier-high-school-may-serve-as-covid-vaccination-site/>

“Site use agreement with Cook County Department of Public Health,” is an agenda item on Tuesday’s (Feb. 16) New Trier High School Dist. 203 Board of Education meeting agenda. According to Cook County Commissioner Scott Britton (D-14th), this means the school’s Northfield campus will become a COVID-19 vaccination site — if approved by board members.

Britton said vaccines could start being administered at the school as soon as Wednesday, Feb. 24.

“Nothing happens until it happens, but,” Britton said he was confident after about six weeks of work, the site would open.

Britton said it was firefighters and chiefs from Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) Division 3 who envisioned the idea, “and wouldn’t let it go.” He said he and fellow county commissioners Larry Suffredin (D-13th) and Peter Silvestri (R-9th) pushed Cook County Health and other top county officials to set up the site.

Britton stressed the site would be used to vaccinate frontline essential workers including teachers, police and firefighters, who did not already receive the vaccine in the 1A frontline medical workers group. All vaccinations in Illinois are being done using advanced registration and reservations. Britton advised members of the general public not to just show up at the school.

There has been some frustration among his constituents that there are few vaccination sites in the northeastern part of Cook County, Britton said. The closest is at a Cook County medical facility in Arlington Heights.

The site will be staffed by firefighter-paramedics, police and municipal staff from MABAS Division 3 communities, which run from Highland Park and Bannockburn on the north to Evanston, Skokie, Niles and Park Ridge on the south, Des Plaines and Prospect Heights on the west, and Lake Michigan on the east, including North Maine, Glenview, Northfield, Northbrook, Prospect Heights, Morton Grove, Wilmette and Winnetka.

Niles Fire Chief Marty Feld said Niles and other communities would be sending firefighters to administer shots, along with police and village and city administrative staff to run the site. Britton said a representative from Cook County Health would also be at the site.

Britton said the site would have the physical and staffing capability to administer hundreds of vaccinations a day, but warned vaccines in Illinois are in short supply, so would not be seeing those kinds of numbers until more vaccines arrive.



New Trier High School Vaccination Site Agreement Approved

*Jonah Meadows
February 16, 2021*

<https://patch.com/illinois/wilmette/s/hfl1y/new-trier-high-school-vaccination-site-plan-poised-approval>

The New Trier High School board unanimously approved a deal with the Cook County Department of Public Health to use its west campus as a mass vaccination site.

According to the site use agreement on the consent agenda for approval at Tuesday evening's school board meeting, county officials will use the main gym, first-floor bathrooms and concession stand at New Trier's Northfield campus for "clinical activities," including administering vaccinations, record-keeping and monitoring for adverse events.

Cook County Commissioner Scott Britton told the Arlington Heights Journal that vaccines could be administered to front-line essential workers at the site as soon as Feb. 24. The idea was the result of [relentless advocacy](#) by firefighters from North Shore communities — Division 3 of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, or MABAS, Britton told the newspaper.

For at least the past six weeks, leaders of fire departments in several north Cook County villages have been urging county officials to allow firefighter paramedics to assist the Cook County Department of Public Health.

On Jan. 7, fire officials from Lincolnwood, Northfield, Wilmette and Winnetka joined the president of [MABAS Division 3](#) and the CEO of [MABAS Illinois](#) in signing a joint letter to the leadership of the Cook County Department of Public Health imploring county officials to accept an offer of help with the vaccination process.

"One lesson we should remember from the onset of the pandemic was that the process of establishing testing for COVID-19 was a disaster at a very critical juncture of the pandemic," it said. "In hindsight, we were not prepared for the vast number of people needing to be tested. Thus, it is important to utilize all the resources available in Cook County to avoid a similar outcome with the vaccination."

Illinois fire departments are a national model for disaster response, and existing command structures and resources could help the county administer vaccines in a "safe, fast and equitable" way, according to the letter.

"Unfortunately, relying solely on commercial pharmacies, private physicians and other commercial venues will overwhelm the system, cause unnecessary delays, and likely lead to many individuals not even realizing they are eligible for the vaccine and how they should go about obtaining one," the fire officials said. "As of now, the onus has been placed on individuals in Phases 1B and 1C to seek out the vaccine themselves; we are volunteering to take on that responsibility as best we can to directly reach our most vulnerable residents and ensure as many individuals as possible are vaccinated."

The letter proposed going directly to local schools to vaccinate teachers and setting up clinics in buildings with large numbers of senior and those identified as affordable housing, as well as recommending distribution sites run in local municipal buildings.

On Jan. 27, the co-leaders of Cook County Department of Public Health, Dr. Rachel Rubin and Dr. Kiran Joshi, responded to the fire chiefs' letter.

It said employees of the Cook County Department of Emergency Management & Regional Security — [formerly known](#) as the Cook County Department of Homeland Security — had met with MABAS officials and valued the support of local governments and their fire departments.

But three weeks after the offer, county officials still had nothing to announce.

"Extensive coordination and collaboration with the resource hospitals, EMS Directors, MABAS, and the respective fire departments are required because CCDPH is expected to maintain vaccine oversight," Rubin and Joshi said in the Jan. 27 response. "We are currently working through all legal and operational processes."

MABAS Division 3 President Tom Burke, assistant chief of the Northfield Fire Department, did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday about the organization's interaction with county officials.

On Jan. 29, Kevin Jauch, the regional superintendent for north Cook County, sent a letter to all superintendents of school district and special education cooperatives.

Jauch said county public health officials said in a meeting with suburban regional superintendents that they were unable to guarantee that any area high schools offered by school districts would be used for vaccination sites. Jauch noted county officials had recently conducted a site visit at a south suburban high school.

"I have been told that the site visit was productive, but the location has not been approved. I am hoping that is a good sign for high school usage, but I am not sure if that bodes well for us in North Cook," Jauch said.

"I know that this is frustrating and that you are getting pressure from your boards, unions and communities."

Six weeks after the MABAS request, it appears Cook County public health officials have managed to put together a boilerplate memorandum of understanding suitable for the site use agreement with New Trier and, potentially, other public bodies in the future.

The Northfield vaccination site is set to be staffed by firefighters, police officers and other [municipal staff](#) from the 17 departments that make up MABAS Division 3, Britton told the Journal.

Commissioner Larry Suffredin, who Britton said assisted with the effort, declined to comment about his role in the effort ahead of the school board vote.

Part of the deal includes a clause that requires the organization hosting vaccination sites to notify county officials of any media inquiries.

"[A]ny communication to the media and/or public regarding this Agreement and the activities to be performed pursuant to this Agreement shall be made by the [Cook County Health] Chief Communications and Marketing Officer," it says.

New Trier Township High School District 203 board members unanimously approved the [agreement](#) as part of the consent agenda of Tuesday's meeting.

Kate Hedlin, communications manager for Cook County Health, said in a statement after the agreement was approved that county health officials anticipated partnering with "agencies and organizations" to open "targeted" point of distribution, or POD, vaccination clinics.

"We are working with officials in the northern suburbs to open a POD for educators and first responders in the coming weeks," Hedlin said, "pending available vaccine supply."

Mass vaccination site set to open at South Suburban College

Mike Clark
Feb 16, 2021

https://www.nwitimes.com/news/mass-vaccination-site-set-to-open-at-south-suburban-college/article_84fa6f08-8208-5453-acb4-97c813ad9366.html

Cook County Health has announced the opening of its third large-scale COVID-19 vaccination site, to be located at South Suburban College.

The location joins sites at Tinley Park Convention Center and Triton College in River Grove, which opened on Jan. 26 and Feb. 2, respectively.

At SSC, vaccinations will be available for individuals eligible under phase 1b, which includes those 65 and over, and essential workers such as first responders, manufacturing employees and grocery store personnel.

That group covers about 600,000 people in suburban Cook County, county officials said, though the current supply of vaccines isn't enough to vaccinate everyone eligible.

"While current vaccine supply does not meet the demand and in fact has been exhausted — we are standing up large-scale sites now to ensure that we are ready as vaccine supply is expected to increase in the weeks and months ahead," County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said in a news release.

County officials expect to be able to provide 4,000 vaccinations a day at South Suburban when the supply increases.

"The South Suburban College Board of Trustees and our executive leadership team are proud to collaborate with Cook County to provide a safe, convenient, COVID-19 vaccination site right here at our main campus in South Holland," Frank Zuccarelli, chairman of the college's board of trustees, said in the release.

Vaccinations at county sites are available by appointment only, and the county is not accepting appointments currently because of the shortage of doses.

Officials said when the supply increases, Cook County Health will begin accepting appointments at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Those without internet access or who need help in scheduling an appointment may call 833-308-1988 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

175 COVID-19 Vaccination Sites Tap Cerner EHR Solution

Christopher Jason
February 16, 2021

<https://ehrintelligence.com/news/175-covid-19-vaccination-sites-tap-cerner-ehr-solution>

Cerner has **announced** 175 COVID-19 vaccination sites have leveraged its Mass Vaccination EHR solution to help clinicians identify, register, and vaccinate patients.

When COVID-19 began to spread in early 2020, the EHR vendor reached out to its customers across the country to ensure they had the necessary health IT to prepare for a large-scale COVID-19 vaccination effort.

Since many hospitals and health systems worked together to deploy the vaccination at community-based locations, Cerner leaders knew these vaccination sites would need a patient-first strategy that could work outside of each users' EHR platform.

The EHR vendor compiled a list of various recommendations for its clients to utilize its **health IT** to boost billing, clinician administration best practices, patient outreach, scheduling opportunities, and both reporting and analytics following each vaccination.

Cerner then provided its customers with its Mass Vaccination solution to increase **vaccination deployment** speeds, boost patient care, and help users with administration documentation.

The solution aims to help clinicians register patients and then identify, administer, and document the COVID-19 vaccine. All in one workflow, the solution provides the clinician with relevant patient data from the EHR to streamline the vaccination process, while also notifying the user of important patient information such as drug and allergy interactions.

Northern Light Health in Maine, Cook County Health in Illinois, the US Department of Defense (DoD), the US Coast Guard, and Truman Medical Centers and University Health in Missouri are a few of the health systems that leveraged Cerner for its vaccination technology.

Employees at Northern Light Health have administered roughly 3,000 COVID-19 vaccinations per week and they expect this number to increase as more doses become available.

Across its five locations in Chicago, Cook County Health utilized Cerner technology to administer around 18,000 doses a week.

The DoD and US Coast Guard are both using the Mass Vaccination software to administer the COVID-19 vaccine.

Truman Medical Centers and University Health in the Kansas City metro area became one of the first 150 hospitals across the country and the first in its area to receive and successfully administer the vaccine.

Truman Medical Centers had to optimize its EHR workflow to send its vaccine notifications to Missouri's ShowMeVax reporting program. Medical center employees worked with the CDC and the state to prepare a vaccination plan to hit the most recent guidelines.

While the hospital had the vaccination system set up in its workflow for other vaccinations, Heather Gleason, senior director IT applications at Truman Medical, [told EHRIntelligence](#) she wanted to integrate the technology into the daily workflow to maintain patient safety.

“We looked to Cerner as a partner because they had a playbook for mass vaccination that was previously utilized at a couple of test sites,” Gleason said. “We wanted to integrate ‘smart technology’ to make sure that we can get people quickly in and out of the vaccination process.”

All of the vaccine components were in place in the workflow, but clinicians never used each part of the solution at the same time. As a result, Gleason and her team had to make an adjustment.

“First, we use the revenue cycle program to schedule the patients,” Gleason explained. “Then when the patient arrives for her appointment, she checks in at a kiosk application to give her name, date of birth, address, and answer a series of questions to properly identify herself and for reporting after the vaccine is administered.”

Additionally, Cerner partnered with several municipalities and nearby hospitals to assemble a mass vaccination event for the Kansas City metro area. The trio helped vaccinate roughly 4,500 every other week and plans to increase that number to 3,500 per day in the near future.

Chicago Weather: Areas near lake see as much as 16 inches of snow in latest winter storm

InterNewsCast
February 16, 2021

<https://internewscast.com/chicago-weather-areas-near-lake-see-as-much-as-16-inches-of-snow-in-latest-winter-storm/>

Chicago-area residents were digging out once again Tuesday morning after yet another winter storm was expected to dump more than a foot of heavy lake-effect snow in some places. It's possible some areas could see 14 inches or more by the time it's all over.

It's been a fierce February, as this latest blast of snow has been coupled with brutal cold. Gov. JB Pritzker issued a disaster proclamation after the storm to open up resources.

Chicago officials continue to ask residents not to go outside unless they need to and to check on their neighbors.

The weather had caused almost 60 flight cancellations at both O'Hare and Midway airports as of Tuesday morning.

The highest snow totals are expected in Chicago and Cook County, as well as areas along Lake Michigan, ABC7 Meteorologist Cheryl Scott said.

By early Tuesday, the far western suburbs had only seen about 2 to 6 inches of snow, while some south suburbs saw 6 to 10 inches. Near the lake, in Chicago and Northwest Indiana, there was anywhere from 10 to 18 inches of snow, ABC7 meteorologist Phil Schwarz said.

Valparaiso, Midway and the South Loop had seen about 16 inches, while Oak Lawn and Forest Park had 13 inches. Elmhurst had 8 inches.

So far this month, there has been almost 12 inches of snow, but there have been 43.4 inches so far this season, ABC 7 Chicago meteorologist Tracy Butler said Tuesday morning. The season total is the snowiest since 2018 to 2019.

Tuesday also marked nine consecutive days with measurable snow falling at O'Hare, tying the record streak set in February 2018. And with more snow predicted Wednesday afternoon, it would make 10 in a row, setting a new record.

Tuesday is 12th day in a row with temperatures below freezing, too.

Monday began with a very intense band of snow draped across northern Cook County, according to Scott.

Heavy snow, gusty winds and the bitter cold temperatures created dangerous driving conditions on surface streets and interstates alike.

At the Lake Forest Oasis off Interstate 294, the roads looked like a mess early Tuesday morning. But conditions were not much better across the area.

On the Northwest Side, near Nagle and Bryn Mawr avenues, snow drifts were so high drivers were getting stuck.

The Kennedy Expressway was also snow-packed overnight, but those who opted for public transportation had to trudge through heavy snow to get there.

The Dan Ryan Expressway looked similar, with cars struggling with slick conditions near 55th Street.

Many private plows were hard at work clearing the snow near the University of Chicago campus early Tuesday, too.

Illinois State Police said that as of 8:15 p.m. Monday, they'd responded to 135 different crashes across the Chicago area and helped about 60 drivers since midnight.

"The biggest concern was when it started snowing heavy and everyone was moving real slow, I couldn't keep the snow off my windshield," driver Steve Martin said.

The city of Chicago deployed more than 300 snow vehicles and have asked drivers to slow down in the treacherous conditions. And with all the snow recently, the city said it does have plans in place, if needed, to dump that snow in designated areas to get those piles out of the neighborhoods.

"The main focus will be on arterial streets, so those of you who are on residential streets, just please be patient," Mayor Lori Lightfoot said. "This is an all-hands-on-deck moment, and we are ready to make sure that our city continues to function even in this extreme weather circumstance."

The snow fell so intensely, all plows could really do is make way for more snow.

"We've got over 3 feet of snow, and when it comes down in bunches, it makes it very difficult," said Doug Halverson, a plow operator with Arctic Snow and Ice.

White-out conditions reported along Chicago's lakefront

In Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood, the wind whipped off the lake along Sheridan Road, creating intense blowing snow conditions.

A few blocks west of the lake, it's a completely different story: The winds are much calmer and there's hardly any snow. The snow caught some off guard.

"I just came out from the 'burbs, and the 'burbs there was nothing," said Courtney Podczerwinski. "And then you come down here by the lake, and it's completely nuts."

Gas line fire shoots flames into sky in Highland Park

The lake-effect snow band dropped several inches of snow along Chicago's North Shore Monday afternoon. At one point, Wilmette saw 2.6 inches of snow fall in one hour.

The scene was similar in Andersonville early Tuesday, but arterial roads like Clark Street were driveable.

Berwyn Avenue had a thick layer of snow after the storm dropped several more inches of snow on top of areas that have already been hit hard in the last few weeks.

Side streets were covered, and Andersonville residents have been forced off some of the sidewalks.

"Yeah because I can't, I can't on the sidewalk. It's too much snow," Carlos Alvarado said.

Ken Rozanski's fingers were freezing as he tried to dig his car out Tuesday morning.

"I guess you gotta do it a little bit at a time, and take a break and go in and try to keep warm," he said.

But the storm did spark kindness, as several neighbors helped a woman push her car down Berwyn and onto Clark.

Sandra Derrig used the bus instead.

"It just reminds me of when I first moved here 30 years ago, when the snow would be this tall and I'm this tall and it's like 'how am I supposed to get over it?'" she said.

Weather also affected the CTA early Tuesday, as the Purple, Yellow, Red and Orange lines were having switching problems.

In a statement, the transit agency said, "Because of overnight weather conditions, CTA is experiencing some service issues on the rail system, including switching issues at Howard and Midway stations which are impacting the movement

of trains. CTA personnel are working to restore regular service as soon as possible. Free shuttle buses are providing connecting service to customers in the affected area.”

The Brown, Orange and Pink lines continued to operate with major delays later Tuesday morning, while service on the Purple and Yellow lines remained suspended.

And Metra experienced multiple delays Tuesday morning, as vehicles got stuck on the snow-packed tracks, including a snow plow at Winthrop Harbor on the Union Pacific North Line. But the commuter rail is warning riders that there will likely be delays during the evening rush hour due to continuing weather conditions.

Meanwhile dogs like Charlie, with his short legs and snow-covered snout, couldn't care less. This is his kind of weather.

“He likes to plow, and last time it snowed we called him Charlie the snow plow because he was going through the tire tracks in the street,” Charlie's owner Ginger Tunzi said.

And nothing was going to stop Amanda Dykema's morning run.

“Yeah it's a lot of snow, and it's pretty cold so it's a double whammy,” she said.

In Highland Park, flames shot into the sky on Green Bay Road where the city said a contractor ripped open the gas line with a Bobcat. Highland Park officials said ComEd is working with North Shore Gas to repair the line.

Evanston blared its tornado sirens to warn people to get their cars off main roads for a snow route parking ban, and Niles residents received a voicemail and text message warning people the worst of the storm was coming.

Lake-effect snow piles up in Northwest Indiana

Heavy snow also hit northwest Indiana, where white-out conditions were observed at Marquette Park Beach in Gary.

The Indiana Department of Transportation deployed 1,100 plow trucks on the roadways Monday night.

Gary Public Schools students have been told to stay home Tuesday. It was supposed to be their first day back in the classroom since last March, but they'll now have to wait until Thursday.

Several Cook County vaccination sites will be closed Tuesday due to the winter storm, officials said. Vaccinations will continue at Stroger Hospital, Provident Hospital and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, but all other locations, including large-scale sites, will be closed.

Officials said anyone who is already scheduled for an appointment will be contacted and rescheduled for another appointment this week.

Mobile COVID-19 testing sites were closed Monday due to extreme cold; however, community-based testing sites remained open.

According to the Cook County Medical Examiner's office, there have been more than half a dozen hypothermia-related deaths so far this winter season. Frostbite and weather-related injuries are also climbing.

To locate a warming center nearby, residents can call city services at 311 or visit 311.chicago.gov.

The city also has dozens of other locations where people can seek shelter during the day, including at the Chicago Cultural Center, public libraries, Park District locations and local police departments

The city is also asking people to shovel and salt in front of their homes and businesses and to check on neighbors. The city urged people not to shovel snow off rooftops, as it is a great way to get hurt. Officials say if your home is heated properly, some of that snow will melt.

Fire officials also remind people to make sure their smoke detectors are working — citing a recent rash of fatal fires and offering a reminder not to use stoves for heat and to keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything combustible.

Snowstorm causes 100-plus Chicago vaccine sites to miss shipments, but city's public health commissioner says doses will come soon

Alice Yin

February 16, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/vaccine/ct-coronavirus-vaccine-arwady-snowstorm-delay-shipments-20210216-g2h3qvcwmbq75chryk2hymnmim-story.html>

More than a hundred vaccine sites in Chicago didn't get their shipments Tuesday following a heavy snowstorm overnight, city Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady said while promising people will get their appointments rescheduled and doses will not go to waste.

Because most of the city's vaccine supply comes from Tennessee, one of the many Southern states that this week's winter storm brought to a standstill, more than 100 vaccine providers did not get their expected shipments Tuesday, Arwady said during an online question-and-answer session. That led to wide-scale appointment cancellations, including at city-run mass vaccination sites, but Arwady said those slots will be rescheduled.

"We can control a lot of things, but we can't control the weather," Arwady said. "Obviously we can't have people coming if we don't have vaccine to put in arms."

Typically, Chicago's weekly vaccine shipments come between Monday and Wednesday, but with the Presidents Day holiday falling on Monday and the snowstorm affecting Tuesday, that timeline will be delayed this week, Arwady said. She said she projects the shipment won't take longer than a few days to arrive, and in the meantime there is no concern of the doses spoiling because the storage facilities have the proper temperature controls.

"Particularly in the South, they're not used to handling large weather events like this," Arwady said. "As vaccine gets here, we will work to get it out."

Appearing with other city commissioners Tuesday afternoon to talk about fallout from the snowstorm, Arwady said Pfizer vaccines were shipped Tuesday, but Moderna doses weren't. So people scheduled Wednesday to get the Moderna vaccine — which is distributed by many of the city's outpatient providers — will likely have to reschedule for a later date, Arwady said. City-run sites will be open and keeping appointments Wednesday, distributing the Pfizer vaccine, she said.

The city announced Monday that all city-run COVID-19 vaccine sites would be closed Tuesday because of the snowstorm, while Cook County Health announced the same for all of its sites except Stroger and Provident hospitals as well as the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center. The storm starting Monday led to almost 18 inches of snow in some parts of the Chicago area.

Some residents, however, managed to sign up for Cook County Health vaccine appointments at one of the sites that closed on Tuesday. Cook County Health spokeswoman Kate Hedlin wrote in a statement that appointment slots at the Tinley Park Convention Center were accidentally released at noon on Tuesday despite a previous announcement that the site would be closed.

“With regards to Tinley Park, when appointment slots were released at noon today, the system inadvertently opened availability at Tinley Park for today,” Hedlin wrote. “Individuals who made appointments for today were quickly contacted to not come to the site and our call center will be reaching out to them to reschedule.”

Not everyone got the memo in time. Bill Linden, a 73-year-old comic strip writer who lives in the Loop, said he scrambled to secure a 1 p.m. slot for himself while his wife nabbed a 12:45 p.m. appointment at Tinley Park Convention Center. After receiving an emailed QR code, Linden and his wife immediately drove down to the south suburban site — fighting unplowed roads on the Dan Ryan Expressway along the way, he said.

The couple was met with a man guarding the door who said the site was closed due to the weather, Linden said.

“My head exploded in Tinley Park,” Linden said. “I blew up, and I started screaming obscenities about the situation.”

The man did not respond to the tirade and closed the door to Linden, he said. Meanwhile, more cars were pulling into the convention center’s parking lot.

Following a somber drive back home, Linden noticed their answering machine had a voicemail from Cook County Health informing them their appointments would be rescheduled. But the message had come only after they already left for the 40-minute drive, he said.

Linden said by the end of the afternoon, he and his wife got new appointments, slightly tempering the frustration from the snowy, fruitless trip to Tinley Park after weeks of endeavoring to find a vaccine, he said. But he’s waiting until the needle goes into his arm to celebrate, he said.

“We’re used to rejection,” Linden said. “You can’t get an appointment any place. That’s why we were so excited when this happened today, and then it was such a letdown.”

In total, about 1,500 Cook County Health vaccine appointments need to be rescheduled from Tuesday because of the weather, Hedlin wrote. She added that the doses will not go to waste and the three sites that remained open on Tuesday had “very few no-shows.”

On the patients’ side, people also canceled their vaccination appointments due to travel hiccups from the storm.

Sinai Health System received “a number of requests” to reschedule appointments at its vaccine clinics due to concerns about road conditions Tuesday and all were able to shift their appointments, spokesman Dan Regan said. Cancellations shouldn’t lead to wasted doses because the hospital system keeps a waitlist of people who can be at a vaccination clinic on short notice, he said.

Snowstorm causes 100-plus Chicago vaccine sites to miss shipments, but city's public health commissioner says doses will come soon

*Alice Yin – Chicago Tribune
February 16, 2021*

https://www.pantagraph.com/news/state-and-regional/snowstorm-causes-100-plus-chicago-vaccine-sites-to-miss-shipments-but-city-s-public-health/article_0848ac8e-59cf-52d8-a74a-85acda6b6245.html

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COVID-19 vaccination operated by the city of Chicago, test sites closed on Tuesday due to a snowstorm

February 16, 2021

<https://www.thebharatexpressnews.com/covid-19-vaccination-operated-by-the-city-of-chicago-test-sites-closed-on-tuesday-due-to-a-snowstorm/>

All COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites operated by the city of Chicago will be closed on Tuesday due to the snowstorm.

The Chicago Department of Public Health said people who made an appointment for Tuesday will be notified of the changes.

The city is assessing the overall impact of the storm and will make decisions on day-to-day vaccination testing and operations.

Cook County health officials also announced Monday night that they will be closing several coronavirus vaccination sites on Tuesday due to the snowstorm sweeping the Chicago area.

Vaccinations will continue at the Cook County Stroger Hospital, the Cook County Interim Hospital and the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center. But all other sites – including large-scale sites – will be closed on Tuesday.



CORONAVIRUS VACCINE DISTRIBUTION DELAYS IN SEVERAL STATES BECAUSE OF WINTER STORMS

News Staff & CNN Wire

February 16, 2021

<https://nbcpalmsprings.com/2021/02/16/coronavirus-vaccine-distribution-delays-in-several-states-because-of-winter-storms/>

Vaccine distribution slowed in many areas because of winter storms engulfing much of the country Monday and Tuesday. Here are the localities and states that have delayed or postponed distribution so far:

Illinois

In Chicago, all city-run vaccine sites were closed Tuesday because of the winter weather and appointments there will be rescheduled, city officials said.

The Cook County health system, which includes the Chicago suburbs, told CNN all of its vaccination sites would be closed, except for three that the system operates within the city limits.

The postponements came after Covid-19 shipments coming into the area were delayed when more than a foot of snow fell between Sunday evening and Tuesday morning, the Chicago Department of Public Health said.

In advance of winter weather and adverse road conditions, Illinois ordered the Covid-19 vaccine to be delivered to its "Strategic National Stockpile Receipt, Store, and Stage site," according to a state news release.

The state also said it has been informed by the federal government it should anticipate vaccine delivery delays this week because of the winter storms, the news release said.



Suburban Cook County Increases Indoor Dining Capacity, Effective Immediately

February 16, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/suburban-cook-county-increases-indoor-dining-capacity-effective-immediately/2439561/>

Suburban Cook County will increase indoor dining capacity at restaurants and bars after reaching the threshold of coronavirus metrics that officials provided earlier this month.

Cook County officials announced Tuesday that, effective immediately, restaurants, bars and events can offer indoor service at 40% capacity or to a maximum of 50 people, whichever is lower. Prior to Tuesday, indoor dining was limited to the lesser of 35% capacity or 50 people per room or floor.

“The COVID-19 metrics continue to improve, allowing us to align with the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Stickney Township Public Health District and ease mitigation restrictions in suburban Cook County,” Dr. Kiran Joshi, Senior Medical Officer at Cook County Department of Public Health said.

The new mitigation order adds that any person over the age of two who can medically tolerate wearing a mask should do so in public areas.

Chicago is also increasing indoor dining capacity at dining establishments after the city hit multiple COVID-19 metrics to ease restrictions.

The expansion of indoor service comes after the city recorded less than 400 new COVID-19 cases per day on a seven-day rolling average for each of the last three days, the city said.

That lowered the city to a "low" or "moderate" risk in all four metrics health officials designated earlier this month to determine indoor dining capacity. Those metrics, and where the city stands currently, are as follows:

COVID cases diagnosed per day: currently averaging 344. This number must be below 400 new cases per day to reach the “Moderate-Risk” level.

COVID test positivity: currently averaging 3.6%, in the “Low-Risk” level

Emergency Departments visits for COVID-like illness: currently averaging 62 per day, in the “Moderate-Risk” level

ICU beds occupied by COVID patients: currently averaging 117, in the “Moderate-Risk” level

Capacity can increase to 50% after two weeks of successfully maintaining "moderate risk" levels across all four metrics, according to the city.

“In recent days, we have made incredible progress in the ongoing effort to save lives and defeat this deadly virus,” Mayor Lori Lightfoot said in a statement. “I am thrilled that we have made enough headway to cautiously ease more regulations, but I once again want to remind all our businesses and residents that we are not out of the woods yet. Only by committing to what we know works will we be able to continue moving forward carefully and responsibly.”

While capacity expands, other regulations still remain place, city officials said. Those include:

Food must be available at all times in order to offer indoor service. This means that bars, taverns or breweries without a food license can reopen indoors as long as they partner with a food establishment so that food is available to patrons at all times (e.g., making menus available and allowing delivery, allowing patrons to order from third-party delivery services).

Maximum of six patrons at indoor or outdoor tables

Patrons can sit at bars, with six feet of social distancing between parties

Face coverings must be worn at all times, except when patrons are seated and actively eating or drinking

Patrons must be seated whenever they are eating or drinking

Tables must be six feet apart

Establishments must close for on-site service at 12:00am

The sale of alcohol must end at 11:00pm, including alcohol sold for on-site consumption, delivery or carry out

The city entered Phase 4 of Illinois' coronavirus mitigations on Jan. 31, which allows indoor dining capacity to increase, among other changes, under the state's guidelines.

But as restrictions were relaxed when Chicago entered Phase 4, [Lightfoot and Chicago officials had previously decided not to increase the indoor dining capacity limit in according with state guidelines](#), leaving it at the lesser of 25% or 25 persons per room.

In explaining the decision to curtail the state's Phase 4 guidelines, Chicago health officials said it was "standard public health practice" to monitor the impact of any significant mitigation change for a minimum of two weeks.

Sunday, Feb. 14 marked two weeks since Chicago entered Phase 4 mitigations. Partial indoor dining resumed in the city on Jan. 23, when the city reached the threshold to move from Tier 2 to Tier 1 mitigations under the state's reopening framework.

Chicago officials moved the city's indoor dining capacity to the 25% or 50 people limit on Feb. 11.

COVID-19 vaccine site coming to New Trier High School's Northfield campus

KAREN ANN CULLOTTA

FEBRUARY 17, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/winnetka/ct-wtk-covid-19-vaccine-site-new-trier-tl-0225-20210217-tiq4jjvih5bfdqzqirvjbqc4q-story.html>

New Trier High School is slated to become a future COVID-19 vaccine site operated through a new partnership forged by the Cook County Department of Public Health and area first responders, officials said this week.

The proposal to use New Trier's Northfield campus, 7 Happ Road, as a COVID-19 vaccine site was unanimously approved by the school board at a Tuesday night meeting, officials said.

"Cook County Health looks forward to partnering with agencies and organizations to open targeted Points of Distribution (PODs) in Cook County," Kate Hedlin, a spokeswoman for Cook County Health, said in a Tuesday email.

"We are working with officials in the northern suburbs to open a (site) for educators and first responders in the coming weeks pending available vaccine supply," Hedlin said.

Officials at New Trier declined to comment on the planned site and deferred all questions to the county. County officials were not immediately available to comment as to when the vaccine site at the high school is expected to open, the anticipated hours of operation or how residents can make an appointment.

According to public records, county health department officials are now making arrangements to use multiple locations throughout suburban Cook County as COVID-19 vaccine sites.

Establishing the COVID-19 vaccine sites "may require the cooperative efforts of the local public health departments, health providers, local law enforcement, fire departments, municipalities, local government entities, school districts, colleges and universities."

All expenses related to the establishment and operation of the vaccine site at New Trier will be paid for, "in whole or in part by Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding," officials said.

The county health department will be responsible for the oversight of all clinical activities at the vaccine site, and will provide the furniture, supplies, medication and equipment needed at the vaccine site, according to public records.

Weather forces drops in suburban vaccine supply; U.K. variant found in DuPage

Jake Griffin
February 17, 2021

<https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20210217/weather-forces-drops-in-suburban-vaccine-supply-uk-variant-found-in-dupage>

Illinois averaged more than 40,000 COVID-19 vaccine inoculations a day on Monday and Tuesday.

But that's down by almost 20,000 daily vaccinations from a week ago and almost 9,000 fewer than the state recorded two weeks ago when doses were more scarce, according to state health department figures.

Illinois Department of Public Health officials reported Wednesday that 40,380 more Illinois residents and workers received doses.

That brings the number of doses administered statewide to 1,903,942 since the vaccine rollout began more than two months ago.

The fewer vaccinations over the past two days result from the effects severe winter weather has had on the region in recent days. The weather also is hampering delivery of new doses, local health department officials said.

"With very low supply of vaccine on hand, combined with delays in receiving vaccine due to recent winter weather and extreme cold, and an emphasis on administering second doses of vaccine within its timeline, it has prevented us from providing nearly as many doses as we'd like," said Dr. Rachel Rubin, senior public health medical officer and colead at the Cook County Department of Public Health.

Kane County Health Department officials said they were experiencing something similar with their supply. And so did DuPage County Health Department officials, who also said Wednesday they will join Cook County and Chicago in declining to expand vaccine eligibility to medically vulnerable people younger than age 65.

That's as DuPage health officials announced the first case of a variant of the virus identified in the United Kingdom that is [more contagious and may be more deadly](#). So far, vaccines appear to protect against the variant.

"Given these emerging variants alongside ongoing vaccination efforts, supply remains the single-greatest challenge in not being able to swiftly vaccinate more people in DuPage County," said Karen Ayala, executive director of the DuPage County Health Department. "We, too, are frustrated with the insufficient and unpredictable supply our county is receiving."

Additionally, IDPH officials announced 24 more Illinois residents have died from the virus, bringing the state's death toll to 20,057.

The state reported 1,795 more infections as well, which means 1,166,717 cases of the respiratory disease have been diagnosed since the outset of the pandemic.

Hospitals statewide reported 1,719 patients were being treated for the virus. Of those hospitalized, 375 were in intensive care, according to state health department figures.

The state's seven-day case positivity rate is at 2.8%. Case positivity allows health officials to track the level of infection within a certain population. A seven-day average is used to smooth out any anomalies in the daily reporting of new cases and test results.



Frustration Grows for Illinois Residents Having Trouble Getting COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments

Vi Nguyen

February 18, 2021

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/frustration-grows-for-illinois-residents-having-trouble-getting-covid-19-vaccine-appointments/2441186/>

Frustration is growing among some Illinois residents who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine but are struggling to get an appointment as health officials urge patience, warning that supply is low.

Severe winter weather has delayed vaccine shipments and distribution across the country this week. More than a foot of snow blanketed parts of the Chicago area Monday into Tuesday, hampering deliveries to the city and across Illinois.

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's office said Tuesday that "the federal government has notified all states of COVID-19 vaccine delivery delays across the entire country due to adverse weather and road conditions," warning that delays could continue throughout the week.

"To help offset delayed vaccine deliveries, the state of Illinois proactively ordered vaccine to be delivered to its Strategic National Stockpile Receipt, Store, and Stage site in anticipation of adverse weather," Pritzker's office said in a release. "Illinois is distributing that vaccine to many providers around the state today and tomorrow, as weather permits, to continue to support vaccination operations."

Testing and vaccination sites in Chicago and Cook County were closed on Tuesday, with city officials saying more than 100 providers were left without their expected shipments.

"The inclement weather in the Midwest has also led to a delay of vaccine shipments coming into Chicago over the upcoming days," the Chicago Department of Public Health said in a release. "While there is currently no estimated time of arrival on the orders, we anticipate daily updates from CDC. All COVID shipments are requested as overnight shipping so we expect vaccine shipments and supply with catch up quickly."

Officials noted that deliveries from Chicago's allocation to vaccine providers were delayed due to the travel impacts from the storm, urging anyone with appointments at private healthcare centers to contact their providers and check on the status of their appointments.

CDPH Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady said the city usually receives its weekly shipments on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. But with Monday being a federal holiday, followed by a dangerous winter snowstorm, "we didn't get the vaccine we were expected."

"There's more than 100 providers that didn't get their vaccine like we were hoping today," Arwady said in a Facebook Live video Tuesday. "We just need to wait for that vaccine to get here."

In suburban DuPage County, health officials said Wednesday that over the next three weeks there will be a [large reduction in the number of vaccine doses](#) available, as they expect to receive just 2,450 doses each week instead of the 14,000 they've received weekly since December.

While state and local officials have repeatedly urged patience with the vaccine rollout since it began in December, some Illinois residents are growing more frustrated.

Karen Lindquist said she's been trying to get an appointment for her mother, who was initially scheduled to get her vaccine at her independent living facility in Arlington Heights before CVS ending up postponing the appointments. That forced her to spend hours trying to secure an appointment elsewhere.

"I'm relentless when it's something especially when it comes to my mother, but it shouldn't be that hard," Lindquist said.

Illinois is currently in Phase 1B of vaccinations, open to people age 65 years and older as well as "frontline essential workers," which includes first responders, education workers like teachers and support staff, childcare workers, grocery store employees, postal service workers and more.

Beginning Feb. 25, the state plans to increase eligibility for Phase 1B to include people with certain underlying conditions and comorbidities, like cancer, diabetes, obesity and others. However, Chicago and Cook County announced earlier this month they would not join the rest of the state in expanding eligibility, citing low vaccine supply.

Last week, the Cook County Health mass vaccination site at Triton College said there was a shortage in supply. School secretary Lynn Marnstein was able to reschedule an appointment but was frustrated she and her 78-year-old mother could not get the shots after showing up to Triton College as scheduled.

"If they ran out, they could have notified us before we went out there and how could they run out? They knew who was coming," Marnstein said.



Cook County opioid study pinpoints suburbs with most overdose deaths

Steve Miller

February 18, 2021

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/suburbs-with-most-od-deaths-identified-in-cook-county-study>

A four-year study of opioid deaths in suburban Cook County has revealed new data, including the locations where opioid use most often ends in death.

“Poverty and addiction — there’s certainly a connection there,” says Dr. Kiran Joshi, senior medical officer for the Cook County Department of Public Health.

The highest mortality rates from opioids, based on zip codes, were in western and southwestern suburbs: Worth, Broadview, Maywood and Forest Park.

The study found a big increase in opioid overdose death rates among African Americans, especially middle-aged men, 35 to 64.

In suburban Cook County there have been 1,576 deaths from opioid overdoses since 2016, the report said. More than 80% of those deaths involved heroin and/or fentanyl.

Joshi said another finding invites more investigation: Opioid hospitalizations and deaths among Hispanics and Latinx are significantly lower than among Blacks and whites.

“Why is that? We’re not quite sure,” Joshi said.



Officials Pledged to Address Rising Black Suicides in Chicago. Six Months On, There's Still No Plan.

Lakeidra Chavis
Feb 19, 2021

<https://www.thetrace.org/2021/02/chicago-black-suicide-data-cook-county-mental-health/>

Ninety-seven Black Cook County residents died by suicide in 2020 — the highest total for a single year in more than a decade.

The alarming rise came as government officials fell short on pledges to improve suicide-prevention efforts that were made after The Trace and the *Chicago Sun-Times* [reported last July](#) on the rising number of deaths.

In response, Chicago city health officials said they would seek proposals from private agencies to create and implement a suicide-prevention plan. And county officials said they were working on a similar plan and would have it by year's end.

But neither the city nor the county came through on those promises.

The increase in the number of suicides among Black residents last year began even before the coronavirus pandemic upended people's normal lives. An analysis of the deaths based on Cook County medical examiner's office data shows that:

Most of those who died by suicide were men.

The median age was 34.

About four in 10 of the deaths involved a gun. Less than a quarter were caused by hanging.

And the deaths touched nearly every corner of the city and suburbs with clusters of suicides in parts of the West Side and cutting through community areas from Auburn Park to South Shore on the South Side — including areas facing high levels of violence and drug overdoses that were also disproportionately affected by the first wave of the pandemic.

Among the deaths: A woman in her 60s in Chinatown. A 34-year-old man in Austin. And a 16-year-old boy whose death in Riverdale came just days before Christmas.

Even as the number of Black suicides rose, the number of suicides among white Cook County residents fell to a near decade low in 2020. Although there doesn't seem to be an increase in suicides for Latinos, it's hard to know for certain: Because of the way the medical examiner keeps records, the figures for Latinos are likely an undercount.

In July, a city official told The Trace and the *Sun-Times* that the city would be releasing additional funds to address mental health, including several million for the expansion of existing mental health services and \$1 million for suicide prevention. The official also said the city would seek proposals for a suicide-prevention plan in late 2020 or early 2021.

In October, the city [announced](#) that more than 30 community-based mental health organizations would receive \$8 million in annual grants to expand existing services. However, the grants do not fund suicide prevention specifically. Asked about the status of the city's suicide-prevention efforts, a spokesperson with the Chicago Department of Public

Health declined an interview request and said the agency was “finalizing our planning in regards to what we will be funding.”

Cook County Health did not answer detailed questions about its suicide-prevention effort. In a written statement, Dr. Diane Washington, the agency’s director of behavioral health, said the county plans to begin an online campaign focused on suicide prevention “in the coming weeks.”

“Suicide prevention and many other health disparities are still a key priority for Cook County Health,” said an agency spokesperson. “Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a key factor in shifting resources to help us fight this deadly virus and help save lives in Cook County.”

Amika Tendaji, a mental health advocate and director of Black Lives Matter Chicago, said the lack of follow-through by the city isn’t surprising.

“Chicago is known internationally for the trauma on its citizens,” she said. “We’ve got to figure out a plan and a pathway for people to heal.”

Tendaji says the pandemic has been hard on people’s mental health and that private as well as public services have been difficult to navigate.

“We have to stop discussing this as a problem of just a few people and recognize that housing insecurity, food insecurity, job insecurity — and the kind of oppression that exists in this city — is a recipe for the most marginalized to not be well in their minds or bodies,” she said.

Mental health professionals and researchers say that, although it’s impossible to tell what caused the increase in Black suicides, they suspect that the stress and isolation brought by the pandemic put people at a higher risk of depression.

Dr. Jonathan Singer, the president of the American Association of Suicidology, said prevention plans are an essential tool for governments trying to reduce the number of suicides.

“They provide a rationale and justification for local organizations to obtain funding, allocate time and resources for suicide prevention,” Singer said. “They can outline how and when data are shared, what systems are focal points for prevention activities and expectations for who in the state should be trained and involved in suicide prevention.”

Singer said it’s important to create plans with an anti-racist lens to help a range of communities, particularly because those working in the field of suicidology are predominantly white.

“We have contributed to the erasure of very real experiences in communities of color where people were dying but it wasn’t getting national press, it wasn’t getting federal funding, and it wasn’t getting its due because of the narrative that white men kill themselves — which contributes to this idea that suicide is a white people problem,” Singer said.

Jessica Newsome, director of behavioral health for Alternatives, a youth development organization that serves primarily Black and Latino families, said her organization was able to add a therapist and expand services in the Washington Park area on the South Side thanks to some additional city funding for mental health services.

But Newsome said, “It’s never enough.”

“I think CDPH is really trying and doing a really good job,” she said, but added, “The annual budget for CDPH is about \$200 million, the Police Department’s is \$1.6 billion.”

Newsome worries about people who, during the pandemic, are being missed by mental health providers, who aren’t getting referred for needed services and aren’t seeking help on their own.

“I think that we’re already in a situation where the young people we serve are dealing with the impact of white supremacy in their communities and community violence, and then we add in COVID,” Newsome said.

Mental health professionals in Chicago say demand for mental health services has remained steady during the pandemic. But they also say suicides are a small part of a larger mental health crisis.

“I think because these factors have been going on for so long and people have been holding on waiting for things to go back to normal — and they have not yet — we’ll continue to see symptoms present and probably get worse,” said Dr. Inger Burnett-Zeigler, a psychologist at Northwestern University who says her waitlist to accept new clients is around six months.

In November, Chicago health officials put out a [public health alert](#) on the rising number of Black suicides that noted that Black Chicagoans have the highest rates of hospitalizations for suicide attempts and face added barriers to finding affordable mental health treatment.

Newsome worries that the full extent of the problems won’t be clear until after the pandemic ends.

“That is what keeps me up at night,” she said. “I know that the wave has started. I don’t think it’s going to stop.”

More suicides by Black Cook County residents in 2020 than in any year in over a decade

Lakeidra Chavis – *The Trace*
Feb 19, 2021

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2021/2/19/22290148/suicide-black-cook-county-residents-rise-mental-health-covid-coronavirus>

Ninety-seven Black Cook County residents died by suicide in 2020 — the highest total for a single year in more than a decade.

The alarming rise came as government officials fell short on pledges to improve suicide-prevention efforts that were made after *The Trace* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* [reported last July](#) on the rising number of deaths.

In response, Chicago city health officials said they would seek proposals from private agencies to create and implement a suicide-prevention plan. And county officials said they were working on a similar plan and would have it by year's end.

But neither the city nor the county came through on those promises.

The increase in the number of suicides among Black residents last year began even before the coronavirus pandemic upended people's normal lives. An analysis of the deaths based on Cook County medical examiner's office data shows that:

Most of those who died by suicide were men.

The median age was 34.

About four in 10 of the deaths involved a gun. Less than a quarter were caused by hanging.

And the deaths touched nearly every corner of the city and suburbs with clusters of suicides in parts of the West Side and cutting through community areas from Auburn Park to South Shore on the South Side — including areas facing high levels of violence and drug overdoses that were also disproportionately affected by the first wave of the pandemic.

Among the deaths: A woman in her 60s in Chinatown. A 34-year-old man in Austin. And a 16-year-old boy whose death in Riverdale came just days before Christmas.

Even as the number of Black suicides rose, the number of suicides among white Cook County residents fell to a near decade low in 2020. Although there doesn't seem to be an increase in suicides for Latinos, it's hard to know for certain: Because of the way the medical examiner keeps records, the figures for Latinos are likely an undercount.

In July, a city official told *The Trace* and the *Sun-Times* that the city would be releasing additional funds to address mental health, including several million for the expansion of existing mental health services and \$1 million for suicide prevention. The official also said the city would seek proposals for a suicide-prevention plan in late 2020 or early 2021.

In October, the city [announced](#) that more than 30 community-based mental health organizations would receive \$8 million in annual grants to expand existing services. However, the grants do not fund suicide prevention specifically. Asked about the status of the city's suicide-prevention efforts, a spokesperson with the Chicago Department of Public

Health declined an interview request and said the agency was “finalizing our planning in regards to what we will be funding.”

Cook County Health did not answer detailed questions about its suicide-prevention effort. In a written statement, Dr. Diane Washington, the agency’s director of behavioral health, said the county plans to begin an online campaign focused on suicide prevention “in the coming weeks.”

“Suicide prevention and many other health disparities are still a key priority for Cook County Health,” said an agency spokesperson. “Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a key factor in shifting resources to help us fight this deadly virus and help save lives in Cook County.”

Amika Tendaji, a mental health advocate and director of Black Lives Matter Chicago, said the lack of follow-through by the city isn’t surprising.

“Chicago is known internationally for the trauma on its citizens,” she said. “We’ve got to figure out a plan and a pathway for people to heal.”

Tendaji says the pandemic has been hard on people’s mental health and that private as well as public services have been difficult to navigate.

“We have to stop discussing this as a problem of just a few people and recognize that housing insecurity, food insecurity, job insecurity — and the kind of oppression that exists in this city — is a recipe for the most marginalized to not be well in their minds or bodies,” she said.

Mental health professionals and researchers say that, although it’s impossible to tell what caused the increase in Black suicides, they suspect that the stress and isolation brought by the pandemic put people at a higher risk of depression.

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Looking back on Provident Hospital's remarkable history as first Black-owned hospital in US

Will Jones

February 19, 2021

<https://abc7chicago.com/provident-hospital-chicago-history-black-owned/10355037/>

Provident Hospital on Chicago's South Side has a remarkable past. It was the first Black-owned hospital in the country. The first successful open heart surgery was performed at Provident. The hospital was started to address the healthcare challenges facing Black Chicagoans in the late 19th century.

The hospital opened to much fanfare at 29th & Dearborn in 1891.

"It was really a community event," said Lionel Kimble Jr., an associate professor of history at Chicago State University.

Provident Hospital met a critical need for Chicago's growing Black population. One that its founder Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, a Black surgeon, saw firsthand.

"African Americans have had a very difficult time getting adequate health care," Kimble Jr. said.

And difficulty accessing medical training. After Emma Reynolds was denied admission to all of the city's nursing schools because she was Black, her brother requested the help of Dr. Williams, the first Black graduate of what is now the Northwestern University Feinberg School Of Medicine. With the support of Black and white donors came Provident Hospital & Training School, offering not only medical care but also a nursing program for Black women. Reynolds enrolled in its first class.

"To be of the mind to start training other practitioners, other nurses, it's absolutely incredible," said Kim L. Dulaney, the DuSable Museum of African American History Director of Education & Programs

A few years later, Dr. Williams moved to Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Provident remained open and expanded with a post graduate school to train Black men in medicine and a larger building near 51st and King. But under crushing debt, Provident closed in 1987.

"As the neighborhood fell on hard times, so did the hospital," Kimble Jr. said.

Cook County purchased the facility and Provident reopened in 1993.

"I don't have to go a long distance now," said a nearby resident to ABC 7 at the reopening.

Today, the hospital is responding to a pandemic that has ravaged the Black community.

"We continue to serve those in our community who are the most challenged in terms of their ability to pay for and secure health care," said Toni Preckwinkle, the Cook County Board President.

Like Dr. Williams during his time, many Black doctors in Chicago are fighting to address racial health disparities and to increase diversity in medicine. Only 5 percent of physicians in the U.S. identify as Black, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

"What we have to do, my generation, is really open doors and bring more people into the loop," said Dr. Clyde Yancy, a professor and chief of cardiology at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Dr. Williams once said "a people who don't make provision for their own sick and suffering are not worthy of civilization."



A Healthy Sentence: Why Vaccinating Prisoners Should Be a Priority

Wendy Netter Epstein
Feb. 19, 2021

<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-02-19/vaccinating-prisoners-against-covid-19-should-be-a-priority>

WATSON GRAY, AT 73, survived cancer and strokes but suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure and coronary heart disease.

When [COVID-19](#) hit in 2020, Gray was an inmate at Dixon Correctional Center in [Dixon, Illinois](#). He had no ability to isolate and limited access to protective equipment like masks. He contracted COVID-19 while incarcerated and [died](#) of it late last year, having not seen his family for over eight months.

As of mid-December, [1 in every 5](#) prisoners in the United States had tested positive for the coronavirus, according to an analysis by The Marshall Project and The Associated Press. That's a rate more than [four times](#) as high as the rate of the general population. At least [2,400 prisoners](#) have died in connection with COVID-19.

As President Joe Biden takes charge of the national COVID-19 response, he is asking Congress for [\\$20 billion](#) to spend on a national vaccination effort and has aimed to administer [100 million vaccine doses in 100 days](#). He has the opportunity to direct vaccinations to those who need them most and need them the most quickly. That includes prisoners.

In guidance that states can choose to follow, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices includes [corrections officers](#) among those eligible for a shot in the early phases of vaccine prioritization. ACIP's [recommendations](#) are silent on vaccine prioritization for prisoners, though the CDC itself [encourages](#) officials to vaccinate corrections staff and inmates at the same time.

States, however, vary in terms of prioritizing prisoners for vaccines. About 40% explicitly include residents of correctional facilities in their early vaccine groupings, according to a [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) analysis of state websites and plans. Other states appear more vague, and some leaders have [proved resistant](#) to prioritizing prisoners.

In [Illinois](#), Gov. J.B. Pritzker has faced tremendous political pushback for [his decision](#) to give prisoners priority, placing them in [Phase 1B](#) of the state's vaccine plan.

By contrast, [Colorado](#) Gov. Jared Polis has publicly come out [against vaccinating prisoners](#) in [Phase 2A](#), stating: "There's no way it's going to prisoners before it goes to people who haven't committed any crimes."

Yet science and public health information should compel policymakers to offer inmate vaccinations at the same time as they're vaccinating teachers and essential workers.

Vaccinating inmates can help protect the rest of us against community spread. A [study](#) by the Prison Policy Initiative points to prisons and jails as potential "super spreaders." Of particular concern are nonmetro counties with a very high density of inmates, like a rural county with a large prison. Prisons there could increase the COVID-19 infection rate by some 15% to 35% over comparable counties without prisons, according to the analysis.

That's because prisons are not closed communities; staff members enter and leave, and prisoners are released and transferred. In a study last year, researchers said roughly [1 in 6 COVID-19 cases](#) in [Chicago](#) as of April 19 appeared

associated with the cycling of inmates into and out of the Cook County Jail. (Some, including officials in the [Cook County Sheriff's Office](#) and the [Chicago Department of Public Health](#), have heavily [criticized](#) the study.)

Without vaccination, COVID-19 will linger in correctional settings, just as prisons have historically been a major source for the [community spread of tuberculosis](#). Infections like [COVID-19](#) and tuberculosis can spread quickly in correctional settings because of insufficient ventilation; some U.S. prisons were [built in the 1800s](#). Inmates live in close quarters, and self-isolation is often impossible.

Importantly, even if vaccines do not stem transmission of the virus outright, which remains an [open question](#) but a [real possibility](#), they suppress symptoms and help build herd immunity. And vaccines that do not prevent transmission have nonetheless [helped control infectious diseases](#).

Vaccinating inmates also will free up hospital capacity to treat other patients. Rural hospitals are often the hospitals closest to prisons and must treat prisoner patients as well as patients from the surrounding community, placing a greater strain on some of the most [overburdened and underresourced](#) providers in our health care system. Vaccinating prisoners will allow these hospitals to better care for other patients.

Ironically, it is more efficient to vaccinate prisoners because prisoners are already congregated in one place. And there are efficiencies to be gained from vaccinating them at the same time as correctional officers.

While critics of prisoner vaccination may argue that in some places prisoner mortality rates are lower than that of the general population, prisoners are getting seriously ill and requiring hospital resources. Studies also show that in many states [they are dying in high numbers](#). [One in every 281](#) prisoners in [Michigan](#) had died of COVID-19 and [1 in 352](#) had died in [Alabama](#), for example.

Some would say prisoners do not deserve to be prioritized for a vaccine because they've harmed society. Yet some who are incarcerated have not even been found guilty. They sit in jail because they [could not pay bail](#). In any event, there is no room for moral judgment about who deserves the vaccine – only about who needs it.

The focus needs to be on how to slow community spread and save lives. That is why the [American Medical Association](#) called for prisoners to receive the vaccine early on and [The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) called for those incarcerated to receive it in tandem with groups like teachers and some older adults.

"We're in a war with this virus," [President Biden recently said](#). His administration seems [poised](#) to target vaccines to residents of jails, prisons and detention centers. States should do the same.

After all, Americans are not in a war with each other. We're fighting the virus, and every American deserves a better chance to survive it.

30 COVID-related deaths, 400 hospitalizations averted by measures taken at Cook County Jail: study finds

Matthew Hendrickson

Feb 19, 2021

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2021/2/19/22291638/cook-county-jail-covid-19-coronavirus-yale-standford-study-tom-dart>

Measures taken to slow the spread of the coronavirus at Cook County Jail saved dozens of lives and prevented hundreds of hospitalizations, researchers at Stanford and Yale universities said in a new study.

Reducing the jail's population and holding detainees in single cells were among the most effective steps taken to contain the virus and should be used in other institutional settings, the researchers said in the [study published this month in the British Medical Journal](#).

Those measures, as well as widespread asymptomatic testing, led to an 83% reduction of new cases at the jail over an 83-day period, the study said.

By reducing new cases, the researchers believe an estimated 435 additional COVID-related hospitalizations and 30 deaths of people held or working at the jail were prevented.

The researchers said the name of the institution studied was being kept anonymous, but officials with the sheriff's office confirmed the subject mentioned in the research was Cook County Jail.

"Taken together, these measures not only have bearing for the correctional facility, but also for the community health systems that surround the jail," the authors of the study wrote. "Our findings suggest that depopulation efforts should be a primary strategy for COVID-19 mitigation in jails."

Sheriff Tom Dart called the results a vindication of his office's efforts during the pandemic.

"It's nice to have these studies say, 'You were right all along, keep it up, and other jurisdictions should do it, too,'" Dart said Friday, adding that about half of correctional staff and more than 1,000 detainees had been vaccinated.

Early in the pandemic, the jail was labeled a "hot spot" for the COVID-19, though the sheriff's office has long contended its numbers were higher than other facilities because of its early and aggressive testing of detainees.

[Advocates for detainees sued the sheriff's office](#) in federal court, leading a judge to issue a series of mandates requiring social distancing of detainees at the jail and requiring officials to provide additional access to hygiene products.

Since the pandemic began, 10 detainees at the jail, a sheriff's deputy and four correctional officers have died from complications related to the virus, according to the latest figures posted to the sheriff's office's website.

In November, the jail saw a spike in virus cases as cases in the city and across the nation also increased dramatically, leading to renewed calls to reduce the jail's population, which had crept back up to earlier levels.

As of Friday, the jail's population stood at 5,396 detainees, and there were 27 detainees who tested positive for coronavirus.

Dart called early criticism of his office's handling of the pandemic "really difficult and beyond frustrating," but said studies since, including one by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last year, show his office was right to "follow the data, follow the science."

Dart said he learned to "take the hits, take the criticism ... [and] stick to the science, no matter how painful it is."

Last spring, county officials worked together to bring the jail's population down from 5,500 detainees to around 4,000 — the lowest level on record.

The reduced population, as well as the reopening of additional facilities on the jail's sprawling campus in Little Village, allowed the sheriff's office to move 66% of detainees into single cells and socially distance detainees in its dormitory-style housing areas, [the Chicago Sun-Times previously reported](#).

Dart said he has no plans to close the expanded areas of the jail's campus or to curtail social distancing efforts while the pandemic continues.

"Science has not not nailed down yet that even if you've been vaccinated, you cannot carry it and pass it on to somebody," he said. "So for the time being, we're going to continue."

Chicago Tribune

Struggling Cook County suburban areas face overdose epidemic, with death rates similar to Chicago, report says

John Keilman

February 19, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-cook-county-opioid-overdoses-20210219-ly3yy24utvcqnedizsamkzdxa-story.html>

The overdose epidemic that has ravaged Chicago has not spared the nearby suburbs, some of which have death rates comparable to anything seen in the city, according to a report released this week by the Cook County Department of Public Health.

ZIP codes in the towns of Worth, Broadview, Maywood and Forest Park, areas that “have substantially lower median household incomes and higher poverty rates,” have been especially hard-hit, the report said.

“If you happen to have an addiction or a predisposition to addiction and you live in poverty, I think it follows that that could potentially tip one over,” said Dr. Kiran Joshi, the department’s senior medical officer.

The report found that heroin and fentanyl, a synthetic opioid far more powerful than heroin that increasingly has been added as an adulterant to street drugs, accounted for the vast majority of the nearly 1,600 deaths that have happened in suburban Cook County since 2016.

It also found that middle-aged Black men have been particularly susceptible to overdose deaths, reflecting a national trend, and that suburban hospitals have spent more than \$500 million to treat overdoses.

Report co-author Lee Friedman of the University of Illinois/at Chicago School of Public Health said the overdose problem in the county as a whole is comparable to the rest of the state. Some hot spots, though, particularly those adjacent to “high-risk” communities in Chicago, have elevated overdose death rates, he said.

The highest ones are in suburbs south and west of the city. A ZIP code that encompasses Worth and sections of Palos Heights, Palos Hills, Alsip and Chicago Ridge tops the list, with 42 opioid deaths per 100,000 residents over the last four years.

“(Some Cook County suburbs) have very elevated rates that are comparable to the highest rates that we are seeing within specific Chicago communities,” Friedman said.

Opioid deaths across the country have been rising because of the increasing presence of fentanyl, and Lydia Karch, a project coordinator for the department, said that has been true in Cook County as well.

“It’s becoming a more dominant share of the market,” she said.

The danger is made worse by the ingestion of other drugs. The Cook County medical examiner’s office found that most overdoses included more than one substance, including things such as alcohol, barbiturates or benzodiazepines — drugs that in combination with opioids increase the risk a person will stop breathing.

Suburban overdoses started to edge up in the middle of 2019, peaking in the spring of 2020 after the COVID-19 lockdowns had begun, though Friedman said cases that have yet to be closed by the medical examiner could affect that trend line.

Karch said a COVID-19-related spike makes sense.

“If you are in isolation and experience an overdose, there won’t be anyone to reverse the overdose,” she said. “It is not unreasonable to believe that might contribute to a higher number.”

She said the county is trying to fight the trend by stressing the distribution of naloxone, an overdose-reversing medication. Joshi said an even broader response, including an increase in the minimum wage and paid sick leave for workers, is needed to address the root causes of addiction.

“A little compassion can go a long way,” he said. “We know not only are things like poverty highly stigmatized, but of course addictions are stigmatizing. Following the science, addictions are a chronic disease, just like diabetes, just like emphysema, and we should treat individuals with addictions with the same dignity, the same respect we would treat anyone with a chronic disease.”



Cook County administers 100,000th vaccine dose as shortages caused by storm continue

Judy Wang, WGN Web Desk, Dana Rebik
Feb 19, 2021

<https://wqntv.com/news/coronavirus/thousands-of-covid-19-vaccine-appointments-pushed-back-across-chicago-due-to-winter-storm/>

The Chicago health department says thousands of vaccination appointments must be rescheduled because of vaccine shipment delays due to this week's snowstorm.

Vaccines arrive by truck at the beginning of every week from facilities in Tennessee and Kentucky, which were also hit hard.

As of Thursday night, the city health department says it received a limited supply of Pfizer vaccine in the middle of this week. A spokesman says the department received no Moderna shipment this week.

The city was expecting 17,550 doses of Pfizer and 26,500 doses of Moderna.

Illinois Department of Public Health reports it received 15% of the 365,000 doses it was expecting this week.

Health commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady says she's confident the city will catch up. She says you can reschedule your second dose four days earlier than scheduled, or up to six weeks after you had your first dose, without losing efficacy.

Despite storm related shipment delays, [Gov. JB Pritzker says](#) the state still expects to receive a half million doses next week.

Cook County administered its 100,000th dose Friday despite the shortages, which have affected all 50 states and caused a backlog of approximately 6 million doses, according to the White House COVID-19 response team.

Illinois is averaging 61,000 shots per day, but is still lagging behind other states.

There are currently 850 vaccination sites across Illinois.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot got her second vaccine dose at the new Gage Park vaccination site, which opened in the former health club at 61st and Western Avenue.

During a press conference Friday at the new site, Lightfoot announced 50% of first doses in the past week were given to Black and Latinx Chicagoans. Those communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

State health department data shows two-thirds of doses, so far, have gone to white recipients — with Blacks, Latinos and Asians lagging far behind.

Lightfoot also made another plea to minorities to not be afraid of the vaccine.



Suburban Cook County increases indoor dining capacity

WSJ Staff Reporter

<https://westsuburbanjournal.com/suburban-cook-county-increases-indoor-dining-capacity/>

Suburban Cook County has increased indoor dining capacity at restaurants and bars after reaching the threshold of coronavirus metrics that officials provided in early February.

Cook County officials announced this week that, effective immediately, restaurants, bars and events can offer indoor service at 40% capacity or to a maximum of 50 people, whichever is lower. Prior to Tuesday, indoor dining was limited to the lesser of 35% capacity or 50 people per room or floor.

“The COVID-19 metrics continue to improve, allowing us to align with the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Stickney Township Public Health District and ease mitigation restrictions in suburban Cook County,” Dr. Kiran Joshi, Senior Medical Officer at Cook County Department of Public Health said.

The new mitigation order adds that any person over the age of two who can medically tolerate wearing a mask should do so in public areas.

Suburban Cook County is also increasing indoor dining capacity at dining establishments after the city hit multiple COVID-19 metrics to ease restrictions.

The expansion of indoor service comes after the city recorded less than 400 new COVID-19 cases per day on a seven-day rolling average for each of the last three days, the city said in a statement.

“In recent days, we have made incredible progress in the ongoing effort to save lives and defeat this deadly virus,” Mayor Lori Lightfoot said in a statement. “I am thrilled that we have made enough headway to cautiously ease more regulations, but I once again want to remind all our businesses and residents that we are not out of the woods yet. Only by committing to what we know works will we be able to continue moving forward carefully and responsibly.”

While capacity expands, other regulations listed below remain in place:

Food must be available at all times in order to offer indoor service. This means that bars, taverns or breweries without a food license can reopen indoors as long as they partner with a food establishment so that food is available to patrons at all times (e.g., making menus available and allowing delivery, allowing patrons to order from third-party delivery services).

Maximum of six patrons at indoor or outdoor tables

Patrons can sit at bars, with six feet of social distancing between parties

Face coverings must be worn at all times, except when patrons are seated and actively eating or drinking

Patrons must be seated whenever they are eating or drinking

Tables must be six feet apart

Establishments must close for on-site service at 12:00am

The sale of alcohol must end at 11:00pm, including alcohol sold for on-site consumption, delivery or carry out.

Cook County opens community vaccination site at South Suburban College in South Holland

February 20, 2021

<https://chicagocrusader.com/cook-county-opens-community-vaccination-site-at-south-suburban-college-in-south-holland/>

Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller (D-6th) proudly joined County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha, Frank M. Zuccarelli, Chairman of the SSC Board of Trustees, and other elected officials announced the South Suburban College community vaccination site opening on February 11th to continue Phase 1a and Phase 1b vaccinations.

Vaccinations at South Suburban College and other Cook County Health sites are provided by appointment.

Appointments for individuals in Phase 1b can be scheduled at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov. Individuals without internet access or who need assistance scheduling can call (833) 308-1988 (from 7a.m. to 7p.m., Monday – Friday). Cook County Health will only offer appointment slots based on the amount of vaccine on hand and will add appointments as new vaccine shipments arrive.

“We have all been working together at all levels of government since the beginning to fight this pandemic, and perhaps the most essential aspect of this fight is the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines, and getting shots in arms as quickly as supply allows,” said Miller “I am very pleased that we are bringing more sites online especially here in the Southland, which has been hit hard by this virus.”

“While current vaccine supply does not meet the demand and in fact has been exhausted – we are standing up large scale sites now to ensure that we are ready as vaccine supply is expected to increase in the weeks and months ahead,” said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

When fully operationalized and when ample vaccine supply becomes available, Cook County Health estimates it will be able to provide more than 4,000 vaccines weekly at South Suburban College.

“The South Suburban College Board of Trustees and our executive leadership team are proud to collaborate with Cook County to provide a safe, convenient, COVID-19 vaccination site right here at our main campus in South Holland,” said Frank M. Zuccarelli, Chairman of the SSC Board of Trustees.

In addition to Cook County Health sites, the Cook County Department of Public Health has distributed vaccines to more than 90 partner locations including Jewel-Osco, Mariano’s, Walgreens, Federally Qualified Health Centers and hospitals who are also offering vaccines by appointment. A complete listing of these sites can be found at www.cookcountypublichealth.org.

“I encourage everyone to get vaccinated when it’s their turn, I’ve signed up already at our dedicated website, and when my turn comes I’ll be getting vaccinated,” said Miller.

“We are asking Cook County residents for their continued patience as we work to ramp up one of the largest County-operated vaccine programs in the country,” said Israel Rocha, CEO, Cook County Health.

Residents not yet eligible for vaccine can also sign up at vaccine.cookcountyil.gov to receive updates on their phase and for information on dozens of additional vaccination sites across Cook County.

Each month, at the Cook County Health & Hospitals Committee Meeting, representatives from the Cook County Department of Public Health will share a briefing on Covid-19 Vaccination Plans for suburban Cook County. You can watch this meeting and many others at www.cookcountyil.gov/service/watch-live-board-proceedings.

'The perfect storm': How the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the suburbs' opioid crisis

Lauren Rohr

February 21, 2021

<https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20210220/the-perfect-storm-how-the-covid-19-pandemic-has-exacerbated-the-suburbs-opioid-crisis>

Nicole Caceres fell to her knees in disbelief, feeling as if someone hit her in the chest and stole the air from her lungs.

It had been three months since she learned her 24-year-old son, Mathew LeBlanc, had been using heroin. A month and a half since he got out of rehab. A day after he moved out of a sober living house in Minnesota. He had been on the road to recovery, ready to start a new life and eager to find a job that blended his passion for art with his love of teaching.

But on May 19, 2020, Caceres found herself on the floor of her West Dundee home, reeling from the devastating phone call she had just received from LeBlanc's father: "We lost Matt."

Everything beyond that moment is a blur.

"When you hear those words, it doesn't even really register," Caceres said. "I can't even describe it. It's awful. You don't expect your children to go before you do."

LeBlanc's death from fentanyl poisoning was among a record number of fatal drug overdoses nationwide -- a dire situation experts say has been exacerbated and yet overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The opioid crisis has intensified in the suburbs, too, with Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane and McHenry counties all reporting a spike in 2020 overdose deaths compared to the previous year, according to data released this month. In the six-county region, including Will County but excluding Chicago, opioid-related fatalities rose from 781 to 922, with some cases still pending.

Local drug prevention advocates say the sheer nature of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown has been a significant contributor.

Support meetings shifted from in-person to online. Face-to-face interactions with recovery coaches and loved ones became scarce. And people battling substance use disorder found themselves vulnerable to loneliness, mental health issues, economic insecurity, job loss, boredom and the disruption of daily routines, said Laura Fry, executive director of Arlington Heights-based [Live4Lali](#).

"Substance use disorder is a disease of isolation," she said. "COVID is the perfect storm."

The data

DuPage County Coroner Richard Jorgensen noticed new themes emerging as he examined each of the record 112 opioid overdoses that came through his office last year.

Suburban leaders have long been seeking solutions to combat an already growing number of drug-related deaths, largely due to the strength and abundance of fentanyl in the black-market drug supply, among other factors.

But the "alarming increase" in fatalities when the stay-at-home order took effect last spring was unlike anything Jorgensen had seen before, he said. In most cases, the person had a history of prior mental illness, depression, financial issues or drug use.

The correlation is no coincidence, he said.

"This is very COVID-related," Jorgensen said. "I don't think there's any question that this pandemic is causing a long-term effect on our society."

In 2020, opioid overdose deaths in DuPage County rose 17% over the 96 reported in 2019, according to a [news release](#).

Coroners in other counties reported similar spikes. Fatal opioid overdoses increased from 32 to 43 in McHenry County and 79 to 97 in Lake, according to preliminary results with a handful of cases still pending. In Kane County, data shows opioids were involved in 97 deaths -- 69 of which listed opioids as the primary cause -- compared to 90 related fatalities in 2019.

Cook County saw a jump from 381 to 496 opioid-related deaths in suburban communities alone, with more than 100 cases still pending, according to the [medical examiner's case archive](#). Adding Chicago, that number rises to 1,768 in 2020, compared to 1,276 in 2019.

Only Will County experienced a drop in fatal heroin and fentanyl overdoses, with 77 cases reported last year compared to 103 the year before, according to the most recent [data from the coroner's office](#).

The Chicago-area data largely mirrors a national trend identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A record 81,000 drug-related deaths were reported in a 12-month period ending last May, primarily driven by a 38.4% increase in synthetic opioid cases, according to a [December news release](#). The coronavirus crisis accelerated that scourge.

"As we continue the fight to end this pandemic, it's important to not lose sight of different groups being affected in other ways," CDC Director Robert Redfield said in a statement. "We need to take care of people suffering from unintended consequences."

Idle hands

Flipping through her son's artist notebook, Caceres notices his lighthearted, whimsical drawings become increasingly dark and ominous.

It was an indication, she realized in retrospect, that LeBlanc was in the throes of addiction. "But hindsight is always 20/20," she said.

After graduating from Harry D. Jacobs High School in Algonquin, LeBlanc moved to North Carolina and earned an art education degree from Appalachian State University in 2018, his mom said. It was there that he started using heroin, she later learned, though his family was completely unaware for years until his dad found his needle kit on Feb. 13, 2020.

Two days later, LeBlanc was admitted to a rehab facility in Texas, where he was living at the time, Caceres said. When he got out 45 days later and moved to Minneapolis, he found himself in a new world overthrown by the COVID-19 virus.

Living in a sober house with about 10 other men during a lockdown proved to be difficult for LeBlanc, his mom said, noting his family was in touch with him frequently. He had to attend daily narcotics anonymous meetings online, and he struggled to find constructive ways to fill his time.

More than anything, she said, LeBlanc longed to find a permanent job in his new town doing what he loved: teaching art. But at the height of the pandemic, schools were shut down and districts weren't hiring, prompting him to settle for a menial job at FedEx.

"Matt was a hard worker, and he just accelerated when he had something good to do," Caceres said. "His passion was teaching and art, and he wasn't able to do those things when he got out of rehab."

A sudden abundance of free time, a loss of connection and the unmanageability of events like those experienced in 2020 can be detrimental to people battling substance use disorder, said Brad Gerke, a member of the DuPage County HOPE Taskforce and co-founder of the [516 Light Foundation](#).

"People in recovery need structure," Gerke said. Without it, some may be tempted to return to their former vices, he says. "Idle hands are the devil's playground."

Other ripple effects from the pandemic may have contributed to an increase in opioid deaths, including a disruption in the supply chain prompting individuals to seek illicit drugs from unreliable sources, said Dr. Gregory Teas, chief medical officer for Amita Health Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital in Hoffman Estates.

Forced isolation has been another factor, he said, causing more people to use opioids when they're alone, with nobody around to call for help or administer naloxone in the event of an overdose.

On the flip side, Gerke said, treatment centers have had to limit capacity or institute new COVID-19 requirements, creating another barrier for someone seeking help.

"Is COVID a scary thing? Yes," he said. "But so is addiction."

Reducing the stigma

The day before LeBlanc died, he was kicked out of his sober living facility for drinking a beer, Caceres said.

He assured his family that he would be just fine. He had a job, he had a car, and he found a safe place to stay. That night, he texted his mom the address and said, "I'm here. I'm good."

The next morning, LeBlanc was found with a needle in the bathroom of the Airbnb.

The pandemic made everything about the grieving process more difficult, from not having a proper memorial service to only being able to attend bereavement group meetings remotely, Caceres said. But it has not stopped LeBlanc's family from trying to honor his memory.

"That's going to be my life's work now," his mom says, "Bringing awareness, letting people know about the effects of addiction and that it can happen to anybody."

Reducing the stigma of substance use disorder has been a key focus for suburban organizations like Live4Lali and [Point to Point Kane County](#). Both distribute free and safe supplies -- clean needles, fentanyl test strips, naloxone, safe-sex kits, and personal care products -- as part of their harm reduction programs.

Initiatives aimed at battling the opioid crisis have also been ongoing at the state and county levels. [The Cook County Department of Public Health](#), for example, has partnered with nonprofits to prevent fatal overdoses and increase access to evidence-based treatment programs, thanks to a \$4.7 million grant awarded in 2019.

An opioid mortality report released Thursday determined 82.9% of overdose deaths in suburban Cook County from 2016 to mid-2020 involved heroin, fentanyl or both. Other trends and potential blind spots will be used to "inform our activities and customize intervention programs," said Dr. Kiran Joshi, who is colead and senior medical officer of the department.

Drug prevention advocates say they fear the opioid crisis has taken a back seat to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of awareness and public health resources. They want to bring the issue back to the forefront.

"Education and the understanding of the disease of addiction is so important," Gerke said. "The No. 1 thing I'd want people to know is, there's hope. But you have to take the action and be willing to change."

New Trier High School COVID-19 vaccine site to deliver shots for local educators, first responders starting this week

Karen Ann Cullotta
February 22, 2021

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/winnetka/ct-wtk-covid-19-new-trier-vaccine-site-educators-shots-tl-0225-20210222-hlv5budzm5e33q4uoy7wyqsoi-story.html>

A new COVID-19 vaccine site staffed by area fire departments at New Trier High School will begin delivering shots to local educators and first responders this week, officials announced.

The new partnership forged by Cook County Department of Public Health and the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System Division 3, which includes 17 north and northwest suburban fire departments, is slated to kickoff Wednesday at New Trier's Northfield campus, Cook County Commissioner Scott Britton, 14th District, said.

The plan to create a COVID-19 vaccine site to immunize area teachers and first responders was recently proposed by MABAS Division 3 officials, who said the EMTs were qualified to deliver the shots, and eager to help, Britton said.

"They told us, our (emergency medical technicians) are already on the front lines, and are very qualified to deliver vaccines, so let's use them," Britton said.

The logistics of when the vaccines will be scheduled are still in flux, but appointments will likely be handled by school districts and other public agencies on behalf of their employees, Britton.

While the EMTs staffing the New Trier vaccine site at 7 Happ Road will provide vaccines solely to educators and first responders, Britton said MABAS officials are also considering a potential plan to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to area senior citizens who are homebound.

"We're hearing from a lot of elderly residents who can't get to the county vaccine sites easily, and who would be comfortable with a firefighter or paramedic visiting their home, so this is our next goal," Britton said.

The suburban firefighters have also expressed an interest in volunteering their services beyond the suburbs by possibly assisting residents of underserved communities on Chicago's South and West sides, Britton said.

"One of the fire chiefs I talked to said, 'We're at war, and we have an entire army we can send where needed,'" Britton said, adding: "This is still a huge challenge, because of the limited amount of vaccine that is available."

Last week, a spokeswoman for Cook County Health said [officials were looking forward to partnering](#) with agencies and organizations to open targeted vaccine sites in Cook County.

All expenses related to the establishment and operation of the vaccine site at New Trier will be paid for, "in whole or in part by Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding," according to public records.

The county health department will be responsible for the oversight of all clinical activities at the vaccine site, and will provide the furniture, supplies, medication and equipment needed.

The proposal to use New Trier's Northfield campus as a COVID-19 vaccine site was unanimously approved by the school board last week.

Social Media Dashboard



Insights and Activity Report

January 26, 2021 – February 22, 2021



COOK COUNTY
HEALTH

Social Media Summary

January - February Activity

During January 26 – February 22, the communications team posted content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn for Cook County Health.

Posts included content such as COVID-19, interviews with local media, recognition for physicians and the hospital, and health tips.

Facebook: 23 posts

<https://www.facebook.com/Cookcountyhhs/>

Instagram – 16 posts (*does NOT include stories*)

<https://www.instagram.com/cookcountyhealth/>

Twitter – 23 (*includes retweets*)

<https://twitter.com/CookCtyHealth>

LinkedIn – 9 posts

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cook-county-health/>

Social Media Insights

As of February 22

Twitter (28-Day Summary)

- Impressions: **146K**
- Profile visits: **6,911** (up **87%**)
- Mentions: **163**
- Followers: **3,696** (up **446**)

LinkedIn (30-Day Summary)

- Impressions: **21.6K**
- Unique visitors: **636** (up **23%**)
- Followers: **6,261** (up **498**)

Facebook (28-Day Summary)

- Post reach: **34.8K** (up **229%**)
- Post engagement: **6,252** (up **106%**)
- Page views: **2,098** (up **66%**)
- Page likes: **5,023** (up **155**)
- Page followers: **5,967** (up **31**)

Instagram (30-Day Summary)

- Impressions: **16,188**
- Reach: **1,842**
- Profile visits: **887**
- Followers: **2,285** (up **219**)

Top Social Media Posts

January 26 – February 22

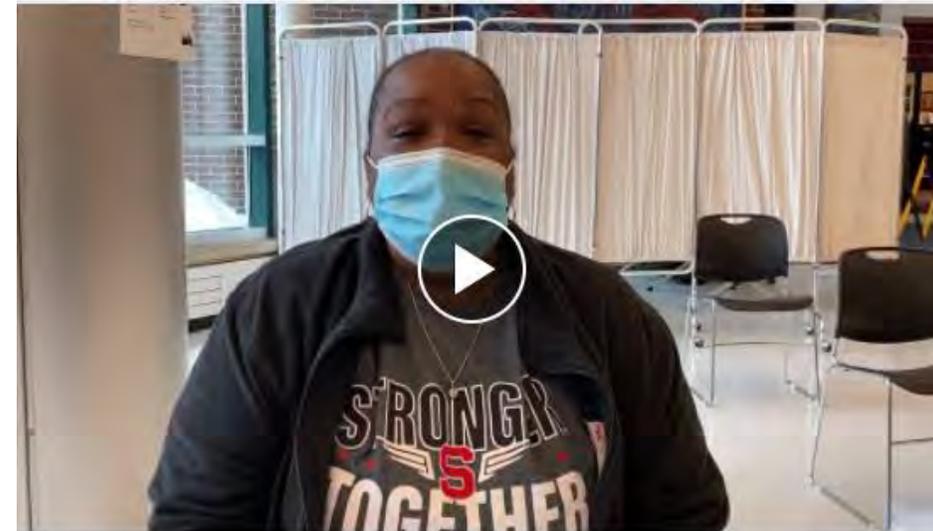


COOK COUNTY
HEALTH

Top Social Media Posts: Facebook

Post Performance

- Reach: **15K**
- Reactions, comments and shares: **669**
- 3-second Views: **3.6K**



Cook County Health...

ICYMI: Yesterday, Cook County opened a pilot Educational POD (Point of Distribution) for COVID vaccines at Thornton Fractional (TF) South High School in Lansing, IL. Deneen, a nurse assistant at TF South, spoke about her experience as one of the first individuals t...

0:32 - Uploaded on 02/11/2021 - Owned - Appears Once - View Permalink - Copy Video ID

Top Social Media Posts: Facebook

Post Performance

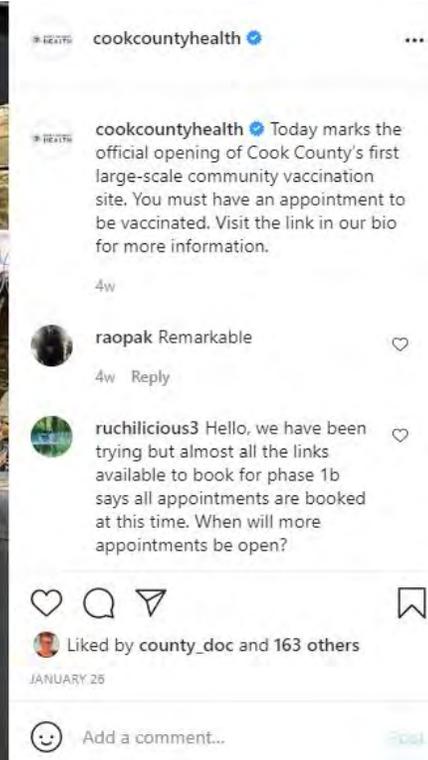
- Reach: **8.4K**
- Reactions, comments and shares: **516**



Top Social Media Posts: Instagram

Post Performance

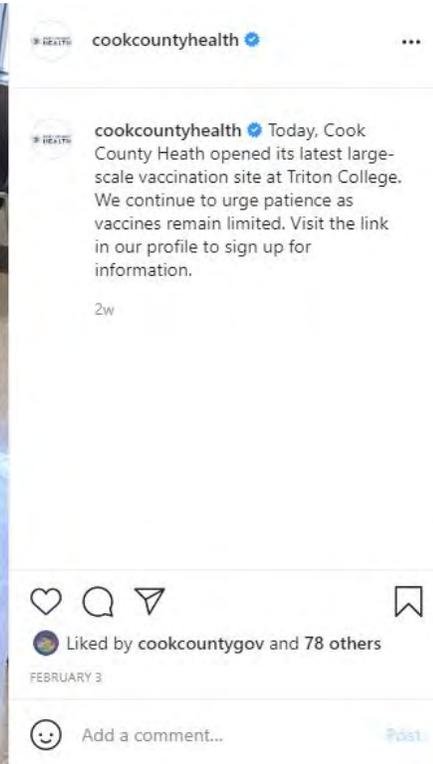
- Impressions: **1,640**
- Reach: **1,355**
- Profile visits from post: **122**



Top Social Media Posts: Instagram

Post Performance

- Impressions: **1,015**
- Reach: **822**
- Profile visits from post: **14**



Top Social Media Posts: Twitter

Post Performance

- Impressions: **78k**
- Total engagements: **235**

ICYMI: Yesterday, Cook County opened a pilot Educational POD (Point of Distribution) for COVID vaccines at Thornton Fractional (TF) South High School.

Deneen, a nurse assistant at TF South, spoke about her experience as one of the first to be vaccinated at the new site.

pic.twitter.com/AsMkBI5R1a



← 2 ↗ 6 ❤️ 8

Top Social Media Posts: Twitter

Post Performance

- Impressions: **18K**
- Total engagements: **467**



Cook County Health @CookCityHealth

South Suburban College in South Holland is the third large-scale site Cook County has operationalized. When fully operationalized and when ample vaccine supply becomes available, CCH estimates it will be able to provide more than 4,000 vaccines weekly at South Suburban College.

pic.twitter.com/t6Y6N8zicP

Top Social Media Posts: LinkedIn

Post Performance

- Impressions: **2,994**
- Clicks: **673**
- Reactions: **55**

Cook County Health
6,261 followers
2w • 🌐

Today, Cook County Health opened its latest large-scale vaccination site at Triton College. We continue to urge patience as vaccines remain limited. Visit <https://lnkd.in/dQvBhUb> for updates and information.



👍 🌐 55 • 1 comment

Top Social Media Posts: LinkedIn

Post Performance

- Impressions: **3,256**
- Clicks: **671**
- Reactions: **88**

