

Illinois e-News Release

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Illinois to Launch 14th Mass Vaccination Site in West Cook as National Guard Surpasses 500,000 Vaccinations

New Forest Park Site to Open to All Eligible Illinois Residents on March 26

CHICAGO – As the Illinois National Guard surpasses 500,000 vaccinations administered to residents across the state, Illinois is launching its 14th mass vaccination site in Forest Park. Governor JB Pritzker was joined by House Speaker Chris Welch, Senate Majority Leader Kim Lightford, Representative LaShawn Ford, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, and local officials to announce the Illinois National Guard supported site, which will operate at the former HOB0 store in Forest Park and will open to all Illinois residents Friday, March 26.

“Since day one, our Illinois COVID-19 Vaccination Plan has been an all-hands-on-deck effort, and as the national supply has expanded, so too has the number of locations Illinoisans can get vaccinated,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “With this location in Forest Park, we have now strategically established three of our largest mass vaccination sites – open to all Illinoisans – at Tinley Park in the southwest, this new site in the western suburbs, and Des Plaines in the northwest, meaning that our highest density Cook and Collar Counties communities all have a convenient state-supported option for getting vaccinated. And thanks to our exemplary Illinois National Guard, the 900 vaccination sites across the state, and the great work of our 97 local public health departments and healthcare professionals, Illinois has administered over 4.7 million doses of the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines. That’s amazing progress – and we’ll make even greater strides when we open up to all adults starting April 12.”

"I am pleased that the western suburbs will have equal access to this lifesaving vaccine," **said Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch (D - Westchester)**. Ensuring that the states' most vulnerable population and the black and brown communities have equal access is imperative in fighting this deadly virus, because equity must be at the center of everything we do.”

“It is critical that we move as quickly as possible to allow our most vulnerable residents to get vaccinated to defend themselves against the virus,” **said Senate Majority Leader Kimberly A. Lightford (D- Hillside)**. “By opening a mass vaccine site here in Forest Park, we ensure every community member and surrounding communities, regardless of race or color has access to this life-saving vaccine. There is no other pathway to getting families back together and our lives back to normal than ensuring Illinois residents get the opportunity to be vaccinated.”

“Getting as many people to trust and believe in the vaccine's power is important and half of the battle. Illinois must have trusted partners like Pastor Winston and his team. The Governor should be commended for bringing

this site to Forest Park, and I will work with the team to get the word out about the availability of this life-saving shot in the arm,” **said Representative LaShawn Ford (D-Chicago).**

“Cook County is committed to getting vaccines into the arms of residents who want them,” **said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.** “There is no doubt that Cook County and some of its most vulnerable communities have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to get to the other side of these historic times, we need to continue vaccinating as many people as possible. Having mass community vaccination sites like this one is very efficient in getting shots in arms so we can beat this virus.”

Over the weekend, the Illinois National Guard marked a significant milestone in the fight against COVID-19. To date, Governor Pritzker has deployed nearly 1,400 Illinois National Guard troops for COVID-19 operations. This includes more than 86 teams operating at 39 vaccination sites. These citizen soldiers have now administered more than 500,000 vaccinations to Illinois residents.

“It has been a historic year for the Illinois National Guard and I could not be more proud of the Soldiers and Airmen who have answered the call to duty,” **said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard.** “We are also grateful to the Guard service members’ and support of the families, employers, and universities and colleges. Without their understanding and flexibility it would be very difficult for our troops to serve their communities, state and nation.”

Following last week’s announcement that all Illinois residents age 16+ will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine starting April 12, the State of Illinois has forged ahead with an expansion of its mass vaccination plan to enhance the efforts of local health departments to increase access to the COVID-19 vaccine. In collaboration with the Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Emergency Management Agency, Illinois National Guard and local health departments, site surveys are currently underway in multiple jurisdictions to identify locations suitable for vaccination clinics that will open to the public in the coming weeks.

Today, any Illinois resident in phase 1A, 1B and 1B+, as well as government workers, higher education staff, and media can receive a free COVID-19 vaccine regardless of their zip code, immigration status, or health insurance at the following state-supported mass vaccination sites Sangamon, Jackson, Winnebago, Madison, St. Clair, Adams, Kane, DuPage, and five sites across Cook County.

“Expanding our state’s vaccine eligibility is a monumental feat that would not be possible without the collaboration and dedication of our local health departments,” **said Dr. Ngozi Ezike, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).** “In the coming days and weeks, our local partners will be ramping up efforts in order to vaccinate more and more Illinoisans. This teamwork has led our state to being a leader on the national stage as we look to end this pandemic.”

On top of the state-supported mass vaccination sites, the Illinois National Guard is also running three additional vaccination missions across the state, furthering the state’s ability to target specific regions and populations, with more assignments in the coming weeks:

1. Equity-focused mobile vaccination teams are partnering with local health departments to reach underserved communities in Cook, Lake, DeKalb, McHenry, St. Clair, Jackson, Sangamon, Madison, Winnebago, Rock Island, McLean, Grundy, Vermilion and the Southern Seven Health Department Counties.
2. Illinois National Guard troops are working directly with local health departments to improve local vaccination rates and meet the public demand for safe and effective vaccines in Lake, Vermilion, McLean, Rock Island, DeKalb and Grundy counties.
3. The state also established one-stop, single-shot Johnson & Johnson rural vaccination clinics, a collaboration between the Illinois National Guard and our local health departments. This rural vaccination program serves to reduce the travel barriers associated with equitable healthcare and will

result in people getting vaccinated quicker, without the logistics and time commitment associated with coordinating a second trip. This week, the Rural Vaccination Program will visit five providing vaccine access to 2,700 people.

There are now more than 900 vaccination locations in Illinois open to the public, and these locations can be viewed online at <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/>. For those having difficulty navigating online services to make vaccination appointments, the Vaccine Appointment Call Center may be able to assist. This hotline is available seven days a week from 6:00 a.m. to midnight. Call agents' primary role is to help individuals navigate the various online registration sites. However, if the individual does not have access to online services or is unable to navigate the site, the call agent will make an appointment on the caller's behalf. **The Vaccine Appointment Call Center phone number is 1-833-621-1284.**

State-supported vaccination sites listed below are open to all Illinois residents unless otherwise noted. All sites require appointments through the local health department. Residents must meet the state's current eligibility requirements to book an appointment.