



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 16, 2021

**CONTACT:** [Andie Poole, APR](#)

517-303-0214

## **More than 43,000 of Michigan's most vulnerable vaccinated as part of vaccine pilot program**

**LANSING, Mich.** – More than 43,000 Michiganders living in communities with high Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine thanks to a pilot program coordinated by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Protect Michigan Commission.

In early March, MDHHS and the Protect Michigan Commission awarded 35,800 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to 22 entities across Michigan to help enhance the state's vaccine equity strategy. A total of 14,678 vaccines were administered within the first week. Several pilot sites administered all their vaccine allotment within the first week and received 8,000 additional vaccines to distribute in the second week and another 12,200 in the third week. In total, 43,797 vaccines were administered statewide as a part of the pilot. Second doses will be arriving at pilot sites over the next few weeks.

“We are thrilled that thousands of Michiganders who might not have been able to easily access the COVID-19 vaccine are now protected thanks to the efforts of these pilot sites,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health with MDHHS. “As we continue our efforts to reach these vulnerable populations, we will be drawing from the successes and lessons learned from this pilot program.”

Pilot sites included hospitals, health departments, a fire department, an Area Agency on Aging, a behavioral health authority and other local organizations with strong ties in their communities (full list of sites below). These providers were chosen for their innovative strategies to overcome barriers in reaching vulnerable populations, including transportation, language and other access issues for those with sensory, cognitive, emotional or physical disabilities.

Sites reported an increase in vaccine confidence within their communities due to one-on-one counseling opportunities with physicians or pastors and holding vaccine clinics at trusted sites such as churches.

Some of the vaccine pilot program successes include:

- **Henry Ford Health System** built a strong partnership with the Islamic Center and worked with imams and religious leaders to help encourage the community to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, stressing that it was not forbidden due to Ramadan. With the support of their partners, they were able to help combat this additional aspect of vaccine hesitancy in this community and successfully scheduled an additional vaccine clinic at the Islamic Center of America.

- **Wayne Health** went an extra step by offering other services on site at their vaccination clinics that included blood pressure screening and linkage to medical care.
- Five two-person teams from **Mid-Michigan Health** went door-to-door and provided at-home vaccinations to 50 people in Alpena.
- The **Dearborn Fire Department** embarked on vaccination visits to 14 senior complexes throughout seven communities. Many seniors were so happy to receive the vaccine (in their own apartment) that they broke down into tears.
- **Advanced Health Pharmacy** in Kalamazoo worked with local community organizations to set up five vaccination events in five days — in parking lots and churches, with drive-through and walk-in options. Their team, which included volunteer medical students from Western Michigan University, vaccinated over 1,100 people in the first two days at an outdoor vaccination event with donated food and a DJ. Another 1,400 were vaccinated at additional events throughout the rest of the first week. “I knew we weren’t going to save the world, but I knew we could save a neighborhood,” said Arun Tandon, pharmacist and owner of Advanced Health Pharmacy.

The following organizations are participating in the community outreach pilot project:

- Advanced Pharmacy - Kalamazoo County
- Alma Family Practice, P.C. - Gratiot County
- Allegan County Health Department - Allegan County
- Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) - Wayne County
- Bay-Arenac Behavioral Health Authority - Bay County
- Calhoun County Public Health Department - Calhoun County
- Covered Bridge Healthcare - St. Joseph County
- Cristo Rey Family Health Center - Ingham County
- Dearborn Fire Department - Wayne County
- Genoa Healthcare - Oakland County
- Henry Ford Health System - Macomb, Wayne, Jackson, Oakland counties
- Ingham County Health Department - Ingham County
- Kent County Health Department - Kent County
- Mid-Michigan Health - Alcona, Alpena, Clare counties
- Northwest Michigan Health Services, Inc. - Oceana, Mason, Manistee, Benzie counties
- Saginaw County Health Department - Saginaw County
- Region VII Area Agency on Aging - Saginaw County
- Schoolcraft Memorial Hospital - Schoolcraft County
- St. Clair County Health Department - St. Clair County
- Wayne Health - Wayne County
- Washtenaw County Health Department - Washtenaw County
- Western Wayne Family Health Center - Wayne County

Michigan residents seeking more information about the COVID-19 vaccine can visit [Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine](https://Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine). Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://CDC.gov/Coronavirus).

###