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Health officials fixing improper use of vaccination self-scheduling link

Scheduling links for two COVID-19 vaccination clinics hosted by the Health Department of Northwest Michigan were compromised Monday, and immediately shut down to prevent further improper self-scheduling of appointments. The inappropriate action impacts only the clinics schedule for February 4 and 5 in Antrim County and did not compromise any medical or personal data.

Health officials stress the infringement only involved the scheduling link, which allowed anyone with that link to schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment for him or herself using the online system. It did not compromise nor allow any access to medical records or any other information on the health department's website, any county's website, or any partner agencies' website or data.

"We didn't even have those links to share with our scheduling staff until late Monday morning and quickly discovered that one of the clinics we had planned in Antrim County was already full – before we had distributed the link to anyone to view available appointments and lock in their appointment," said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. "People had self-scheduled in from multiple counties – mostly northern Michigan but some from much further away. Some of the people we spoke with said the link had been forwarded to them by a friend."

The health department anticipated inviting 300 eligible individuals to receive their first COVID-19 vaccinations. Other arrangements are in progress to reschedule those eligible individuals affected.

The health department has contacted the company contracted to provide the unique scheduling links to clarify how the link was distributed and shared. According to the software company, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is not the only online scheduling system of the provider's that has been compromised. Others have included Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak where approximately 3,000 appointments were compromised and canceled.

Health department officials share the link with an individual once they know the quantity of their vaccine supply and how many appointments are available at a specific clinic and invites that individual to schedule a single appointment. Residents should be aware that information and any link to schedule a COVID-19 vaccination will come from the health department and should not come from any individual outside of the health department. The link is intended only for the person who received it directly and should not be forwarded on to anyone else. Clinics are carefully planned based on the doses allocated to the health department and there are not extra doses available at the clinics for people who do not have legitimate appointments.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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“We are quite upset. Our staff is working hard and long hours to schedule clinics and administer these vaccines. This is just wrong and unacceptable! We will not accept this disruption to our mission. We are so sorry for the inconvenience this causes for our communities,” Peacock said. “We are working with the software company to get this issue resolved immediately and will schedule people by phone for as long as needed to prevent this from happening again.”

Vaccination of the current priority groups of adults 65 and older and approved frontline essential workers is estimated to continue through mid-summer. Based on availability of the vaccine, health department clinics are offered weekly by appointment only. Individuals eligible for vaccination, as determined by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, are asked to complete the [COVID-19 online pre-registration form](#) on the health department’s website or call the senior hotline at 231-715-5557 if they are unable to access the form or have any other barriers to receiving the vaccination. For those calling the hotline number to get on the health department list, please know this hotline is experiencing extremely high call volume. When prompted, it is recommended that you request a call back instead of staying on the line.

Today, February 2, the health department is reporting 13 new cases: Antrim (4), Charlevoix (6), Emmet (-1), and Otsego (3) counties.

As of 4 p.m. today, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (857), Charlevoix (1,003), Emmet (1,408), and Otsego (1,111).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (648), Charlevoix (815), Emmet (1,133) and Otsego (925).
- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (17), Charlevoix (11), Emmet (34), and Otsego (25).

The State of Michigan is reporting 562,510 cases and 14,672 deaths.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). To locate a testing facility, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website](#). To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the [MI Safe Start Map website](#). For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS [vaccine website](#) or the [CDC vaccine website](#).

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