



**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Laurel Johnson, PIO

O: 231-347-5628

[l.johnson@nwhealth.org](mailto:l.johnson@nwhealth.org)

[www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org)

**February 26, 2021**

**Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update**

**Health department ‘doubling down’ on vaccinating most vulnerable populations**

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is committed to vaccinating seniors throughout its four-county jurisdiction and, just like all other things in life, there is no “one size fits all” senior citizen.

Some are computer savvy and can navigate the online COVID-19 registration process, while others struggle or have no internet services. Some seniors can drive themselves to a clinic, while others rely on family or neighbors, and still others use public transportation. Some seniors are quite active and live on their own, while others are homebound with little or no connection to community resources, and still others live in congregate care facilities.

Despite their differences, there is one thing they share in – the health department’s commitment to offer them the coronavirus vaccination.

“We are doubling down on our efforts to reach every segment of our senior population,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer for the health department which covers Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties. “We have thousands of seniors that we’ve vaccinated or who are registered and waiting for a vaccination appointment. Yet we also know there also many more in our counties who we haven’t connected with yet and we are working on that,” she said.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services recently added metrics on the senior population in each county to its dashboard. The department also recently released a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to help health departments understand the socioeconomic makeup of their regions. And, the health department recently surveyed seniors attending clinics on questions ranging from the ease of registering for the vaccine to how they get news about COVID-19 clinics.

“We are looking at the number of seniors registered in each county as well as what the state metrics tell us about this population in order to plan our outreach efforts,” Peacock noted. “We are partnering with Commissions on Aging, local congregate living facilities, senior centers, churches, and other organizations to reach this high-risk population.

“Despite statistics showing that approximately 45% of those 65 or older in the health department’s jurisdiction have received at least one vaccination, the differences among counties is being closely monitored and helps to inform future strategies”, Peacock said. The health department is committed to assuring that at least 75% of all first dose vaccinations are administered to seniors 65 and older, with the remaining 25% going to other populations in eligible categories such as essential frontline workers, school staff, law enforcement, and health care workers.

*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](http://nwhealth.org).*

###

Health department staff members are teaming up with the Michigan National Guard to vaccinate seniors in congregate care living facilities. Commissions on Aging have helped to identify seniors they work with who are homebound or have other barriers to being vaccinated. With a more reliable and dependable assurance of vaccines, the health department is planning regular, weekly clinics in each county with the focus on vaccinating seniors.

“We recognize seniors are more likely to get sick or hospitalized due to COVID-19. With more predictable vaccine allocations coming we can double down on our efforts to help protect this vulnerable population,” Peacock stressed.

Today, Friday, February 26, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting 14 new cases: Antrim (6), Charlevoix (2), Emmet (4), and Otsego (2) counties. As of 4 p.m. today, the health department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (931), Charlevoix (1,042), Emmet (1,523), and Otsego (1,166).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (817), Charlevoix (930), Emmet (1,282) and Otsego (990).
- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (20), Charlevoix (12), Emmet (37), and Otsego (25).

The State of Michigan is reporting 586,425 cases and 15,454 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](#).