



**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)

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

**Health department to further expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility**

Effective Monday, March 8, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan will expand eligibility permitting some frontline essential workers in the Phase 1B, Group C to register to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition to this expanded group, those age 50 and older will also be eligible to make a vaccination appointment.

Among the frontline essential workers now eligible ([MDHHS prioritization guidance document](#)) are:

1. Food and agriculture workers ([defined here](#))
2. Utilities or Critical manufacturing workers
3. Public transit workers
4. Grocery store workers
5. U.S. Postal Service workers
6. Other [frontline essential workers](#) who are essential to maintain critical infrastructure, services, and functions whose work must be performed on-site and within close proximity to others.

The decision to expand eligible groups for vaccination - above and beyond the state's [latest eligibility guidelines](#) - is a result of several factors that are helping the health department reach its eligible populations. This includes the recent assurance of a steady allocation of vaccines, allowing the department to offer more clinics in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties. In addition, more providers are also serving some of the same population. In areas of the state where the population is smaller, there are efficiencies to be gained by expanding eligibility.

The health department and our region are making progress towards the state's goal of vaccinating 70% of the population. To date, 54.6% of the 65 and older population in the health department's four county jurisdiction have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 25% have received two doses. The health department will continue to work with senior organizations locally to vaccinate this high-risk population in addition to the newly prioritized groups. Adults over the age of 65 who have not been fully vaccinated will continue to be prioritized. Eligible individuals are encouraged to complete the pre-registration form by visiting [www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org), or by calling the senior hotline at 231-715-5557 for assistance completing the form.

"Due to the additional providers eligible to receive and administer vaccine in the region, the health department announced starting Monday, people 50 and older, caregiver family members and guardians who care for children with special health care needs, and all essential workers in Phase 1B, Group C who live or work in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine," said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer. "This is a significant expansion to vaccine eligibility, and as a

*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).*

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result, appointments for individuals in these newly eligible groups will not be available immediately. Please know that it will take time for us to coordinate making appointments for those currently on our waiting list and these new groups who will be signing up.”

The expansion meets the health department’s unique community needs and further expands the guidance issued by the State of Michigan. This decision was made in alignment with the partner health departments of the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance: Grand Traverse County Health Department, Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, Health Department of Northwest Michigan, District Health Department #10, District Health Department No. 4, and District Health Department No. 2. Local health departments are responsible for oversight and implementation of the vaccine strategy within their jurisdictions. They play a crucial convening and coordination role in both the distribution and administration of vaccine.

Today, March 4, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting 26 new cases: Antrim (8), Charlevoix (5), Emmet (3), and Otsego (10) counties. As of 4 p.m. today, the health department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (974), Charlevoix (1,061), Emmet (1,554), and Otsego (1,191).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (843), Charlevoix (965), Emmet (1,324) and Otsego (1,009).
- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (20), Charlevoix (13), Emmet (38), and Otsego (27).

The State of Michigan is reporting 593,279 cases and 15,600 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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