

# State Opens COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility to All Illinois Residents 16 and Older as Illinois National Guard Surpasses One Million Vaccinations

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**CHICAGO** – Effective today, all Illinois residents age 16 and older are eligible to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. This move to universal eligibility is one week ahead of President Biden’s call to make this safe and effective vaccine available to all Americans 16 years and older by April 19. More than two-thirds of Illinois counties

already have begun offering the COVID-19 vaccine to all individuals 16 and older. At this time, the Pfizer vaccine is authorized for individuals 16 and older, while the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are authorized for individuals 18 and older. With more than 1,000 vaccination locations throughout the state open to residents 16 and older, including all state-supported vaccination sites, local health departments clinics, and pharmacy partners outside the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois will continue its push for greater equity and accessibility in healthcare.

To further expand availability of the COVID-19 vaccine, Governor JB Pritzker announced today three additional counties will receive support from the Rural Vaccination program and three new counties will receive Rapid Response vaccination teams to mitigate COVID-19 trends

“From the onset of the pandemic, the men and women of our Illinois National Guard have been leaders in our COVID-19 response: setting up Alternate Care Facilities, running hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 tests, and delivering safety equipment to frontline responders all across Illinois,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “As we’ve ramped up our vaccination efforts across the state, our Guard has once again stepped up to meet the moment – as they always do. I’m thrilled to announce that our Guard has administered more than one million doses of the life-saving vaccine. I want to thank Major General Rich Neely for his steadfast leadership and the entire team for their work to keep the people of Illinois safe during the pandemic.”

“Having the vaccine as easily accessible as possible for as many people as possible is crucial as we are seeing an increase in cases and hospitalizations,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike.** “Right now, it’s a race between vaccine and variants. We are seeing more variants being detected, but we are also seeing vaccinations increase. We need vaccinations to outpace the variants and adding rural and rapid response vaccination teams will help in that race.”

This week, an additional 150,000 new first-dose vaccine appointments were made available at the state-supported mass vaccination operations in Cook and the collar counties and area pharmacies as the State opens to universal eligibility for individuals 16 and older. The state is delivering more than a quarter of a million doses to sites around the state that are open to all Illinois residents on top of tens of thousands of newly available appointments at hospitals, local county sites, and other mass vaccination sites throughout the region.

## **Rapid Response Program**

To address early warning signs of COVID-19 resurgence, the State of Illinois is deploying rapid response vaccination teams to LaSalle, Tazewell, McDonough and Woodford counties, while additional doses will be sent to local health departments in Peoria to enhance local operations.

Once activated, the Rapid Response teams move into an assigned county supplied with Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which fully vaccinates residents after one-shot. These teams move at the direction of the local health department to augment a vaccination strategy to quickly inoculate residents in an area experiencing a rise in test positivity.

This is the second week for additional state assistance in Peoria, Woodford and Tazewell counties. In one week, these counties were able to administer 19,840 vaccines to eligible residents.