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Pritzker Administration Deploys Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams to Support COVID-19 Vaccination Sites Across Illinois

Federal teams requested by Governor Pritzker will assist local jurisdictions with COVID-19 Vaccination Operations

SPRINGFIELD -- The Pritzker administration today announced the State is deploying three Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) teams throughout the state to serve as community outreach specialists at county-run COVID-19 vaccination sites. These teams are federal resources, requested by the State of Illinois.

“My administration’s vaccine plan prioritizes equity and accessibility for all Illinois residents and federal resources like the Disaster Survivor Assistance teams will help support community outreach efforts with a keen focus on underserved populations,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Local health departments are on the front lines of this initiative and it is critical that we provide them any and all support they need.”

“FEMA’s Disaster Survivor Assistance teams are prepared to fully support Illinois’ vaccine distribution plan,” **said Kevin M. Sligh, acting regional administrator, FEMA Region 5**. “These experienced outreach personnel are a critical resource to expanding the state’s capacity to assist individuals in accessing the COVID-19 vaccine as quickly as possible.”

Prior to COVID-19, Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) teams were used to build community outreach to educate disaster survivors about the availability of federal disaster assistance and services. DSA teams were last deployed to Illinois in 2013 when tornadoes and severe storms ripped through the state.

Each DSA team is comprised of 8 people, and team members hail from throughout the nation. Like all FEMA personnel, DSA team members can be identified by their official federal photo ID badge. If in doubt, immediately contact your local law enforcement or local emergency number for assistance.

Given the current COVID environment, DSA teams will be deployed to assist local health departments serving underserved communities and vulnerable populations.



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“Disaster Survivor Assistance teams are force multipliers,” **said Illinois Emergency Management Agency Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau.** “DSA teams are uniquely trained to work with the public, specifically those impacted by disasters. These federal teams bring a wealth of experience to the state of Illinois and will help bolster state and local efforts to educate the public about the efficacy and availability of the COVID-19 vaccine.”

The first DSA team will be deployed to St. Clair County this week. These teams will be used to support the county’s call center operations to help individuals make vaccination appointments. The team will also work with various organizations throughout the community to contact seniors and other eligible populations about the availability of the vaccine.

In the coming days, the two remaining teams will be assigned to assist the Cook County Department of Public Health. These teams will be used at community ambassadors stationed at health centers to assist patients with scheduling first and second appointments.

At this time, vaccinations are available only by appointment at local health departments and pharmacies across the state. Until the federal vaccine supply is increased, there will be a great demand and appointments may be limited. For information on how to make an appointment to receive the vaccine, updates on the state’s plan and eligibility, and answers to frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, go to coronavirus.illinois.gov.

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