



Office of the Governor

JB Pritzker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

CONTACT

Gov.Press@illinois.gov

State Partners with Rural Health Inc. and SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital to Expand Equitable Distribution of Vaccine in Southern Illinois

New Pilot Program with FQHCs and Safety Net Hospitals to Help Reach Underserved Communities

(SPRINGFIELD)- Building on existing efforts to ensure equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health today announced a new partnership with Rural Health Inc. and SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital to administer vaccines to residents throughout Southern Illinois. The partnership is part of a broader pilot program the state launched in coordination with five federally qualified health centers (FQHC) and five safety net hospitals across the state. In the coming weeks, the pilot program will expand to include additional critical access hospitals across the state. Vaccines are available to residents by appointment only.

"Ensuring the most vulnerable Illinois residents have a trusted, reliable health care provider to administer the COVID-19 vaccine is critical to combating this deadly virus," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "This new pilot program builds on robust efforts by the administration to ensure equity is at the center of the state's Vaccine Administration Plan. By partnering with providers in underserved communities we can reduce vaccine hesitancy and ensure we are reaching Illinoisans in the communities they call home."

The state will provide each of the sites with approximately 300-500 vaccine doses per week, in addition to the allocated doses the state distributes to existing health care partners like local health departments and pharmacies. IDPH used the COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index (CCVI) as well as local vaccination rates to select sites for the first round of the pilot program.

The new partnership between the state and Rural Health and St. Mary's as well as other similar providers will help ensure that communities hardest hit by COVID-19 have access to the vaccine. The program also aims to reduce vaccine hesitancy in underserved areas by providing residents the ability to receive vaccines more quickly from trusted providers.

“The citizens of Marion County and Centralia fully realize the effects that the COVID virus has had on communities throughout the state and with Governor Pritzker announcement of additional vaccines coming to us we realize his commitment to reach all areas of the state in order to eradicate this deadly disease,” **said Centralia Mayor Herb Williams.** “We thank him for his leadership and efforts for all of Illinois citizens.”

The new pilot program builds on the federal FQHC vaccination program through which five FQHCs across the state receive vaccine doses directly from the federal government. Illinois has an expanding network of state-supported vaccination sites operating across southern, central and northern Illinois. To find additional information about vaccine availability, including locations and eligibility, visit coronavirus.illinois.gov.

Sites participating in the pilot program include:

Southern Illinois:

- Rural Health, Inc., Union County
- SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital, Marion County

Cook & Collar Counties:

- Family Christian Health Center, Cook County
- Chicago Behavioral Hospital, Cook County
- AMITA Health Adventist Medical Center, DuPage County
- Lake County Health Department and FQHC, Lake County

Central Illinois:

- Crossing Healthcare, Macon County

Metro East:

- Touchette Regional Hospital, St. Clair County

Quad Cities:

- Community Health Care, Inc., Rock Island County

###