



Press Release

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FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams Deploy to All Illinois Counties in Support of COVID-19 Vaccination Effort

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) announced today that three additional FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) teams arrived in Illinois this week—bringing the total to 11 teams across the state—to distribute information about COVID-19 vaccination sites, assist residents with accessing the vaccine, and raise awareness about FEMA’s funeral assistance program.

“These community outreach teams are invaluable to this administration’s vaccination plan,” **said IEMA Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau.** “These individuals are working in our communities, serving as force multipliers for our local health departments, to expand outreach, education and awareness of vaccine availability. As we move into the next phase of our COVID-19 response, it is important to continue to focus on equity, accessibility and work with our communities to find ways to add vaccine convenience to the equation.”

Since the DSA Teams were first deployed to Illinois, the teams have had more than 100,000 interactions with the general public. These community outreach teams can help individuals locate vaccine providers, answer questions related to vaccine hesitancy, help organizations or groups host a vaccination clinic for the community and educate the public about the availability of COVID-19 funeral assistance. To date, more than \$6 million has been approved for COVID funeral assistance in Illinois.

“These community outreach specialists will play a key role in supporting the Biden-Harris Administration’s National Month of Action, mobilizing an all-of-America effort to get 70 percent of U.S. adults at least one shot by July 4th,” **said Kevin M. Sligh, acting regional administrator, FEMA Region 5.** “FEMA is working closely with our state and local partners to protect Illinoisans

from this deadly virus, helping to make the vaccine available to anyone who wants it, especially those in historically underserved or marginalized communities.”

Eleven crews of six specialists are now active in all Illinois counties. The Illinois DSA team members come from all over the nation and include two teams from the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps hasn't been activated to support domestic disaster response and recovery efforts since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Working closely with local government officials as well as community and faith-based organizations, these teams are raising awareness about the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine in Illinois communities. They are also coordinating with funeral homes across the state to help raise awareness about FEMA's funeral assistance program, which provides federal financial assistance for COVID-19 related funeral expenses.

Like all FEMA personnel, DSA team members can be identified by their official federal photo ID badge and FEMA attire. If in doubt, immediately contact your local law enforcement or local emergency number for assistance.

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. For more information about the federal COVID-19 response and FEMA's Funeral Assistance Program, visit www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus.

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