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PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

For Immediate Release

March 4, 2021

Health Department to further expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility

Effective Monday, March 8, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department will expand eligibility for frontline essential workers in the Phase 1B, Group C (as defined below) to register to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Those age 50 and older will also be eligible to make a vaccine appointment.

Among the [frontline essential workers](#) now eligible 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 workers](#) who are essential to maintaining critical infrastructure, services, and functions who 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 Benzie and Leelanau 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, 47.7% of the 65 and older population in the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department's two county jurisdiction have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 21.6% 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.bldhd.org or 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 and all essential workers in Phase 1B, group C who live or work in Benzie or Leelanau 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 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.

As of today, here is where we are currently:

- Number of vaccine doses allocated for this week: 1450 doses (1050 1st dose, 400- 2nd doses)
- Number of vaccine doses administered so far this week: 897 doses
- Total number of vaccine doses received: 6,519 doses
- Total number of vaccine doses administered: 5,966 doses

As of 4:00pm, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 896, Leelanau– 895
- Active COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 38, Leelanau– 56
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 828, Leelanau– 824
- Confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the following counties: Benzie – 30, Leelanau– 15
- Hospitalized: 130 total; 4 currently

The State of Michigan has reported 593,279 cases and 15,600 deaths.

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