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## PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

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**For Immediate Release**

**April 29, 2021**

### **The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department COVID-19 Update**

Today there were nine new cases of COVID-19 reported in Benzie County and one new case of COVID-19 reported in Leelanau County.

Michigan's "MI Vacc to Normal" plan, the state's Safer High School End-of-Year Events guidance, and the CDC's announcement of new freedoms once you've been fully vaccinated, are all hopeful signs and show our response to fighting the pandemic is trending in the right direction, health officials said.

"We are making significant progress with our vaccinations," said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer. "We've come a long way this past year and getting vaccinated is the path forward to doing what you want to do this spring and summer - safely gather, hug your family and friends, and enjoy festivities across the north."

Although the availability of the long-awaited COVID-19 vaccine is the main tool that we need, it is not enough alone to see us through to the end, Peacock said. "Until we have achieved a high enough level of vaccine coverage to keep ongoing transmission low, we need to use additional layers of protection and move ahead with caution. This careful approach is what will allow us to have some normalcy this summer, protecting all of the things that are important to us: our businesses, school operations, opportunities to participate in sports, milestone events, and most of all our health and the health of those we love," she said.

It's been a challenging year but schools across northern Michigan can celebrate they have nearly completed an entire year of in-person learning, Peacock said. As school officials, students and their families look forward to year-end celebrations – prom, graduation, and other events – the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has [provided guidance](#) on how to hold safer high school end-of-year events. The document provides guidance for how schools can be safer while holding events such as prom, graduation, and year-end parties, and guidance for schools that choose to implement an end-of-year testing program. School leaders and parents can find information on end-of-year school events pertaining to locations, mask wearing requirements, and guidelines for activities such as dancing, games, and transportation, in the document.

Fully vaccinated people can now enjoy additional freedoms such as exemption from quarantine after exposure, traveling with more confidence, and relief from masking in certain situations.

Earlier this week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that people who have been fully vaccinated – meaning they are two weeks past receiving their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna or two weeks past their one dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine – can start to do some things they stopped doing because of the pandemic. The ["When You've Been Fully Vaccinated"](#) document includes, among other guidelines, information on gathering or conducting outdoor activities without wearing a mask except in certain crowded settings and venues. A CDC graphic on [Choosing Safer Activities](#) illustrates guidelines to mask wearing for indoor or outdoor activities if you are unvaccinated or vaccinated.

In addition, earlier today, state officials announced a pathway to return to normal by unveiling the ["MI Vacc to Normal"](#) plan as the state continues to push toward its goal of vaccinating 70% of Michiganders ages 16 years or older. To facilitate this goal, the MDHHS will base future epidemic order actions on four vaccination-based milestones that, once achieved, will enable Michigan to take a step toward normalcy.

Peacock noted the COVID-19 vaccine is widely available through health department clinics, pharmacies, and doctors' offices. She also encouraged employers to help their staff get vaccinated and neighbors to help their friends and elderly neighbors get vaccinated.

As of 4:00 p.m. today, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 1,186, Leelanau– 1,205
- Active COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 202, Leelanau– 186
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 953, Leelanau– 1,003
- Confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the following counties: Benzie – 31, Leelanau– 16
- Hospitalized: 151 total; 3 currently

The State of Michigan is reporting 837,514 cases and 17,576 deaths.

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