



# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

## **Confronting COVID-19: Vaccine Clinic to Serve Hard-hit East Palo Alto**

### **Local Seniors, Essential Workers Eligible in Expanded Clinic Access to Help Ensure Vaccine Equity**

**East Palo Alto** – The County of San Mateo and the [Ravenswood Family Health Center](#) today announced they will expand local COVID-19 vaccine opportunities in East Palo Alto to serve seniors and essential workers who live in the hard-hit city.

“My priority has been and will continue to be on equity,” said San Mateo County Supervisor Warren Slocum, whose District 4 includes East Palo Alto.

“San Mateo County has committed to vaccinate our residents equitably, when they are eligible. This new and innovative approach brings the vaccine to where people reside and will make the vaccination process as seamless as possible for them,” he said.

The expanded partnership with Ravenswood – a community-based [Federally Qualified Health Center](#) (FQHC) that has provided medical and dental care to the community for two decades – and the city of East Palo Alto to open a community vaccine site the week of March 8 is expected to help overcome barriers to vaccine access.

“We are thrilled to partner with the County of San Mateo to expand access to the COVID-19 vaccine in our community,” said Ravenswood CEO Luisa Buada. “The majority of our residents are hard-working families in front-line jobs. They are the ones working in our markets and performing other vital jobs and services that keep our community running.”

Appointments will be available to eligible East Palo Alto residents. Ravenswood is planning a second event for eligible residents of the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park the same week.

The County and East Palo Alto, along with additional local partners, will provide outreach services to help sign up as many eligible residents as possible. The goal is to ultimately operate community events on a regular weekly basis, dependent upon vaccine supply.

“Reaching difficult to access low-income communities of color like EPA is a daunting challenge but it is imperative if we want to realize a truly equitable distribution of the vaccine,” East Palo Alto Mayor Carlos Romero said.

“The County’s new EPA vaccination site and expanded accessibility to food and ag workers, along with the Ravenswood Health Clinic efforts, will bring us significantly closer to achieving health justice in East Palo Alto,” Romero said.

The announcement comes as California officials on Wednesday pledged to devote 40 percent of available COVID-19 vaccines to residents in the most disadvantaged areas of the state. The partnership between the County, Ravenswood Health and East Palo Alto anticipates and responds to the need to get vaccine shots into the arms of eligible residents in hard-hit communities.

Beginning February 22, the County expanded COVID-19 [vaccine eligibility](#) to include teachers, child care providers, first responders and food and agricultural workers who meet the state’s Phase 1B criteria, as supply allows.

East Palo Alto’s approximately 29,500 residents account for less than 5 percent of San Mateo County’s population. Yet the city’s 4,216 total confirmed cases of [COVID-19 account for nearly 11 percent](#) of the county’s total cases since the pandemic began.

“This is a seismic shift in the delivery model,” Slocum said. “Instead of asking our residents to come to sites that are convenient for us, we are bringing the vaccine to sites convenient for them.”

This week’s upcoming event in East Palo Alto builds upon other recent County-sponsored local clinics at farms and community sites on the coast and in Daly City focusing those eligible residents who face challenges reaching mass vaccination sites.

**Additional Information:**

San Mateo County is currently in the red Tier 2 in the state’s [four-tier, color-coded](#) reopening plan. [Learn more](#).

Safe, easy and no-cost testing is widely available at County-sponsored locations for everyone who works or lives in San Mateo County regardless of symptoms. Learn more at <https://smcgov.org/testing>.

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