



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

County Expands Access to COVID-19 Vaccines in Communities Highly Impacted by Virus

Redwood City – With the continuing scarcity of vaccine and uncertainty about when supplies will increase, the County of San Mateo County is shifting away from large-scale mass vaccinations sites and towards smaller, targeted clinics in communities in need.

“Census tract data shows us exactly which neighborhoods are being impacted most by COVID. That’s why we are laser focusing our vaccination efforts by providing clinics in highly impacted ZIP codes to get more doses in arms right in the neighborhood you live in and the language you speak,” Board of Supervisors President David J. Canepa said.

The community clinics will generally operate on regular schedules, allowing for better outreach to residents and more opportunities for scheduling appointments. Many clinics will also be able to vaccinate eligible residents without pre-scheduled appointments.

“We look at the data and want to focus on neighborhoods where the vaccination rates are lower than the county as a whole,” said Anand Chabra, MD, the County’s COVID-19 Vaccination Branch chief. “We’re trying to reach people where they live and in a format that make sense to them. As much as possible we want to eliminate barriers to getting vaccinated.”

This week, County-sponsored or -supported community vaccine events are taking place in East Palo Alto, South San Francisco, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks. County Health is in the process of planning community clinics for next week and expects to announce additional locations soon.

The additional focus on community clinics will allow the County’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to plan for scaling up mass vaccination sites for when more vaccine is available. Since January, clinics at the San Mateo County Event Center and San Francisco International Airport have often vaccinated between 3,000 and 4,000 residents per day,

based on vaccine supply. The County expects to be able to increase daily capacity at these sites significantly when vaccine supply improves.

“We know that these smaller, targeted events will not return the large vaccination rates for the county that we see with mass vaccination center, but that’s okay,” said Warren Slocum, whose Fourth Supervisorial District includes East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks and Belle Haven. “The County’s priority, especially through an equity lens, is to vaccinate every resident when they are eligible, and that means we need to bring the fight to where the battle is.”

With major health care providers, community clinics, partner organizations, and County Health all providing vaccinations, the county has made significant progress. As of today, one-third of adults in San Mateo County have been vaccinated with at least one dose. This includes 3/4 of those 65 and older and 4/5 of those 75 and older.

“Having been vaccinated when I became eligible, I have a great sense of relief, safety and security. I want eligible residents in our most underserved areas to be able to feel that way, too,” said Supervisor Carole Groom who sits on the Board’s COVID-19 subcommittee.

Supervisor Dave Pine, who also sits on the subcommittee, said the County is not waiting on the state to determine where the vaccine is needed most locally but instead taking it upon itself.

“Ensuring equitable access to vaccines must be our highest priority,” said Supervisor Pine. “Administering additional vaccinations within our vulnerable communities is key to stopping the spread of the virus.”

With the additional focus on community clinics, County Health will continue to support vaccination for individuals experiencing homelessness, inmates, those with medical conditions identified by the State, and the other groups eligible under the State’s Phase 1A and 1B.

“The vaccine is a ray of hope at the end of a tumultuous year that carried so many unknowns. But what we always knew is that we must take care of every resident with the tools we have, and our current data tools are giving us the ability to meet people where they are,” said Supervisor Don Horsley.

Eligible residents in targeted communities or groups will be contacted by the County or outreach partners. County residents should sign up for [the County’s notification tool](#) as well as the state’s [MyTurn](#) to be informed of vaccination opportunities when eligible.

Eligible residents with insurance are also reminded that vaccines are available through health care providers such as Kaiser and Sutter and through pharmacies such as Rite Aid and CVS.

Learn more about the County's vaccination strategy and sign up for notifications at <https://www.smchealth.org/covidvaccine>