

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAGINAW COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES VACCINE APPOINTMENT SELF-SCHEDULING TOOL

(SAGINAW) – Today marks the first day the Saginaw County Health Department is inviting those registered with them for the COVID-19 vaccine to “self-schedule” their own appointment date and time.

Up until now, the health department has been using a phone bank of staff and volunteers to individually call each person registered – which was particularly important with seniors, some of whom were not comfortable using technology.

Four factors have led up to today’s launch of the web-based app at mySaginawHealth.org:

- Vaccine doses are more plentiful and clinics can be planned out further in advance.
- Registrants are younger – anyone 16 and older may now register (however minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at the time of vaccination)
- The online tool, built here in Saginaw for the health department, has been in development and is now finished – and will also include a self-reporting and contact tracing element for positive COVID-19 cases.
- Phone banks are time and resource limiting.

“We are excited we are finally able to offer this to residents,” says Chris Harrington, MPH, health officer. “We carefully watched and listened to other local health departments that tried out commercial scheduling software and found it to be less than helpful. Fortunately, we were already working on a self-reporting/contacting tracing tool with a local developer and had them shift gears to help us with vaccine appointment self-scheduling.”

Harrington notes that vaccination scheduling still won’t happen all at once. “We are releasing emails in batches to make sure we aren’t driving too many people to too few appointment times,” she explains. “So, I encourage anyone who has registered with us to check their email often now and remain patient.”

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Harrington notes that those who didn't register with an email and couldn't provide a cell phone number with text capabilities will still have to be called.

Beginning today, anyone 16 and older may register for the vaccine at mySaginawHealth.org. In doing so, registrants will be providing name, date of birth, address, email, phone, race, and ethnicity. If applicable, registrants can indicate if they are a critical infrastructure worker, have an underlying health condition, or are the caregiver of a special needs child – which are high priority vaccine groups.

Upon registering, everyone receives a confirmation email.

When it's a registrant's time to schedule their appointment, they will receive an email or text containing a personal link and instructions for using it to schedule their appointment. This link should not be shared with others, as anyone using it will alter the intended recipient's appointment.

For two-dose vaccines, clinics will be offered in pairs – one date for first dose and a second date for second dose. When scheduling, registrants are encouraged to only select “pairs” that work for them. There is no option to mix dates although there is flexibility in appointment times.

Harrington cautions registrants about entering their phone numbers and emails correctly so they can be reached. She also notes that anyone under the care of a physician or specialist for a condition that suppresses the immune system OR taking medications that have the ability to suppress the immune system, must fax a written physician's order to (989) 758-3859 PRIOR to scheduling a vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccination must be deferred for 14 days after receipt of other vaccines. COVID-19 vaccination must be deferred for 90 days after receipt of passive antibody therapy as treatment for COVID-19.

Minors under the age of 18 must have a parent/guardian accompany them to vaccine appointments.

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