



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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State of Michigan secures additional federal team to assist Covenant HealthCare in Saginaw with staffing

LANSING, Mich. – Today, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced that the federal government has granted Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s request for additional staffing assistance at a third Michigan hospital, Covenant HealthCare in Saginaw. Under the agreement, the federal government will send a 22-person medical team to support Covenant’s doctors and nurses as they treat COVID-19 and other patients.

“I’m grateful to our federal partners for delivering much-needed relief to Michigan’s hospitals and healthcare personnel who have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic for over 18 months,” said Governor Whitmer. “We know that the vast majority of their patients are unvaccinated or have not yet received a booster dose. We can all do our part to help reduce the strain on our hospital systems by getting vaccinated, making an appointment to get a booster dose and continuing to take precautions to keep ourselves and loved ones safe. We are in this together.”

“We continue to work to provide support to our hospitals across the state as we know this latest surge is taking a tremendous toll on our health care workers who have already given so much throughout the pandemic,” said Elizabeth Hertel, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services director. “We are asking all Michiganders to do their part to support our state’s health care workers by getting vaccinated, [wearing a mask in public indoor settings](#) regardless of vaccination status, social distancing and staying home and getting tested regularly.”

The additional staffing team will include registered nurses, doctors and respiratory therapists. The team will begin treating patients Dec. 12 and provide support for the next 30 days. Two additional teams were announced last week and have begun providing support at Beaumont Hospital – Dearborn and Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids.

“We are incredibly grateful that the Department of Defense has stepped up to offer their support to our employees and community as we continue our battle against COVID-19. The Covenant Team has been on the front lines of the pandemic since March of 2020,” said Kevin Birchmeier, Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer, Covenant HealthCare. “As the largest acute care hospital in a 20-county region, patients

and other hospitals rely on us for care. We take this responsibility very seriously and want to do anything we can to keep our patients, staff, and community safe.”

“You can support your local hospitals,” said Birchmeier. “Help us slow the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses by wearing a mask, social distancing and avoiding large gatherings. Be sure to wash your hands frequently, get your flu shot and COVID-19 vaccine or booster, and seek the right level of care at the right time.”

Michiganders are being asked to carefully consider where they seek health care. A primary care office, virtual visit or urgent care may be the best choice as hospital and emergency departments are experiencing high demand. However, for emergency conditions such as stroke symptoms, chest pain, difficulty breathing, significant injury or uncontrolled bleeding, Michiganders should still seek emergency care.

The federal staffing teams come as Michigan hospitals strain due to a spike in COVID-19 patients, the vast majority of whom are unvaccinated. In the last 30 days (Oct. 21 – Nov. 19), 97,310 (71%) of 137,472 cases, 1,134 (72%) of 1,584 hospitalized cases, and 588 (76%) of 772 deaths were among individuals who were not fully vaccinated.

According to Michigan Health & Hospital Association data, three out of four COVID patients are unvaccinated (76%), 87% of COVID ICU patients are unvaccinated and 88% of COVID ventilator patients are unvaccinated.

As of Dec. 1, 4,291 Michiganders are hospitalized for COVID-19.

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