

Daily News

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Montcalm Township budget ‘sitting pretty good’ despite COVID-19 concerns

By [Cory Smith](#) | on February 17, 2021



Members of the Montcalm Township Board were thankful during their Feb. 10 township board meeting to see budget projections for the end of the current fiscal year trending in a positive direction despite numerous uncertainties regarding the coronavirus pandemic. Pictured top row from left, Supervisor Doug Crowley, Clerk Jessica Shearer and Treasurer Rose Hyde; bottom row from left, Trustee Brian Cousineau and Trustee Ed Hansen. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

MONTCALM TOWNSHIP — In a turnaround of original projections, one local township is currently holding its head well above water when it comes to its budget.

During the Feb. 10 meeting of the Montcalm Township Board, Supervisor Doug Crowley informed his fellow board members that the budget was “sitting pretty good.”

It’s news that came a significant positive, following months of uncertainty due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“Our original budget for the year, we didn’t know where we were going to be at because we lowballed everything,” he said.

The board initially budgeted \$425,000 in total for income, with state revenue sharing coming in at \$195,000.

With worries that state revenue sharing could not only lessen significantly, but nearly vanish at some points as fears mounted over state shutdown measures, the board was relieved to see that federal COVID-19 aid through the CARES Act ensured that the local municipality was able to function without diving into its coffers.

“We were able to up our estimates in September, which meant we were able to pave the first phase of Colby Road,” Crowley said. “Since then, the numbers are surprising.”

On the fiscal year — April 1, 2020, through March 31, 2020 — despite budgeting for \$195,000 in state aid, Crowley said the township has thus far received \$247,000 with another check coming in March.

“I’m predicting we’re going to bring in another \$40,000,” he said. “Plus, we are looking really good on our taxes. The bottom line is the budget has jumped, and with income, we’re projecting \$525,000, which is great. We’re only a month and a half out from the end of the year and we’re sitting pretty good.”

Crowley also credited lower than expected expenses on the year.

“We stopped police protection with the Sheriff’s Office and saved some money there,” he said. “Also, road work came in lower than anticipated.”

Factoring in the year’s expenses, Crowley estimated nearly \$20,000 could be added to the township’s ending fund balance when the fiscal year concludes, which would place it at around \$130,000 (31% of annual expenses).

Township hall remains closed

With the township currently hosting its monthly meetings online due to pandemic restrictions, a question was brought forward as to whether the township hall should be rented out again.

“We’ve had this township hall shut down for several months now,” Crowley said. “How much longer do we want to keep it shut down? People are calling, wanting to rent it, but I’m not sure what the rules are yet.”

Trustee Ed Hansen advised that the township wait until it has approval from the Mid-Michigan District Health Department to do so.

“I would suggest calling the health department and see how many people we can have in there,” he said.

Crowley said he believes the current limit on occupancy would be 25%; however, Hansen raised a question regarding that limit.

If you rent it out, who is going to police the 25%?” he asked.

“Well there you go,” Crowley said, acknowledging the difficulty.

“If we rent out the hall and somebody has more than 25%, are we liable for that?” Hansen asked. “Also, I believe we would have to have cleaning people come in and sterilize it.”

With all of those conditions laid out, Hansen said he felt it was best to keep the hall closed at this time.

“I would be in favor of shutting it down for another month and revisit this in a month,” he said.

“I think that’s a good idea,” Treasurer Rose Hyde said.

Gratiot County Herald

Thursday, February 18, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine Still In Short Supply, Health Department Says

By Leslie Kinnee
MMDHD Public Information Officer

The COVID-19 vaccines are the best hope for ending the pandemic and now, there are more Michiganders who have been vaccinated than who have contracted COVID-19. Progress is being made, although not as fast as many people would like.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) knows that many community members are waiting to get their COVID-19 vaccinations and many are frustrated because they are having a difficult time getting an appointment. Local public health departments across the State of Michigan, including the MMDHD, are moving as quickly as possible to vaccinate those who are eligible. Unfortunately, efforts are being hampered because there simply is not enough vaccine to meet the high demand.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department is administering around 600 first doses every week and holding second dose clinics. They are also working with area hospi-

tals and Meijer Pharmacies to vaccinate as many people as possible. They wish they could vaccinate more people on a weekly basis, and are making plans to hold mass vaccination clinics, but can't follow through with these plans until the amount of vaccine they receive is increased.

When the MMDHD has COVID-19 appointments available, they will send out a notice to those on their waiting list. If you would like to be placed on their waiting list, please visit their website at www.mmdhd.org/covid-vaccine-information/.

The good news is that more and more vaccination locations are opening up in the area and the MMDHD recommends that people explore all of these options to increase their chances of obtaining an appointment. These locations can be found on their website as well.

The biggest challenge every organization offering the vaccine faces right now is the limited supply of vaccine. The MMDHD asks for patience as they work through this monumental task, and they want their communities to know

that everyone who wants to be vaccinated will be vaccinated, but it will take time.

The MMDHD knows that those without internet or seniors might have an especially difficult time trying to schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment. These individuals are encouraged to call 211 for assistance. A 211 operator will help callers register or sign up with clinic sites in their area.

Seniors over 65 who do not have internet or who struggle to use a computer may call their nearest office on aging. Gratiot County seniors over 65 can call the Gratiot County Commission on Aging at 989-875-5246. As a reminder, everyone needs to continue preventative measures such as wearing masks properly, social distancing, and hand washing to reduce the spread of COVID in local communities, even as the vaccine is being administered. We've come so far since the start of the pandemic, and hope is on the horizon. This is a difficult time for us all, but we will get through this, one vaccination at a time.

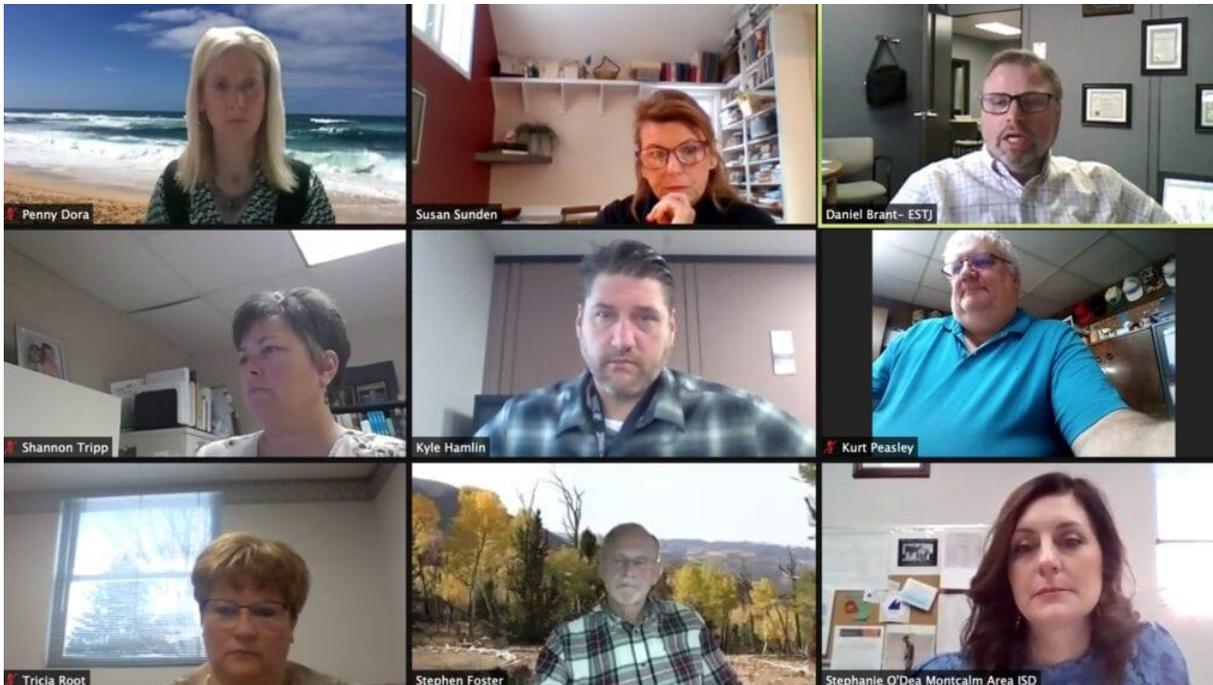
Daily News

Saturday, February 20, 2021

1st dose of COVID-19 vaccine almost done for school personnel in Montcalm County

By [Cory Smith](#) | on February 20, 2021

STANTON — As the coronavirus pandemic spiked late last year, local health officials welcomed the first sign of relief after months of agony — the arrival of vaccines.



During Thursday's meeting of the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) Board, Superintendent Kyle Hamlin reported that first-dose COVID-19 vaccines were almost at a 100% completion rate for teachers and school staff throughout Montcalm County. Pictured are, top row from left, MAISD Administrative Services Coordinator Penny Dora, Board Trustee Susan Sunden and MAISD Associate Superintendent for Special Education Daniel Brant; center row from left, MAISD Associate Superintendent for CTE and Career Center Principal Shannon Tripp, Hamlin and Trustee Kurt Peasley; bottom row from left, MAISD Associate Superintendent of Finance Tricia Root, Board President Steve Foster and MAISD Associate Superintendent for Instruction Stephanie O'Dea. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

On Dec. 23, the first individual in Montcalm County received a COVID-19 vaccine at Spectrum Health United Hospital in Greenville, and since that time, according to state of Michigan data, a total of 8,272 vaccines have been administered in the county of 63,000 residents.

Of those vaccines, which require two doses, 5,649 were first-dose vaccines and 2,623 were second-dose vaccines.

While that results in a total first-dose vaccination rate of about 9% of the population of the county, one organization is celebrating a vaccination rate of nearly 100% — public schools.

On Jan. 11, the state moved on from Phase 1A to Phase 1B within its COVID-19 vaccination implantation schedule.

While Phase 1A only included healthcare workers and long-term care residents and staff, Phase 1B opened the door for those aged 75 years and over, prioritized and essential frontline responders, corrections staff, agriculture and food processing workers and school and child care staff.

During Thursday's meeting of the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) Board, Superintendent Kyle Hamlin was happy to report that in the span of about one month, nearly every educator and staff member of every public school district in the county who has wanted to receive the vaccine, has been able to.

"I feel that anyone who was wanting or willing to get the shot, we're pretty close to 100% in Montcalm County, from an educator perspective," he said. "The health department, I think they've done very well, all things considered."

Hamlin also credited MAISD Administrative Services Coordinator Penny Dora with the successful rollout of the vaccines for educators.

"I can't say enough about Penny, seeing a need and filling that need," he said. "When all of these vaccine clinics came out, Penny took the bull by the horns and has been working hard to provide and communicate opportunities to all the local schools."

According to Dora, the MAISD has been working with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) to obtain vaccines for school employees.

By doing so, school officials such as Hamlin are more confident that despite occasional outbreaks of the virus, in-person learning will be much more sustainable as sudden and unexpected staff shortages due to positive cases of the virus and subsequent quarantines are expected to be a thing of the past.

"We're back to face-to-face instruction and we are pretty thrilled about that," Hamlin said. "Things are going pretty steady, though we've had some isolated situations with COVID-19."

Dora said the MMDHD has assigned a specific employee to work with every school district in Montcalm County, giving local schools a dedicated point of contact.

"Our health department has been amazing," Dora said. "I cannot sing their praises enough. I am impressed with the work they have done for our county."

"I believe from our seven districts, our ISD and Flat River Academy, everyone who wanted to seek a vaccination — and it certainly wasn't mandatory — but for those people who wanted a vaccination and qualified, I believe everyone was able to get through their first dose," she added. "We have two districts who have just a handful of employees that still are seeking that first vaccination, but as far as school vaccination clinics that were provided to us, I would say we are at 95% completion for receiving that first dose."

While vaccinations will hopefully remove one source of concern for school administrators, Hamlin said additional work and responsibilities brought on by COVID-19 won't be going away anytime soon. He noted said since winter sports were able to resume earlier this month, testing for the virus at every local school district has increased — and all of those tests, in being shipped to Montcalm County, are first delivered to the MAISD.

“With sports and the clinics the district are offering internally, the ISD is basically the mailroom for all these tests that come in,” Hamlin said. “We’re getting all of these tests that need to be dispersed to the local districts doing these testing clinics for their staff, but also the student-athletes.

Hamlin described it as an exhausting task.

“We receive a ton of boxes and then Penny has to coordinate with the local districts,” he said. “So the ISD is finding itself, in relation to COVID-19 ... ping pong is a fun game unless you’re the ball and we find ourselves being the ball quite a bit in this scenario. We’re maneuvering through it the best we can, but it is an additional task that is being expected of us. We’re doing it, we’re making it work.”

Hamlin gave credit to the entire administrative staff at the MAISD for taking on the extra responsibility.

“I can’t say enough about our team here,” he said. “We all pull together, despite what’s going on. COVID-19, work-related issues and things going on in our own lives, we’re all doing the best we can with everything going on around us.”

While Hamlin said things are improving regarding COVID-19, he believes board meetings will continue to be held virtually for the foreseeable future.

“At this stage they are virtual, and while there is some discussion about scaling back on that, right now, I’m not seeing anything about loosening that up,” he said. “It’s mostly about being able to accommodate the public in these meetings. The state frowns upon the board members meeting in person but having the public have to attend virtually.”

Daily News

Thursday, February 25, 2021

Health officer says Montcalm County COVID-19 vaccination rate is too low

By [Elisabeth Waldon](#) | on February 25, 2021



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham updated the Montcalm County Board of Commissioners on Monday about the ongoing struggle to get people vaccinated from COVID-19. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

STANTON — Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham remains concerned about the low rate of COVID-19 vaccinations in Montcalm County, and he believes a variety of factors are at play:

- The state of Michigan’s definition of essential workers keeps expanding, making it difficult to balance vaccinating those people and senior citizens.

- The vaccine hub for West Michigan is at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, which is an hour away for many Montcalm County residents. Cheatham would like to make Montcalm Community College in Sidney a hub, but that's dependent on vaccine supply, which remains limited and slow.
- Hospitals in neighboring counties are more aggressive in vaccinating people. Cheatham has reached out to Spectrum Health administration to see if they will offer additional doses in Montcalm County (scheduling that conversation is pending).

Cheatham updated local officials on the slow vaccine process — first at Monday's Montcalm County Board of Commissioners meeting and again during Wednesday's Board of Health meeting.



The Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health heard an update Wednesday about the ongoing struggle to get people vaccinated from COVID-19. Pictured are, top corner from left clockwise, Health Officer Marcus Cheatham, Montcalm County commissioners Adam Petersen and Michael Beach and Gratiot County commissioners George Bailey and Chuck Murphy. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

To date, 29,300 doses of the vaccine have been issued to residents in the health department's three-county district — Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties — with 10,700 of those doses being issued by the health department.

Michigan's dose per 1,000 population rate is currently averaging 161 people, but Montcalm County's rate per 1,000 is only 125 (neighboring Gratiot County has a rate of 179 and Clinton County has a rate of 155), according to Cheatham.

Cheatham noted the health department has even given extra vaccines to Montcalm County residents even though neighboring Clinton County has 10,000 more residents there.

"We've actually slightly shifted our doses toward Montcalm," he said during Board of Health. "We don't really want to shift it anymore. Each of the counties is paying an appropriation to be treated fairly."

"It's not fixing the problem," he said during Monday's county board meeting. "We think that's because of the other partners in this collaboration. They aren't on the ground like the Sparrow campus in Clinton County is just really, really aggressive in vaccinating people. The Frandor Clinic in Lansing is right there. We think more needs to be done with healthcare partners and so we are working to address that. We're seeking to get some Pfizer vaccine into the county, we're only using Moderna, we want to augment that with Pfizer. We've been going back and forth with the leadership of the hospitals, but we're still working on a satisfactory outcome there."

“Marcus, you mentioned that Sparrow is doing a tremendous job in Gratiot or Clinton counties,” Montcalm County Board of Commissioners Chairman Patrick Q. Carr noted. “Is that to imply that Spectrum isn’t doing what they should in our county?”

“No,” Cheatham hesitated in responding. “The West Michigan Vaccine Alliance (vaccinatewestmi.com) has been a very carefully constructed collaboration between all of the West Michigan counties and Spectrum Hospital and the other healthcare systems in the Grand Rapids area. I think what I’m saying is it looks like it hasn’t worked in Montcalm. There’s more planning that’s gone into the West Michigan Vaccine Alliance than into our other healthcare partners. They’re more involved. There’s more at the table there.

“It’s very disappointing to me but I can see that it’s not working in Montcalm,” he said. “We need to get the West Michigan Vaccine Alliance to pay attention to the fact that it hasn’t worked out equally across all of the counties that are participating.”

Cheatham reiterated this point during the Board of Health meeting

“I just feel like it hasn’t worked for Montcalm,” he said. “A for effort, D for outcome. We have to get the West Michigan Vaccine Alliance to admit it’s not working in Montcalm. I don’t want Montcalm to slip any more behind.”

In some good news, Feb. 9 marked the first day that Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties went a week without a COVID-related death since Oct. 15, 2020.

“The bulk of our calls are coming from seniors. They’re scared. They don’t want to be the last person in their area to die from COVID,” said Cheatham during Board of Health when referring to the limited amount of vaccine provided to county health departments. “We need to do better. We have almost zeroed out our doses in the past three weeks. On Mondays we are breaking out in cold sweats because we don’t know if the other doses will arrive in the week. If they don’t arrive, that is a significant disruption for us and the community because then we have to cancel and reschedule clinics.”

CORONAVIRUS IN MID-MICHIGAN

Five deaths reported over the weekend

By Eric Baerren*ebaerren@medianewsgroup.com**Twitter: @ebaerren*

Five COVID-19 deaths were reported around mid-Michigan over the weekend, including two in Gratiot County. Those were originally reported on Saturday.

The deaths bring Gratiot's total number of deaths to 99, the highest of any mid-Michigan county. An additional seven confirmed cases were also reported over the weekend for a cumulative total of 2,460.

No information about the people who died was available on Monday. Mid-Michigan District Health Department, which oversees Gratiot County, stopped providing that information shortly before Christmas last year.

No deaths were reported in either Isabella or Clare counties. Their total number of deaths in Isabella County remains 72, and it is 68 in Clare County.

Thirteen new confirmed cases were reported in Isabella County, bringing its cumulative total to 3,573; another seven confirmed cases were reported in Clare County for a cumulative total of 1,404.

Elsewhere in mid-Michigan, new deaths were reported in two counties, with new and cumulative cases and deaths as follows:

- In Gladwin County, an additional three con-

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Update

FROM PAGE 1

firmed cases for a cumulative total of 1,251, with 39 deaths;

- In Mecosta County, an additional six cases were

reported for a cumulative total of 1,918, with 19 deaths;

- In Midland County, one new death was reported for a total of 62, and an additional seven cases were reported for a cumulative total of 4,421; and,

- In Montcalm County, two deaths were reported for a total of 86, and an additional 11 cases were reported for a cumulative total of 3,252.

Statewide, another 81 deaths were reported for a total of 15,534 and another 3,798 cases were reported for a cumulative total of 589,150.

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COVID-19 UPDATE

Local health departments receive new vaccine

1,300 Johnson & Johnson doses arrive

By Eric Baerren

ebaerren@medianewsgroup.com

@ebaerren on Twitter

The first doses of the third vaccination approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration have already arrived at local health departments, with the anticipated impact causing the state to accelerate eligibility to receive a shot.

Both local health departments have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for use in Isabella, Gratiot and Clare counties. Central Michigan District Health Department also receive 200 doses of the Moderna vaccine for use in Isabella County.

A total of 1,300 doses of the

VACCINE » PAGE 3

Vaccine

FROM PAGE 1

Johnson & Johnson vaccine are expected in the three counties this week, according to state records. Central Michigan District Health Department received 400 doses each for Isabella and Clare counties. Mid Michigan District Health Department received 500 doses for Gratiot County.

None of the counties received the Pfizer vaccine. CMDHD received 1,170 doses, but those were all earmarked for Gladwin County. CMDHD reported Monday that it expects to receive 3,570 doses this week for its six counties: Isabella, Clare, Gladwin, Roscommon, Arenac and Osceola.

CMDHD reports that 18,163 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in its six counties as of last Friday. By Monday, the state reported that 13,197 doses in Isabella County and 7,483 doses in Clare County have been administered.

The accelerated rollout of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has caused the state to move up its timetable for vaccine eligibility. On Wednesday, the Michigan Department of Health

and Human Services announced that anyone 50 and older will be eligible for a vaccine starting March 22.

People 50 and older with pre-existing health conditions are eligible March 8.

The authorization of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has been hailed as a game changer. It requires only one shot and doesn't need to be kept in a deep freeze.

Earlier this week, Johnson & Johnson announced a deal to partner with pharmaceutical giant Merck to produce the vaccine across two large corporations.

The vaccine also differs from the other two based on how it stimulates a body's immune response.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are messenger vaccines, which use a coated piece of RNA to tell the body to create antibodies that recognize the protein spike on the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which plays a critical role in it hijacking a human cell to replicate it.

Johnson & Johnson's vaccine uses older technology, a weakened adenovirus to deliver genetic material.

Ten new confirmed cases were reported across Isabella, Gratiot and Clare counties on Wednesday, with no new deaths.

Six of the new cases were reported in Isabella County, increasing its cumulative

total of confirmed cases to 3,582, with 72 deaths. Three new confirmed cases were reported in Clare County, increasing its cumulative total of confirmed cases to 1,407, with 68 deaths. One new confirmed case was reported in Gratiot County, increasing its cumulative total of confirmed cases to 1,407, with 68 deaths.

All three counties continue to have lower rates of spread than the state as a whole using two key metrics.

Isabella County's seven-day rolling average of confirmed and probable cases per 100,000 people is 7.4, according to a county-level dashboard hosted by the Brown University School of Public Health. On the same dashboard, Clare's seven-day average is 9.2 and Gratiot's is 11.9. The statewide average is 13.5.

Anything between 1 and 9 is in a category called Community Spread, and rigorous test-and-trace programs are recommended. Between 10 and 24 is in a category called Accelerated Spread, and the dashboard recommends stay-at-home orders and rigorous test-and-trace programs.

On the dashboard's map, Community Spread is color coded yellow; Accelerated Spread is color coded or-

ange.

All three counties have lower rolling seven-day averages for positive test results for diagnostic tests. A higher percentage is generally considered to mean the disease is spreading faster.

Gratiot County's seven-day average of positive test results is 1.7 percent; in Isabella it is 2.82, and in Clare it is 3.57. Statewide, the average is 3.78.

Elsewhere in mid-Michigan, no new deaths were reported, with new and cumulative cases and deaths as follows:

- In Gladwin County, an additional three confirmed cases were reported for a cumulative total of 1,255, with 40 deaths;

- In Mecosta County, an additional five cases were reported for a cumulative total of 1,929, with 19 deaths;

- In Midland County, an additional eight cases were reported for a cumulative total of 4,440, with 62 deaths; and,

- In Montcalm County, an additional five cases were reported for a cumulative total of 3,260, with 86 deaths.

Statewide, another five deaths were reported for a total of 15,563 and another 1,356 cases were reported for a cumulative total of 591,753.

Daily News

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Despite new guidelines, local health department still working to vaccinate people 65 and older

By [Elisabeth Waldon](#) | on March 09, 2021

The state of Michigan may have once again changed its category guidelines for those eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, but the local health department is still working on getting prior groups vaccinated.



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham says the health department for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties is currently “scrambling” to get 6,500 newly received doses of the COVID-19 vaccine out to residents, including the new one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham posted a March 5 video with an update on the vaccine process in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties.

Cheatham noted that while people 50 and older with high-risk conditions, caregivers of children with risk factors, agricultural workers and mortuary workers are now all eligible to receive the vaccine according to the state, the local health department is still focused on vaccinating people 65 and older.

“Like almost all counties in Michigan, we’ve only vaccinated about half of our population over age 65,” Cheatham said. “We’ve used every single dose we’ve gotten. We’re not slow, we’re working fast, but we still have only done half the people over 65 so we’re going to go slow about doing these other groups because these folks over 65 are at risk of dying from this disease, they’ve been waiting patiently for weeks, we need to get to them. So please be patient.”

Cheatham recounted a recent confusing series of events in which the health department was told it would be receiving 1,700 doses of the vaccine this week, which was then increased to 4,400, then changed to 1,300 of the new Johnson & Johnson vaccine and then changed again to a combination of Johnson & Johnson and Moderna.

“This is what it’s like where we live, changes from minute to minute,” Cheatham summarized. “We’re now scrambling to get 6,500 doses out to you. Watch our website, we’re going to have more clinics. We’re looking at Carson City because people in our three counties can reach it. Check the pharmacy websites, check the hospital websites. If it’s confusing, just call 2-1-1.”

Visit www.mmdhd.org/covid-vaccine-information for more information about how to get vaccinated locally.

Cheatham specifically addressed the new one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

“It’s a really great vaccine,” he declared. “Why am I saying that? You probably heard on social media it’s not as good as the Pfizer or the Moderna. Look, nobody knows that. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was subjected to a harder test. They’re probably equally effective. No one was hospitalized and no one died one month after receiving it.”

Cheatham also addressed a more controversial issue regarding the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

“You might have heard that fetal tissue was used in the production of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine,” he said. “No — no fetuses were used. What happened was in 1985 a few cells were taken from the retinae from a fetus — it was from an abortion — and it was used like so many other lines of cells to develop lines of cells. So many of the lifesaving medications you’ve already taken were developed using these lines of cells. The daughter cells of this original group of cells that was collected are used in the production of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

“So depending on your beliefs, you might think this vaccine is not for you,” he admitted. “Please tell us if you don’t want the Johnson & Johnson vaccine because we want to vaccinate you and we want to find a vaccine that you like.”

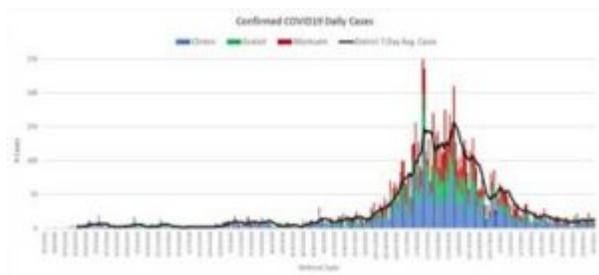
Cheatham noted that Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services recently relaxed some state epidemic orders — such as allowing up to 25 people at indoor gatherings and up to 300 people outside, plus restaurant capacity of 50% now allowed.

“The state told us exactly what they’re doing by opening things up,” Cheatham said. “But I’m a health officer, I’m not sure I want them to open things up. I’m afraid it’s going to start spreading again and killing people. I’m executing the play the coach’s call; she said this is what we’re doing — this is what we’re doing. They’re trying to signal that they know people want to have a semi-normal summer and if we can keep the cases down, that might happen. They’re also saying if the case go back up, we could go backward again, so please be safe, don’t spread this thing around.

“It is still an uphill fight, we still have a lot of people to vaccinate,” he concluded.

COVID-19: ONE YEAR LATER

 Posted on Wednesday, March 10th, 2021 and is filed under [FEATURE](#), [News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.



This graph, courtesy of the Mid-Michigan District [Health](#) Department, shows the confirmed daily COVID-19 cases in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties from March 1, 2020 to March 3, 2021. The case surge at the end of 2020 dwarfed the previous peaks, with approximately 250 cases reported in a single day in November.

By Emma Selmon
Herald [News](#) Editor

It's been a year since Michigan saw its first confirmed COVID-19 case on Tuesday, March 10, 2020. It only took a matter of days for everything to change. March 27, 2020 marked Gratiot County's first confirmed case of COVID-19, and the first death came just over a month later. The virus made its way to every corner of the county, ripping through nursing homes and prisons as well as families and social circles.

All in all, there have been 2,472 test-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Gratiot County — and another 324 have been identified as “probable” COVID-19 cases, according to the data from the State of Michigan.

And as of Monday, 100 Gratiot County residents have died from COVID-19, with another four deaths likely caused by the virus.

March 2021 is, at least, a time of much more certainty than March 2020. Healthcare workers know much more about how to treat COVID-19. Tests are much more readily available, and businesses and schools have the tools in place to limit COVID spread in their facilities.

But it's still true that the situation is rapidly changing. New, more contagious virus variants first identified in the United Kingdom and South Africa have made their way to Michigan. At the same time, there is a light at the end of the tunnel as more and more Michiganders receive their COVID-19 vaccine shots.

Since the first vaccinations began in Gratiot on Dec. 17, over 6,900 county residents have received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine — just over 20 percent of those 16 and over, according to data the State of Michigan.

As more residents take their opportunity to get their shots, the percentage of those immunized will only continue to rise — but this is no time to let your guard down on pandemic precautions, said Marcus Cheatham, health officer for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department.

In a video update last week, Cheatham said that as long as people are “safe and don't spread this disease around,” there is a lot to be hopeful for.

“We still have a lot of people to vaccinate, but we can start to see a time in the future...very soon when we can start to feel safer, and I'm really looking forward to that,” he said.

Third Vaccine Becomes Available In Gratiot County

 Posted on Wednesday, March 10th, 2021 and is filed under [News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

COVID-19 vaccination progress in Gratiot County is continuing to be made as a third shot has been authorized for emergency use by the FDA.

The Johnson and Johnson vaccine was approved by the federal government agency at the end of last month, and Gratiot County has already received its first shipments. It joins the Moderna and the Pfizer vaccines, which have been available in the area since late last year.

The Johnson and Johnson vaccine only requires one dose for full effect, as opposed to the others, which require two.

In a video update from March 5, [Health](#) Officer Marcus Cheatham of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) said that the Johnson and Johnson shot is “a really great vaccine.”

While the Johnson and Johnson vaccine tests may seem to show that the shot is less effective than that of its competitors.

Cheatham pointed out that the Johnson and Johnson vaccine “was subjected to a harder test” because there was “more COVID circulating at the time.”

“All other things being equal, just randomly, you’d expect a few more people in the Johnson and Johnson test to have mild disease. And that’s exactly what happened,” Cheatham said. “They’re probably equally effective.” He also noted that a month after receiving the single-shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine in the trial, no one was hospitalized for COVID-19 and no one died.

And when it comes to immunizing for a deadly disease, preventing serious illness and death is what’s important. “That’s great protection,” he said. “You can’t do better than that.”

In addition to the third vaccine, there has also been an expansion in who is eligible to begin to receive their COVID-19 vaccine.

Since March 1, agricultural workers and food processing workers are eligible to receive a shot, and since March 8, individuals aged 50 to 64 with a disability or preexisting condition are eligible as well. Caregivers of children with special healthcare needs also became eligible on March 8.

And beginning March 22, all individuals aged 50 to 64 will be eligible to receive a vaccine.

While more groups have become eligible and will become eligible soon, Cheatham still asks residents to be patient. Although more doses have become available as the Johnson and Johnson rolled out and the other vaccines amp up their production, there are still many people who have been eligible for weeks now that are still awaiting their shots.

He said that even though the MMDHD, pharmacies and healthcare providers have been “working fast” and have “used every single dose” they’ve received, the MMDHD region has still only vaccinated just about half of the population over 65. This is on par with the rest of the state, Cheatham said.

While other groups are eligible and will begin to be vaccinated, those over 65 will remain a priority, and rollout for groups with less risk may be slow to start.

“We’re going to go slow about doing these other groups, because these folks over 65 are at risk of dying of this disease,” he said. “They’ve been waiting patiently for weeks. We do need to get to them, so please be patient.”

For everyone who is eligible, there are a variety of places that offer COVID-19 vaccinations, including local healthcare providers and pharmacies. A list of places where vaccine may be available can be found at <https://www.mmdhd.org/covid-vaccine-information/>. Other helpful resources are available at this webpage as well.

Anyone who does not have access to internet, or who is a senior and needs help scheduling an appointment, can call 211 for assistance. Seniors can also call the Gratiot County Commission on Aging at 989-875-5246 for assistance as well.

Mid-Mich. seniors nearly 70% vaccinated

State prepares to open eligibility to all aged 50+

Craig Lyons Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING – Health departments in Greater Lansing are rapidly nearing 70% vaccination among those 65 and older.

The Ingham County Health Department reported 71% of its senior citizens have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The Barry-Eaton District Health Department is at 62% and the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, which covers Clinton County, is around 50% vaccination among seniors.

“We’re going to keep working to get that number to 80%,” Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail said.

In Clinton County, efforts have been slightly more hampered by vaccine supply.

“We’ve only vaccinated about half of our (senior) population,” said Marcus Cheatham, health officer for the

See SENIORS, Page 2A



Carma Philip, 87, of Mason gets her COVID-19 vaccination on Jan. 19 at Sparrow Laboratories Drive-Thru Services site at Frandor Shopping Center in Lansing. MATTHEW DAE SMITH/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

Seniors

Continued from Page 1A

Mid-Michigan District Health Department, in a video update Friday. “We’re not slow — we’re working fast. We’ve used every single dose we got.”

Cheatham said reaching the remaining half of seniors in his district, which also covers Gratiot and Montcalm Counties, is a matter of managing appointments for newly eligible residents.

“It is an uphill battle,” Cheatham said. “We’ve still got a lot of people to vaccinate.”

Vaccinating 50-and-ups expected to move faster

Vail expects vaccinating the 50-and-over group to go much faster than the previous phase.

That’s thanks in part to an increase in vaccine availability, but also because the state hasn’t opened vaccination to new employment subcategories, such as retail workers, Vail said.

Here’s where vaccination stands in Greater Lansing, according to MDHHS data:

- Providers administered 79,332 doses to Ingham County residents. Of those, 29,475 people are fully vaccinated
- Providers administered 32,580 doses to Eaton County residents. Of those, 11,547 people are fully vaccinated.
- Providers administered 19,323 doses to Clinton County residents. Of those, 7,363 people are fully vaccinated.

The vaccines administered reflect where a patient resides, not where they received the shot.

While getting an appointment has become easier, keeping up the pace of vaccination as new groups become eligible will take time, Vail said.

“We need to dispel the myth that (we get everybody) 50-plus vaccinated in two weeks,” she said. “We won’t.”

Currently, those 50 and up with preexisting medical conditions are eligible. Vaccination opens to all Michigan residents 50 and up on March 22.

More providers, greater access

As the vaccination effort ramps up, more and more providers are eligible to administer shots. Those include local health departments, hospitals, community pharmacies, and retail pharmacies like Rite Aid, Meijer and Walgreens.

“There’s a lot of availability for vaccine in the community,” Vail said.

Since December, the state has distributed 3.4 million first and second doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Of that figure, 122,796 doses went to Ingham County, 15,000 to Eaton County and 10,300 to Clinton County, according to the most recent data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

Cheatham said MMDHD recently got a huge bump in its vaccine allocation, with multiple shipments of the Johnson & Johnson and Moderna vaccines arriving this month.

Those doses will go toward health department-run clinics and out to pharmacies and hospitals to maximize the availability of appointments, Cheatham said.

“We’re now scrambling to get 6,500 doses out to you,” he said.

Contact reporter Craig Lyons at 517-377-1047 or calyons@lsj.com.

Obituaries

To place an ad, call 586-826-7171 or visit mideathnotices.com/place.php

TODAY'S OBITUARIES AND DEATH NOTICES

Name	Age	Town, State	Death Date	Arrangements
Bajena, Henry Sylvester	91	St. Louis	09-Mar	Smith Family Funeral Homes, St. Louis Chapel
Fox, Thomas J.	64	Lansing	08-Mar	Palmer Bush & Jensen Family Funeral Home, Lansing Chapel
Greer, Doris Fay	83	Haslett, MI	09-Mar	Gorsline Runciman Lansing Chapel
*Henney, Douglas	68	Olivet	09-Mar	Pray Funeral Home
James, Larry Edward	74	Lansing	08-Mar	Tiffany Funeral Homes
Kuhn, Kurt A.	72	Delta Twp.	06-Mar	Palmer, Bush & Jensen Family Funeral Homes, Delta Chapel
Lopez, Anthony	15	Lansing	06-Mar	Skinner Funeral Home Lansing Chapel
McCue, James "Jim"	66	Webberville	06-Mar	Palmer Bush & Jensen Family Funeral Home, Lansing Chapel
Nightengale, Verda	99	Pottersville	08-Mar	Pray Funeral Home
Streeter, Joann	82	Mason	09-Mar	Skinner Funeral Home Lansing Chapel
Twitchell, Thomas	70	Eaton Rapids	05-Mar	Skinner Funeral Homes
Vo, Phuc	51	Lansing	09-Mar	Estes-Leadley Greater Lansing Chapel
Winegar, Homer	90	Vermontville	09-Mar	Pray Funeral Home

* Additional information in display obituaries

Obituaries appear in print and online at www.legacy.com/obituaries/LSJ

Douglas Henney

OLIVET - Douglas Larry Henney, 68, a loved member of his family and dedicated grandfather, died at his home on Duck Lake after a long battle with cancer on Tuesday, March 9, 2021. Doug was born January 10, 1953, in Lansing, the son of Larry



Your guide on getting the vaccine

Eligibility for COVID-19 shots widens in April

Kara Berg and Miriam Marini

Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

COVID-19 vaccine eligibility is widening in April, with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announcing Friday that all Michiganders over the age of 16 will be eligible starting April 5.

Efforts to expand vaccine rollout are underway, as officials aim to vaccinate enough people in Michigan to attain some sense of normalcy this year. Starting March 22, all Michiganders 50 and up will be eligible for the vaccine. On April 5, it opens up to everyone 16 and older.

Now, the question on many Michigan residents' mind: How can I get my dose?

Those interested and eligible can choose where to receive their vaccines — whether through city or county vaccine sites, through their health care provider or at chain pharmacies. Michiganders are encouraged to not be picky about which vaccine to get and instead accept whatever is most convenient.

"I urge all eligible Michiganders to get one of the three COVID-19 vaccines. It is essential to getting our country back to normal, so that we can all hug our families, get back to work, go to restaurants, send our kids to school, play sports and get together again," Whitmer said in a news release Friday. "And as always: mask up, practice safe social distancing and avoid large indoor gatherings where COVID-19 can easily spread from person to person. We will eliminate this virus together."

Ingham County COVID-19 vaccine registration

Everyone who lives or works in Ingham County can register for the vaccine online. The county health department will send an email whenever someone is eligible and appointments are available. Fill out the online registration form here.

For assistance registering, call 517-887-4623 or email covidvaccine@ingham.org.

The county also is vaccinating residents at the Forest Community Health Center, Birch Community Health Center and New Hope Community Health Center. All are in Lansing.

People must call the health centers to schedule an appointment:

- Forest Community Health Center at 517-887-4302
- Birch Community Health Center at 517-244-8030
- New Hope Community Health Center at 517-887-4400

The appointments will either be drive-thru or walk-up depending on a person's preference and the location of a health center.

More information is available online about vaccines and about the county's COVID-19 response.

Eaton County COVID-19 vaccine registration

Anyone interested in receiving the vaccine can register online via an interest form from the Barry Eaton Health Department.

New vaccination appointments are added each Friday afternoon when the health department learns how many vaccines will be available for the week. Eligible individuals will be emailed once they can schedule an appointment.

Find more information from the county health department.

Clinton County COVID-19 vaccine registration

The COVID-19 vaccine is available through the Mid Michigan Health Department, which serves Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties.

Anyone interested can register online to be added to the waiting list. When vaccines are available, people will be notified in the order in which they signed up.

The health department has offices in St. Johns, Ithaca and Stanton.

People who do not have access to the internet or seniors who need help scheduling an appointment can call 211 for assistance. Anyone over 65 who needs help also can call their local office on aging.

- Tri-County Office on Aging (Clinton County): 517-887-1440
- Gratiot County Commission on Aging: 989-875-5246
- Montcalm County Commission on Aging: 989-831-7476



Dental hygienist Muhammad Grival gets his second COVID-19 shot, on Feb. 4 at the Ingham County vaccination center at MSU Pavilion. MATTHEW DAE SMITH/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

Sparrow Hospital

All essential healthcare workers and people older than 50 can sign up on their MySparrow portal for the vaccine. Anyone who does not meet that criteria cannot be vaccinated at Sparrow, even if they are eligible in the state.

Vaccinations are done at the Sparrow Laboratories Drive-Thru Services, near the Frandor Shopping Center. Vaccines are by appointment only.

Anyone who needs help creating a MySparrow account and registering for the vaccine can call 877-205-1300 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Hometown Pharmacy COVID-19 vaccine registration

HomeTown Pharmacy is offering the COVID-19 vaccine to anyone who is eligible.

Fill out the pharmacy's registration form to be contacted when vaccines are available.

HomeTown Pharmacy has been approved to provide the COVID-19 vaccination to individuals who meet state-specific eligibility criteria. When we have vaccines available, HomeTown Pharmacy will call/text you a link to complete consent and schedule your vaccination.

There are four Hometown Pharmacy locations near Lansing: Jackson, Stockbridge, DeWitt and Bellevue.

Walgreens COVID-19 vaccine registration

Walgreens will receive all of McLaren Greater Lansing's state-allocated doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Beginning March 15, the hospital will redistribute its allocation of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to the drug store chain.

All scheduling is done through Walgreens, not McLaren.

To sign up for the vaccine, users can create or log in to their Walgreens.com pharmacy account and complete an eligibility screening. There, they can look for available appointments at stores nearby.

For those not yet eligible, sign up for updates online. Call your local Walgreens or 800-925-4733 to schedule a vaccine appointment over the phone.

Kroger COVID-19 vaccine registration

Starting this week, vaccines will be available at Kroger stores in Michigan to those who meet state eligibility requirements, the retailer announced Saturday.

Once on the grocer's vaccine portal, users will have to answer questions on its virtual assessment tool to determine eligibility.

After completing the questionnaire, you can then select a location out of 103 participating Kroger pharmacies to make an appointment to receive your vaccine.

Those who fall within the state's eligibility guidelines can make an appointment online or by calling 866-211-5320.

Rite Aid COVID-19 vaccine registration

Moderna and Pfizer vaccinations are offered to

those who meet state eligibility requirements at Rite Aid locations throughout Michigan. Those who qualify and are interested cannot make appointments at specific stores, and are rather instructed to follow the pharmacy's vaccine scheduler portal.

There, users are required to fill out a questionnaire to determine eligibility, with questions regarding medical conditions and occupation.

After eligibility requirements are met, users will be able to book their appointments from a list of locations and time slots.

Meijer COVID-19 vaccine registration

To register to receive your vaccine through the Grand Rapids-based grocer, Michiganders have three options: Register online, by texting "COVID" to 75049 or by calling your local Meijer pharmacy.

After completing registration, Meijer will reach out to you to schedule an appointment once a dose is available. Meijer is following state eligibility requirements. Once a vaccine is available, Meijer will text an invite link with clinic dates and times.

Users can choose one of three responses to the invite link: "I accept" to reserve a vaccination, "I defer" to decline the present offer but be kept on the list for future clinic offers, or "Remove me" if you are no longer interested or have received your vaccination elsewhere.

Vaccination appointments may take place at a Meijer pharmacy or an offsite location where vaccinations are being offered through the company.

Second dose appointments will be automatically scheduled by Meijer according to national guidelines.

What do I need to bring for COVID-19 vaccine appointment?

Most sites require photo ID and proof of occupation if necessary for those who may be receiving their vaccine outside of the county they live in. Those receiving their second dose are typically required to bring your COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card.

Do I need to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccination will be free to everyone interested in getting one in 2021, federal officials have said. From the CDC's website:

The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States. Vaccination providers can be reimbursed for vaccine administration fees by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund. No one can be denied a vaccine if they are unable to pay a vaccine administration fee.

Staff writers Kristen Jordan Shamus and Christina Hall contributed to this report.

Obituaries

Leonard John Malinowski

Leonard John Malinowski ("Len") passed away on March 10, 2021 at the Byron House in Potosi, Maryland. Len lived a uniquely blessed life with his late wife, Mary McMahon Malinowski, filled with five children, twelve grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and many divergent interests and life experiences. Len was born on January 29, 1938 in Detroit, Michigan.

Len was a chemist at Arrow Liquor Company and Faygo in Detroit, testing and creating new and unique libations and soda-pop flavors. Then he worked as an engineer with Ford Motor Company, where he helped perfect the first seat-belt technology in the automotive industry. While still working at Ford Len attended Detroit College of Law at night, graduating in 1974 and took a job as an Asst. Attorney General in Michigan. Perhaps his greatest case was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court called Michigan v. Long, a case that is still cited today.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Gratiot, Clare ahead of vaccination average total

MMDHD warns of
new COVID case spike

By Eric Baerren

ebaerren@medianewsgroup.com
@ebaerren on Twitter

More than a quarter of people in Gratiot and Clare counties 16 years old and older have received at least one shot of COVID-19 vaccine. In Isabella County, it is a little more than one in five.

Clare County has the highest percentage of people in that age range who've received at least one shot at 28.34 percent, or 7,222 of 25,487. In Gratiot County, 25.6 percent in that age range have received at least one shot, or 8,658 of 33,817.

In Isabella County, 20.86 percent of people in that age range have received at least one shot, or 12,329 of 59,116. As of Tuesday, 1,447 of those people received a vaccination shot through Nimkee Wellness Center on the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Reservation, Karmen Fox, Nimkee executive di-

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Update

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rector. An additional 50 were expected to have been vaccinated on Wednesday.

The state average is 24.9 percent in that age range, or 2.07 million of 8.1 million, according to state records that were current as of Monday.

Moderna's two-shot mRNA vaccine is the most common vaccination being administered. Of all doses shipped to the three counties, it accounts for 78.9 percent of them, or 30,800 of 39,060.

Isabella County has received the most doses at 16,200, Gratiot County has received 10,300 and Clare County has received 4,300.

Pfizer's two-shot two-shot mRNA vaccine is the second most common vaccination at 14 percent of all doses shipped, or 5,460 of 39,060. So far, state records indicate that the Pfizer vaccine has been shipped only to Isabella County.

Johnson & Johnson's one-shot adenovirus vaccine has gone to all three counties, but accounts for only 7 percent of doses administered, or 2,800 of 39,060. Gratiot County has received the most doses at 1,900, Isabella County has received 500 doses and Clare County has received 400 doses.

Even as more people received vaccination doses, Mid-Michigan District Health Department sounded a warning about the rising number of new cases across mid-Michigan.

The district distributed a press release Wednesday afternoon advising people that it has seen a 100 percent increase in the number of new

cases reported since Feb. 20. It also warns that some of the cases involve new, more contagious strains of the disease.

It cites the relaxation of COVID restrictions, including the reopening of restaurants, and exhaustion with COVID protocols as the likely reasons. The press release says the health department doesn't advise changes to COVID protocols, but that people continue to follow existing protocols.

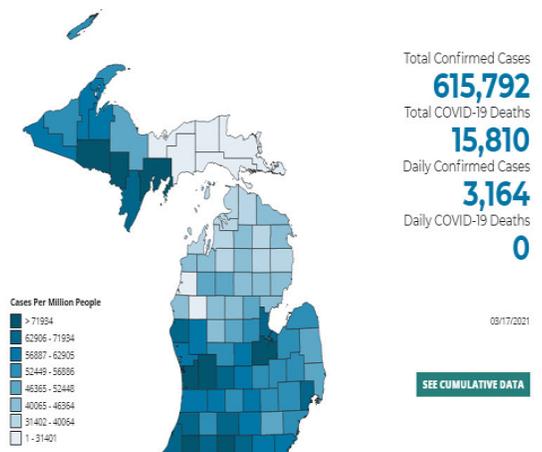
Gratiot County is a MMDHD county, and three new confirmed cases were reported there on Wednesday afternoon for a cumulative total of 2,484, with 100 deaths.

In Isabella County, an additional 18 cases were reported Wednesday for a cumulative total of 3,671, with 72 deaths. In Clare County, an additional two confirmed cases were reported for a cumulative total of 1,423, with 68 deaths.

Elsewhere in mid-Michigan, no new deaths were reported, with new and cumulative cases and deaths as follows:

- In Gladwin County, seven additional cases were reported for a cumulative total of 1,284, with 40 deaths;
- In Mecosta County, 10 additional cases were reported for a cumulative total of 1,980, with 21 deaths;
- In Midland County, an additional 15 new cases were reported for a cumulative total of 4,638, with 63 deaths; and,
- In Montcalm County, an additional 11 cases were reported for a cumulative total of 3,335, with 88 deaths.

Statewide, no new deaths were reported for a total of 15,810 and another 3,164 cases were reported for a cumulative total of 615,792.



GRAPHIC PROVIDED BY MDHHS