

PHMDC: Works to Provide Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccine

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For months, Public Health Madison & Dane County and other Dane County vaccinators have been planning for and providing mobile COVID-19 vaccination clinics to help eliminate barriers to being vaccinated for members of the community.

“We recognize there can be complex factors, such as transportation, language barriers, work in occupations that don’t allow for time off to get a vaccine, or healthcare distrust that may prevent someone from getting vaccinated against COVID-19,” said Janel Heinrich, Director of Public Health Madison & Dane County. “For these reasons, we’re meeting people where they’re at and bringing vaccine to them so everyone in Dane County has equitable access to vaccine,” continued Heinrich.

Dane County vaccination numbers are among the highest in the state, but the vaccination rate of whites is outpacing that of other racial groups. In Dane County, only 21% of Black people and 39% of Asian people have received at least one dose of vaccine, compared to 50% of white people. 32% of people with Hispanic or Latino ethnicity have at least one dose of vaccine compared to 49% of non-Hispanic or Latino people. It’s important to note that these data are affected by who was first eligible for vaccine—people of color tend to be younger than white people in Dane County and may be underrepresented in different professions like health care. Additionally, a larger percent of Black and Hispanic Dane County residents compared to white people are under the age of 18, making a larger proportion of them currently ineligible to be vaccinated (or only eligible for Pfizer).

Public Health is working to break down some of these inequities through a three-pronged approach:

- **Engaging in education:** Staff is listening to and engaging with communities who have questions or distrust of government and healthcare by providing clear and accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines. This has taken the form of community conversations, town halls, and educational materials distributed to mobile vaccination sites and community centers.
- **Providing mobile clinics:** Public Health is holding mobile vaccination clinics with bilingual staff at local farms, congregate living facilities, and faith-based organizations to break down access, transportation, and language barriers.
- **Leveraging resources across the community:** Public Health is coordinating requests for mobile clinics with local vaccinators and has provided vaccine to vaccinators to facilitate mobile clinics.

“Making sure our community has equitable access to vaccine is a priority. We’re proud that Public Health is part of a partnership of vaccinators reaching out to people in our area for whom access to vaccine is a challenge,” said City of Madison Mayor Rhodes-Conway. “This has been an important effort to ensure that we’re providing fair access to health and a healthy future for everyone in our community.”

Public Health has multiple mobile clinics scheduled each week for the remainder of April and into May, in addition to the 7,000 vaccines it provides each week at the Alliant Energy Center.

“Having a highly effective mass vaccination site like the Alliant Energy Center has been a key to success in Dane County’s vaccination efforts. Ensuring everyone has access to vaccines will also require concerted efforts like outreach and mobile clinics in both city neighborhoods and rural communities,” said Dane County Executive Parisi.