



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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NEWS RELEASE
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Lyndi Warner and Matt Johnson
Public Information Officers
pio@kalcounty.com

Kalamazoo County Participates in Statewide Voluntary COVID-19 Testing Initiative for Nursing Homes

Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is participating today in a statewide effort provided by the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) to offer COVID-19 testing for the most vulnerable and at risk Michiganders- older adults residing in nursing homes and the staff caring for them. This statewide testing endeavor, as announced last week, is in coordination with the Michigan State Police through the State Emergency Operations Center. The Michigan National Guard has also been enlisted to assist in the collection of specimen.

In Kalamazoo County, nine nursing homes will be tested with three sites conducting their own and the remaining six being conducted by National Guard members. Testing is offered to all residents and staff members of the skilled nursing facilities, with approximately 1500 people opting to participate today. The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department coordinated with state partners and nursing homes through the Area Agency on Aging IIIA staff.

To date, Kalamazoo County has reported 51 deaths with 78% of those deaths occurring in congregate settings, such as long term care facilities.

“In our community, older adults living in facilities are the most vulnerable and have been impacted the hardest with COVID-19. This collaboration is another example of how fortunate Kalamazoo County is to have the Area Agency on Aging IIIA within the local public health department. Our team was instrumental in the coordination between state partners and the nursing homes. We are grateful to the MDHHS, Michigan State Police, State Emergency Operations Center and the Michigan National Guard for allowing expanded testing for our older adults in facilities and the staff that care for them,” said Jim Rutherford, Kalamazoo County Health Officer.

This testing initiative provided by MDHHS is occurring in all 83 counties in Michigan. Along with Kalamazoo County, Ottawa County and Eaton County are also participating today.

The three-member National Guard teams include a certified medic to conduct testing and two additional members to assist with paperwork, logistics and non-medical tasks. Teams are equipped to perform tests and can train staff members to perform tests at the discretion of the facility.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

311 E. Alcott St. | Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Phone: 269.373.5200 | www.kalcounty.com/hcs

"The Michigan National Guard is made up of men and women who strive to provide innovative solutions and performance excellence to the citizens of Michigan," Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Director Paul Rogers said in a statement. "We look forward to continuing our support to communities, especially the most vulnerable populations."

All team members have tested negative for COVID-19 and have been self-isolating in accordance with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance to ensure health and safety and to protect Michigan communities. The teams wear personal protective equipment, including Tyvek suits, face shields, nitrile gloves, and face mask (N-95 or surgical, as appropriate

Information about the COVID-19 is rapidly changing. The latest information is available at www.michigan.gov/coronavirus and www.kalcounty.com/hcs/covid19.php.

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