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# Illinois Health Associations Encourage COVID-19 Boosters as New Cases Spike

Community Health Workers continue to advocate and provide access to patients

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (August 24, 2023) – A late-summer surge in Illinois COVID-19 infections is prompting community health and wellness advocates to again stress the importance of vaccination at the beginning of the new school year.

Citing data aggregated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), such as hospital admissions and emergency department visits, the Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA) and Illinois Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA) called today for Illinoisans to schedule COVID-19 shots as students return to classrooms.

“It’s important for us to do our part as seasons change to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said Tracey Smith, DNP, PHCNS-BC, MS, director of community health at IPHA. “We have been here before and worked together with our resources and Community Health Workers to make it through. Vaccinations thwart severe infections that keep families apart, more kids out of school and pose long-term health risks for immunocompromised Illinoisans in neighborhoods across Illinois safer for everyone.”

Test positivity increased by more than 14 percent in early August, according to the CDC. In Chicago, early August COVID-19 related hospitalizations are up by 26 percent. These developments come as epidemiologists across the world track the spread of the EG.5 strain, better known publicly as “Eris.”

In Illinois, Community Health Workers (CHWs) are increasing access to COVID-19 vaccines as well as seasonal influenza vaccines by setting up their own vaccine clinics and providing transportation to and from vaccine appointments in their service area. Their trusted voice in underserved communities have also allowed them to share more information about the [CDC Bridge Access Program](#), which allows residents access to COVID-19 vaccinations through 2024 regardless of their insurance status.

In addition to [a similar campaign recently launched by the Illinois Dept. of Public Health](#), IPHA and IPHCA are on social media and in search engine advertisements this month encouraging vaccination ahead of the new school year. To learn more about CHWs and COVID-19 prevention, please visit [www.helpguidethrive.org](http://www.helpguidethrive.org).

## About Illinois Public Health Association

The Illinois Public Health Association's mission is to lead in the enhancement and support of the public health system and the practice of public health, focused on health equity and improved health throughout Illinois. The Association is Illinois' oldest and largest voluntary organization devoted exclusively to matters of public health. Founded in 1940, it now has nearly 7,000 members statewide and is the American Public Health Association's largest affiliate.

## About Illinois Primary Health Care Association

IPHCA is a nonprofit trade association that serves as the voice of and champion for Illinois' 54 community health centers, which serve more than 1.5 million patients annually across more than 400 service sites in medically underserved rural, urban, and suburban areas. [IPHCA.org](http://IPHCA.org)

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