

Maryland Moves Forward on COVID-19 Vaccination with Federal Partners

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PHILADELPHIA - The Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and its counterparts are working together with the federal family of agencies to make sure Marylanders take part in the state's vaccination plan.

“We look forward to continuing to work with our federal partners at FEMA to increase access to vaccinations throughout Maryland,” said Russ Strickland, Executive Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency. “We thank FEMA Region 3 for providing an Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) to help coordinate activities and logistics with federal agencies during this large and very complex operation.”

Maryland has been working with FEMA, other federal agencies, as well as local and non-government partners since the pandemic began last winter.

The most recent step, announced by Governor Larry Hogan on Friday, is the GoVAX public outreach campaign. It is being led by the Maryland Department of Health and the 24 local health departments. The campaign consists of Maryland-branded materials so that advertising, social media messaging, documents and other materials will all have a common look.

Early in the pandemic, Maryland realized the massive Baltimore Convention Center, vacant because of travel and gathering restrictions, would be a useful facility to provide COVID-19 services. The site's proximity to bus, subway and light rail lines service makes it accessible to those without a vehicle. Officials have leveraged the site to provide several COVID-19 services to Marylanders.

Working with Baltimore City, multiple federal partners, and two of the state's largest healthcare systems, the center was first used to develop an overflow subacute care facility as the first surge of COVID-19 patients began filling hospital beds. Later, another portion of the facility was used to set up a walk-in testing center as test supplies became more easily procured and at times has been the



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state's highest volume test site.

Since vaccine distribution is now the top priority of state officials, the facility is being prepared as a mass vaccination site starting in early February. State and local health officials are working across government and the private sector to develop a walk-in vaccination site. The Baltimore Convention Center is one of several mass vaccination sites planned around the state.

“Maryland has been a leader in informing, testing and caring for its residents since the start of the COVID-19 mission,” said FEMA Region 3 Acting Regional Administrator Janice Barlow. “The quick conversion of the Baltimore Convention Center to a vaccination site shows the state’s speed and flexibility, as well as its dedication to the mission. The GoVax campaign will help Marylanders get the information they need to make the best health decisions for their families and themselves.”

MEMA, through Maryland’s Public Assistance Program, has been coordinating with FEMA to provide funding to support the vaccination effort. FEMA has already provided almost \$648.2 million to state and local agencies and certain non-profits (including hospital systems) to help ease the financial burden. MEMA continues to work with communities impacted by COVID to seek additional federal reimbursement and funding for future costs.

Aside from the vaccination effort, MEMA has:

- Led engagement of the private sector through the Maryland Business Emergency Operations Center. These efforts have helped keep the business community updated on the ever-changing information that affects their operations and trying to address the concerns of the private sector.
- Established a statewide coordination structure leveraging the Incident Command System (ICS) to bring leaders from state agencies and other partners together to coordinate the overall strategy for Maryland’s COVID response.



- Conducted an outreach campaign to alert the public to the effects of the pandemic on emergency preparedness. The campaign emphasized the need to include COVID supplies in an emergency kit and the effects of the pandemic on evacuation and sheltering operations, especially as part of Maryland's Know Your Zone hurricane evacuation program.

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Region 3 Office of External Affairs at (215) 931-5597 or at femar3newsdesk@fema.dhs.gov.

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