

## Hochul announces eligibility for 2nd COVID-19 vaccine boosters

Those 50 years and older who received first booster at least 4 months ago are eligible



√ Adults 18-49 years who received Johnson & Johnson Vaccine, immunocompromised ages 12 years and older also eligible for mRNA booster 4 months after first booster

√ State Department of Health, CDC continue to 'strongly recommend' initial booster doses for eligible adults & adolescents

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Saturday announced eligibility for second coronavirus vaccine booster doses. Eligible New Yorkers may receive an mRNA vaccine – either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine – for their second booster shot.

Hochul's team said, "Booster doses are free and widely available statewide, including at all state-run mass-vaccination sites."

She said, "Getting vaccinated and staying up-to-date with all recommended doses is the most effective way to prevent severe illness and hospitalization, and move safely forward through this pandemic."

The New York State Department of Health released new clinical guidance on the administration of second booster doses for all providers enrolled in the New York state vaccination program. The guidance follows the Federal Drug Administration's approval of emergency use authorization for a second booster, and the updated recommendation from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to allow adults 50 years and older to receive a second booster of an mRNA vaccine at least four months after their first booster.

Additionally, adults ages 18-49 years who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for their primary vaccine and initial booster dose now may receive a second booster four months after their first booster dose. Also eligible for the second booster are New Yorkers 12 years and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised.

State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett said, "Providers statewide, including at the state's mass-vaccination sites, are ready to administer second booster doses for eligible New Yorkers. For each of us, vaccination remains our personal best line of defense against COVID. As we have seen with the recent increase of the omicron sub-variant BA.2, COVID is still with us. These safe and effective vaccines remain free, including the second booster."

The New York State Department of Health continues to share CDC's recommendation that all

eligible adults, adolescents, and children ages 5 years and older get fully vaccinated and receive an initial coronavirus booster when eligible.

Hochul's team said, "For eligible New Yorkers, a first booster dose is safe and continues to provide strong protection against severe outcomes. According to CDC data from the recent omicron surge, those who were boosted were 21-times less likely to die from COVID-19 compared to those who were unvaccinated, and seven-times less likely to be hospitalized. In accordance with CDC's recommendation, the state's updated guidance acknowledges the increased risk of severe disease for certain populations, making a second mRNA booster available for those who may choose to increase their protection further."

The state's booster and additional dose website includes information for New Yorkers about first and second boosters, additional doses, eligibility, frequently asked questions, and resources for providers on-the-ground. The state will continue its outreach to booster-eligible New Yorkers through SMS-based messages, traditional and digital marketing efforts, and push notifications through the state's Excelsior Pass platform.

All New York state mass-vaccination sites are administering second booster doses to eligible New Yorkers. To schedule an appointment at a state-run mass-vaccination site, New Yorkers can visit the "Am I Eligible page" or call 1-833-NYS-4-VAX. People may also contact their pharmacy, local county health department, or health care provider to schedule appointments where vaccines are available. New Yorkers can also visit vaccines.gov, text their ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find nearby locations.

Hochul's team said, "New Yorkers should make sure providers are administering second booster doses when scheduling their appointments."

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## Cannabis sales on Tuscarora Nation lands in dispute

Continued from Page 1

Niagara County District Attorney's Office, said they are in process of reviewing what they see as "a complicated matter."

"We're in consultation with the district attorney's office to see whether the sales are legal or not; that's our answer to it at this point, to see whether they can legally sell it on the reservation to begin with or not," Lewiston Police Chief Frank Previte said.

He noted the Niagara County DA is working on licensing issues to determine what the status is. "That's going to dictate, obviously, (how we're) going to deal with this. We don't know that the sales are legal at this point."

Previte said LPD has had conversations with the Tuscarora Nation. Thus far, he said LPD has not received any complaints from either residents or the Tuscarora Nation community as to cannabis dispensary sales activities at Tuscarora businesses.

"It's the Nation itself; it's the Nation that's opposed to this; and they're making it an issue," Previte said.

As to the police response to

any potential shutdown of roads, he added, "First issue, we'll have to determine whether it (the shutting down of roads) is legal; there's lot of factors involved."

John Granchelli, of the DA's office, said he is researching the matter to determine a response.

"As far as particular legalities, we're looking at it," he said. "The nation, because of its (status) as a sovereign territory, has some unique implications. It's our job to look at all of those things, in conjunction with state and federal law. We're doing that."

"We're trying to communicate with Niagara County residents, and that includes the Tuscarora Nation on this particular issue."

Granchelli, speaking for Niagara County DA Brian Seaman, said the office attributes the problem directly to New York state in its passage of "marijuana reform without consideration to these issues."

He said that, in the DA's research of the New York's Office of Cannabis Management, the state allows municipalities the choice of opting in or out of cannabis sales – and sovereign nations, such as the

Tuscarorans or the Senecas, likewise have this option. The Seneca Nation has gone on record as permitting sales on its lands.

On Tuscarora lands, "It appears that cannabis sales are unwanted," Granchelli said. "The state has not provided a mechanism; it's a complex issue."

"Some of these communities are large; they have their own governing agencies," he said. "The (Tuscarora) leaders have made it clear to us: Cannabis is not part of their community; they do not want it to be."

As to the Tuscarora Clanmothers' announcement to block roads to non-residents, and any official response, Granchelli said law enforcement – LPD, the Niagara County Sheriff's Office and New York State Police – all work in concert with the Tuscarora Nation in terms of policing tribal lands.

"It may create more problems (here)," Granchelli said of the announcement. "It's a complex issue; we're trying to come up with a solution (on how to address this). Our concern is for motorists, pedestrians alike. Is there a better way to stop this?"

## County seeks help with health survey

The Niagara County Department of Health is seeking the help of residents to complete a health survey.

NCDOH is working closely with the three local hospitals, the Niagara County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Department and community partners in forming the Niagara County Community Health Workgroup. Its purpose is to identify priority areas to build a plan to improve the health of our communities.

This workgroup is now conducting a collaborative community health assessment to understand the health needs and concerns of local communities.

"We aim to discover the best ways to serve our citizens and improve the health of Niagara County residents," Public Health

Director Daniel Stapleton said.

As part of the community health assessment, the Niagara County Community Health Workgroup is asking Niagara County residents to take a few minutes to complete the confidential community health survey, which is online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Niagara2022>. The web link is also available on the NCDOH website at [www.niagaracounty.com/health](http://www.niagaracounty.com/health).

"We want feedback from the people who live here, so that our priorities are aligned with what's important to you," Stapleton said. "We want to know what matters to our communities, and we urge all Niagara County residents to complete the health survey."

Those with additional questions or concerns regarding the

community health assessment or survey can contact Public Health Educator Cathy Hoy-Patterson at 716-278-1698.

### NIMAC at 'Coffee with Chris'

Niagara Military Affairs Council (NIMAC) Executive Director Holly Curcione will join Niagara County Legislator Chris Voccio at "Coffee with Chris" at 9 a.m. Saturday, April 9.

"Our guest speakers have added a great new dynamic to these events, and I know Holly Curcione will have a lot of interesting things to say," Voccio said.

"Coffee with Chris" is held at Cristoforo Colombo Society at 2223 Pine Ave. Voccio brings Tim Hortons coffee. No reservations are required.

For more information, call 716-696-0086.

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