



Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update February 23, 2021



COVID-19 UPDATES

- I want to start by recognizing that yesterday, this country surpassed 500,000 deaths from COVID-19 -- a truly unimaginable number. In under a year, we lost about the same number of Americans to this virus as to those killed in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam combined. I hope we all can honor the memories of those who died by continuing to do what is necessary to drive these numbers down even further as we await additional vaccines.
- The seven-day average for confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Jersey is down 6% from a week ago and 40% from a month ago, and the rate of transmission is .86. As always, more detailed information about statewide numbers is available on the NJ COVID-19 Dashboard.
- Due to the ongoing favorable trends, Governor Murphy announced some additional easing of restrictions this week that include increased capacity for sports and entertainment venues, increased spectator numbers for collegiate sports, and increased capacity for religious services. Full details can be found at <https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/announcements/all-announcements/governor-murphy-announces-increased-capacity-limits-for-religious-services-and-large-sports-and-entertainment-venues-and-spectators-for-collegiate-sporting-events>.
- On the vaccination front, New Jersey has administered 1,713,580 doses to date. I continue to receive questions from frustrated residents -- rightfully so -- about the vaccination rate in Union County. I share the view that the County should be doing better, but the reality is that the surrounding counties have larger and more vaccination sites. For example, Morris and Middlesex have the mega sites and Essex has four county-sponsored sites. The State did not approve a mega site in Union County. And while Summit Medical Group was vaccinating many Union County residents, their allocation has been decreased so they are now doing fewer.

Our local health department has let the County know that we are willing and eager to do whatever we can to partner with them to get shots into arms. As I've mentioned previously, we have applied to be a local vaccine provider but the application is still on hold pending an increase in supply. We are, however, moving forward with logistical planning for a site in Westfield so we can start vaccinating as soon as there is supply available to us.

In addition, I am thrilled to see the resourcefulness and community-oriented mindset of some resident volunteers come together in an effort to coordinate a plan to assist Westfield's most vulnerable residents in obtaining vaccination appointments and securing transportation. Representatives from Lifelong Westfield, the MLK Jr. Association of Westfield, the Westfield Community Center, the Westfield Neighborhood Council, and Police Chief Battiloro met today with our Health Department's Vulnerable Populations Coordinator to see how we can collectively best assist those in need. I will report more as additional details become available, and we may be asking for additional community volunteers for assistance in securing vaccination appointments.