



Public Health Statement – President Gallagher
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
May 10, 2021

As of today, more than 9,900,000 vaccines have been administered in Illinois, representing approximately 56% of residents aged 16 and older receiving at least the first dose. Over 80% of Illinois residents age 65 and older have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. More than 4.5 million Illinois residents have been fully vaccinated, representing over 35% of the population.

It appears that the vaccination rates have had a positive effect on statewide and regional reopening metrics, including hospital capacity, mortality, and new cases. Both regionally and statewide, hospital admissions are decreasing, hospitalized patients with COVID-19 are decreasing, and daily diagnosed cases are decreasing. Statewide, the average ICU bed availability is hovering just above the 20% threshold, however regionally that percentage is just below the 20% threshold. Sadly, the daily mortality rate has increased slightly over the last 28 days.

Last week, the governor announced that the entire state would move into the “Bridge” transition period this Friday, May 14. Governor Pritzker also announced that, as long as the statewide and regional metrics remain stable or improve, the state may fully re-open as early as June 11, which is when the 28-day monitoring requirement in the Bridge Phase will expire.

The Bridge transition between Phases 4 and 5 allows for increased capacity limits, generally to 60%, and increased business operations as we adjust to the new normal that Phase 5 promises when capacity limits are removed altogether. Individuals with proof of full vaccination — defined as 14 days after receiving a final vaccine dose — or a negative COVID-19 test 1-3 days prior to an event, do not count against capacity limits. For more information on the Bridge Transition Phase and its capacity limits, visit the state’s COVID-19 webpage at <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/bridge-phase>

The vaccine is now widely available at state and county vaccination sites, hospitals, health centers, and pharmacies. Vaccines will soon be available through primary care physicians, as well.

As a reminder, all Illinois residents age 16 and older are now eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Today, US regulators approved the Pfizer vaccine for children aged 12 and up. Vaccines for this younger age group could begin as early as Wednesday when a federal vaccine advisory committee is expected to issue recommendations for the 12-15 year old age group. Of course, the decision to get the vaccine is a personal one. If you are still deciding whether or not to get the vaccine, please talk to your doctor or other trusted health care professional for guidance.

Once you are fully vaccinated, the CDC advises you can gather indoors with other fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart. For more CDC guidance on the dos and don’ts when fully vaccinated, visit the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html> On the whole, though, just use common sense.

The governor’s recent announcements fill us with hope as we look forward to summer. Please continue to support our businesses by shopping locally and visiting the French Market on Sundays, between 9am and 1 pm. We are almost there.