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## We are advocating for you.

Covid-19 continues to be a major public health concern, but with the vaccine rollout underway relief is on the horizon. For many in our community, underlying health conditions and weakened immune systems make the threat of the virus even greater. Because of this, many of our members are understandably eager to receive the vaccine. Since last spring, DSAWM has been sharing resources with and advocating on behalf of our community to ensure individuals with Down syndrome do not fall behind in the pandemic response.

### Here are the advocacy steps we have taken:

1. Last April, **DSAWM signed a joint statement** with eight other local disability organizations advocating for nondiscriminatory healthcare for persons with disabilities. This statement was sent to Spectrum Health, Mercy Health, Metro Health, and the Kent County Health Department.
2. Last December, **DSAWM supported a letter distributed by NDSS and LuMind IDSC** to MDHHS Director Robert Gordon advocating for individuals with Down syndrome to be prioritized in the vaccine distribution process. Shortly thereafter, **on December 23, 2020, the CDC added Down syndrome to the list of at-risk persons.** As a result, people with Down syndrome are now included in Phase 1C of Michigan's vaccine distribution plan. The state is currently in Phase 1B--vaccinating all residents aged 65+ and frontline workers.
3. Currently, DSAWM is in conversation with two county health departments and Spectrum Health to advocate for vaccine prioritization for our community and access the most up-to-date information regarding vaccine distribution to share with our members.

Per our most recent conversation with the CEO of Barry-Eaton District Health Department, county health departments are working closely with the state to ensure those with Down syndrome are included in the next phase (Phase 1C) of vaccine distribution. Vaccine supply for the state's current phase, Phase 1B, are limited and being prioritized for residents aged 65+ and frontline workers at this time. The CEO asked that we share with our community that she thanks you for your patience and asks that you continue to do your part in social distancing, staying home, and wearing a mask.

We will continue to advocate on our community's behalf and will promptly share with you any updates that we receive which may be beneficial and informative. If you have specific questions about your or your loved one's vaccine eligibility, please visit **[vaccinatewestmi.com](https://www.vaccinatewestmi.com)** or **contact your local health department**. Stay safe!

**Helpful Resources:**

- [LuMind IDSC](#) maintains and updates a comprehensive resource guide as well as shares up-to-date medical information related to covid-19 and Down syndrome
- [Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group-USA Vaccine Position Statement](#)
- [Michigan Vaccine Distribution Plan](#)
- [Michigan Vaccine Registration Information](#)
  - Some members have had success speaking with a health representative about vaccine eligibility by contacting Spectrum Health at 833-755-0696.
- Recently, [California clarified vaccine qualifications and are now counting residents with Down syndrome, family caregivers, CLS workers, etc. as essential.](#) Many want Michigan to follow suit. Yesterday, a [Michigan petition](#) was started to Governor Whitmer and state representatives to follow suit. In order to sign on, text **SIGN POQDDK** to the number **50409**. You will then be asked to answer a few questions to identify your local representative.

*All resources listed can also be found at [dsawm.org/covid19](https://dsawm.org/covid19) and will be shared weekly in our both our programming email and newsletter.*

