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County of Berks – Press Release

County of Berks approves partnership with Penn State Health to reopen the Berks Cares Vaccine Center

Reading, PA— 10/21/2021 — The County of Berks is happy to announce a new public health partnership with Penn State Health to reopen the Berks Cares Vaccine Center in Muhlenberg Township on October 27. The Berks County Commissioners approved an agreement with Penn State Health to provide professional, medical personnel to staff and operate the community vaccination center to create a centralized location for residents to continue to get COVID-19 vaccinations as booster and third doses become available. In this new partnership, the County is providing the facility and will help promote the Berks Vaccine Center while Penn State Health will supply the vaccine and staff and manage all site operations.

“With the County’s continued dedication to serving our residents and Penn State Health’s considerable resources, this partnership is a natural solution to ensure the Berks County community has access to vaccinating services for the long term,” Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt said.

The Berks Cares Vaccine Center, located in the North Reading Plaza, 5370 Allentown Pike in Muhlenberg Township, will open on Wednesday, October 27, and offer the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines by appointment only. The center will initially be open Wednesday through Saturday each week with 100 appointments available each day. Hours will vary. Residents can learn more about the Berks Cares Vaccine Center and find a link to the Penn State Health online scheduling portal at www.doyourpartberks.com/vaccinecenter. A call center is also available at 844-774-8883.

“We are excited to partner with the county and eager to offer our community this vital health service,” said Jim Bennett, senior vice president and chief operating officer for Penn State Health St. Joseph. “Our purpose is to provide boosters and third doses of the COVID vaccine to as many people as possible, as efficiently as possible.”

The Berks County Vaccine Center was previously operated from May to July in partnership with Berks Community Health Center (BCHC). The partnership with BCHC was extremely successful, but due to their size and operating model, BCHC could not commit to the necessary staffing to continue to operate the vaccine center while still maintaining their important service to the community in their other roles. BCHC remains committed to offering the vaccine through their health centers as well as pop up clinics throughout the county.

Penn State Health has been offering third doses and booster shots at their other facilities to eligible patients to help increase their protection against COVID-19. A third dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine is part of the primary vaccine series that some immunocompromised patients need to have a better response to the vaccination. Booster shots provide an additional layer of protection as the initially sufficient immune response to the vaccine wanes over time.

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster is available for adults at highest risk for COVID-19 who received their second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at least six months ago. The Pfizer vaccine booster dose is not authorized at this time for anyone under the age of 18, regardless of medical condition or occupation.

Residents can sign up for email updates about the Berks Cares Vaccine Center or find other COVID-19 information and vaccine opportunities in Berks County at www.doyourpartberks.com.

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