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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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Increasing vaccination rate, lower COVID prevalence prompts MDHHS to roll back mandatory testing for agricultural and food processing employees

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) [has rescinded its order requiring COVID-19 testing](#) for agricultural employees. This change is being made in light of increasing vaccination rates; declining COVID-19 cases; expanded access to testing and vaccinations; and enhanced housing and worker protections currently in effect to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

“With COVID-19 transmission numbers low and increasing vaccination rates, we are removing the requirement for testing for these workers,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “The most important tool we have is the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine and we encourage everyone to join the nearly 62% of Michiganders who have already been vaccinated as soon as possible.”

MDHHS recently awarded six contracts totaling nearly \$60 million to the help [improve COVID-19 vaccination access for high-risk populations](#) and settings across Michigan, including for seasonal agricultural workers. In addition, partnerships have been created with Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers, employers [and communities](#) to meet workers where they are and provide vaccination, testing and support to keep workers and families safe. This includes vaccinations offered by the Michigan Primary Care Association (MPCA).

“The Michigan Primary Care Association in partnership with our member Health Centers have built a successful partnership with the state, farm operators, local health departments, workers and communities to meet workers where they are and provide vaccination and testing,” said Dennis Litos, MPCA interim chief executive. “Health Centers are proud to provide health care to farm workers at the Health Center location or at the mobile unit’s location to deliver the safe and effective vaccination right at the farm.”

As part of protecting the state’s workforce from COVID-19, the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) issued [updated emergency rules](#) on June 22 that align with federal guidance. These rules allow employers to use their best judgment in determining whether to maintain daily health screenings, face covering

requirements and social distancing requirements. A process for workers to report health and safety concerns in the workplace also exists, with additional information available at Michigan.gov/MIOSHAComplaint.

"We have made great progress in containing COVID-19 in our state and we continue to provide critical workplace protections more focused on areas of increased COVID-19 risk," said Michigan COVID-19 Workplace Safety Director Sean Egan. "In non-health care settings, it's important that all employers recognize that they have a general duty to provide a safe workplace."

Finally, other protections for agricultural workers remain in effect. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's [February 25, 2021, emergency rules](#) continues to require that agricultural laborer housing camps establish COVID-19 preparedness and response plans, and provide quarantine housing for workers who were exposed to COVID-19, among other protections.

"I am thankful for the steps taken by our food and agriculture community to safeguard the health of this vital workforce throughout the course of the pandemic," said MDARD Director Gary McDowell. "Keeping the established response plan requirements for this growing season provides our growers and processors guidance should a positive employee be identified."

Additional guidance is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for [Agriculture Workers and Employers](#) as well as information on [Vaccinating Migrant/Migratory and Seasonal Food and Agriculture Workers](#).

The latest information about COVID-19 is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

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