

# COVID precautions from the DCHD as part of 2020 election process

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The March 17, 2020 primary election process taught Douglas County Clerk & Recorder Judi Pollock a thing or two, coming on the cusp of the COVID-19 pandemic changing life in Illinois and the world. With the virus still very much in play as the Nov. 3, 2020 general election approaches, Pollock and staff are following Ill. Dept. of Public Health polling place guidelines in making sure Douglas County registered

voters (11,779 as of Sept. 21) have safe options for casting their ballots.

Sanitation kits -- which include masks, gloves, hand sanitizers and sanitation wipes -- have been purchased for all 17 precincts. Protective plastic guards, 30 inches wide and 36 inches high, will be on election judge tables, and signage at each polling place will let voters know masks are requested for entry into the facility. Directional signage will instruct voters on where to enter and exit the buildings, and while a single

touch screen will be available at each site as required by law, use of paper ballots will be encouraged. Pens to mark ballots will be sanitized between each use.

Don't want to risk crowds by voting in person at your polling place on Election Day? There are several options to accommodate that preference. Early voting in Douglas County started Sept. 24, with the county clerk's office open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Pollock said only one person at a time will be

allowed in the clerk's office to have their ballot printed, and the ballot casting will likely be done in the hallway. Masks are required to enter the courthouse, with the county clerk's office located on the second floor.

Voting by mail is another possibility, and Pollock notes her office has already fielded over 1,000 more such requests than is typical at this point in the election cycle. She urges voters using this option to return their ballots as soon as possible, whether by U.S. mail or putting them

in a ballot drop box located outside the courthouse entrance. The drop box will be checked daily and is under security surveillance 24 hours a day.

The increased financial burden related to these protective measures is being offset by several grants, according to Pollock. Douglas County received a \$33,000 federal CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) grant for election expenses, as well as a \$10,000 state grant to be used for postage costs. Anheuser

Busch is providing additional hand sanitizer for polling places, including Douglas County, and IEMA (Illinois Emergency Management Agency) has contributed masks for any voters needing them at county polling sites.

For additional information regarding the Nov. 3, 2020 general election, go online to [www.douglascountyil.com](http://www.douglascountyil.com) and click on the Clerk & Recorder tab on the left-hand side, then click Election Information.

# Caregivers Support Program at the LifeSpan center takes care of you

Are you providing care to someone that is a Veteran and need help? Then the General Caregiver Support Program is for you!

All caregivers who provide personal care services to Veterans enrolled in Veterans Affairs healthcare have access to a Program of General Caregiver Support. The Caregiver Support Program is focused on four core elements: Education and Support, Collaboration

and Partnerships, Outreach, Resources and Referrals.

Caregivers who enroll in the Program of General Caregiver Support have access to education and training, including courses at local veteran medical centers. In addition, caregivers can participate in support services and take advantage of veteran home and community-based care. No formal application is required to enroll in the Program

of General Caregiver Support. Contact the Veteran Caregiver Support Line for a referral or your local VA Caregiver Support Coordinator directly. Complete a brief intake process. If eligible, enroll in services that meet your needs.

As stated on the program website, the mission of the Program of General Caregiver Support is to promote the health and wellbeing of Caregivers who care

for our nation's Veterans through education, resources, support, and services aiming to serve Caregivers with respect and excellence.

Eligibility is determined by the Veteran's need and requirements of personal care services to, or if they require supervision and protection based on symptoms of residuals of neurological impairment or injury, and require the assistance of a family caregiver to live

safely in their home setting. This program also provides care for veterans with dementia, memory difficulties, PTSD, serious brain injuries, or any other illness.

If you are a caregiver and looking to see if you qualify you can visit: VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers website at [https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support\\_benefits.asp](https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp).

You may also con-

tact your LifeSpan Center to speak with a Caregiver Advisor and find out more about the VA Caregiver Program or other local services that may be available. Please call the LifeSpan Center at 217-639-5150 and leave a message. We are currently working remotely but are returning calls in a timely manner. You may also email our Caregiver Advisor at [jshobe@lifespancer.org](mailto:jshobe@lifespancer.org).

# October is College Changes Everything Month in the state of Illinois

October is College Changes Everything® (CCE) Month in Illinois, when students are completing both their college applications and financial aid forms at the same time. Launched by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) five years ago, ISAC and its partners have extended the month-long campaign to provide an intensive schedule of free college and financial aid planning support to students and families from Labor Day through Thanksgiving. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) and the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid for the 2021-22 school year will both be available on October 1, 2020.

This year is unique in many ways. The Covid-19 pandemic has upended not only how education is delivered, but how students are thinking—or perhaps re-thinking—plans for post-secondary education.

"We know that families across the country are suffering financial and other consequences of the pandemic, and that it has disproportionately impacted low income communities and communities of color," said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of ISAC. "We want students and families to know that there are many options available so students

don't have to put their plans on hold and can still pursue college or other postsecondary education. The first step is exploring those options and completing the FAFSA or other financial aid forms so they don't miss out on potential funding available for the postsecondary path they choose. There is free assistance across the state to help them do that."

This year is also unique in Illinois because it marks the first year of the state's new FAFSA mandate. All graduating seniors attending public high schools in Illinois must complete the FAFSA, or if they are ineligible for federal aid, the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma. (A parent, guardian, or the student – if 18 or emancipated – may opt out for any reason by filing a nonparticipation form.) Making FAFSA completion part of an expectation for high school graduation can increase awareness of resources available to help students afford education or training after high school, perhaps helping some decide to attempt college when they might not otherwise have done so.

The FAFSA is the form that determines eligibility for federal, most state, and some institutional financial aid. Because most state

financial aid, such as the Monetary Award Program (MAP grant) is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, students are encouraged to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1 to have the opportunity to receive all the financial aid for which they might be eligible.

The 2021-22 Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid will also be available on October 1, after 12 pm. The Alternative Application provides a pathway to MAP grants for some undocumented students or for transgender students who may be ineligible for federal student aid because they did not register for selective service. It's important to note that most students will continue to complete the FAFSA, rather than the Alternative Application, in order to determine their eligibility for federal and state financial aid. If a student is unsure which application to complete, they can contact the financial aid office of the college or university they plan on attending, or an ISACorps member, for assistance. Pre-screening questions on the Alternative Application itself can also assist a student in determining which application to complete.

Activities and resources available to help with college planning and financial aid

CCE activities include free financial aid completion and college application workshops, where students and families can fill out college applications and/or complete their FAFSA or Alternative Application right then and there, with direct assistance from college and financial aid experts. While some schools may be providing in-person college application and financial aid workshops, this year as a result of the pandemic ISAC will be providing all support virtually, through online group events as well as one-on-one assistance by phone, text, email or WebEx video-conferencing. Students and parents can check directly with their high schools for events within or sponsored by their own school. ISAC will be hosting Facebook live events as well as other online events in English and Spanish throughout the fall. For a continuously updated list of ISAC virtual events, visit [studentportal.isac.org/events](http://studentportal.isac.org/events).

Students and families can get free virtual one-on-one assistance from the ISACorps member in their area. The ISACorps are recent college graduates who are extensively trained to serve as near peer mentors to high school students navigating the college and financial aid process. Find your local ISACorps member at stu-

[dentportal.isac.org/isacorps](http://studentportal.isac.org/isacorps).

Personalized assistance is also available through ISAC College Q&A ([isac.org/collegeqa](http://isac.org/collegeqa)), a free text messaging service where students can get answers to their college and financial aid questions sent directly to their phones. The award-winning ISAC Student Portal ([isac.org/studentportal](http://isac.org/studentportal)) offers free online tools and resources for students, as well as short videos about college planning and financial aid. Check out the Now Playing section of the student portal for our new ISAC College Minute videos, where we answer a college or financial aid question in—you guessed it—one minute! ISAC also offers assistance through the agency's call center, 800-899-4722 (ISAC), and its Online Chat service.

ISAC supports high schools and counselors who would like to participate in CCE fall activities with a downloadable toolkit, materials and event support. Find out more at [collegechangeeverything.org/ccemonth](http://collegechangeeverything.org/ccemonth).

## About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on

education and financial aid for students and their families—giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. Find us at [isac.org](http://isac.org) and follow us on Facebook @ILStudentAssistance, Twitter, on Instagram @ISACfinaid and on YouTube.

## About College Changes Everything

College Changes Everything® (CCE) is a college access movement that recognizes that college can be a life changing experience not only for students, but also for families and communities. In Illinois and across the nation, those who obtain education beyond high school not only see a significant impact on their potential career prospects and future salary, but also change levels of poverty, life expectancy, crime and obesity rates in their communities. CCE is an essential part of helping Illinois reach its goal of increasing the proportion of adults in the state with high quality degrees or credentials to 60% by 2025. Find out more and join the conversation at [collegechangeeverything.org](http://collegechangeeverything.org).

# IL Dept. on Aging encourages older adults to get their 2020-2021 seasonal flu vaccines

Don't wait, as it could be too late

The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) is encouraging all older Illinoisans that getting a flu vaccine during the 2020-2021 flu season is especially important in order to protect yourself and the people around you from the flu. Doing so will also help reduce the strain on healthcare systems, keeping hospital beds and other medical resources available for COVID-19 patients.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, the elderly and people with chronic health problems are much more likely to develop serious complications after influenza infection than are young, healthier people. This risk is due in part to changes in immune defenses with increasing age. While flu seasons vary in severity, during

most seasons, people 65 years of age and older bear the greatest burden of severe flu disease. In recent years, for example, it's estimated that between 70% and 85% of seasonal flu-related deaths have occurred in individuals 65 years of age and older, and between 50% and 70% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people in this age group, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Flu vaccination is especially important for older Illinoisans, individuals with underlying medical conditions, and persons with disabilities because they have an increased risk of developing serious complications from the flu; coupled with being at higher risk for contracting COVID -19. Flu vaccines are updated each season

as needed to keep up with changing viruses. Also, immunity wanes over a year so annual vaccination is needed to ensure the best possible protection against flu.

"According to the experts, getting a flu shot will increase your chances of staying healthy and staying out of the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Paula Basta, Director of IDoA. "This is another instance of being able to plan for what you can and focus on things you can control; take precautions now so you don't regret it later."

The best way to protect against the flu and its potentially serious complications is with a flu vaccine. Find flu vaccines in your area with Vaccine Finder. Most insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid cover one

flu shot per flu season. Beneficiaries pay nothing for a flu shot if their doctor or other qualified healthcare provider accepts Medicare payment for giving the shot. Always seek the advice of your healthcare provider before accepting medical treatment.

IDoA, its 13 Area Agencies on Aging, and 55 Care Coordination Units are working to ensure that services provided by the agency are never interrupted. If you or an older family member, friend, or neighbor need assistance, please visit [www.illinois.gov/aging](http://www.illinois.gov/aging) or contact the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (hearing impaired call 888-206-1327) or by email [aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov](mailto:aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov).

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