



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Department of Health Joins St. Luke's University Health Network, Muslim Aid Initiative to Discuss Vaccine Hesitancy**

**ALLENTOWN, PA** – Pennsylvania Department of Health Acting Secretary Alison Beam today joined leaders from St. Luke's University Health Network and Rabiul Chowdhury from the Muslim Aid Initiative to talk about vaccine hesitancy among minority groups across the state, including in the Muslim community.

"As more vaccine is becoming available across the state, and more Pennsylvanians are becoming eligible, we know there are individuals who are hesitant to get it, or still have questions about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine — and that is okay," Acting Secretary Beam said. "We are continuously working to provide information to the public about the COVID-19 vaccine to ensure everyone has the proper information to make a decision on their own. The vaccine is safe, effective and has gone through extensive clinical trials. Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available, and vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed."

The vaccines that are available now have made it through extensive clinical trials to determine their safety and effectiveness. These trials were conducted according to the rigorous standards set by the federal government and will undergo intensive safety monitoring to continue to ensure the vaccines are safe.

All providers are directed to monitor patients for at least 15 minutes after receiving the vaccine to ensure supports are available in case of reaction.

"As the leading COVID vaccinator in central-eastern Pennsylvania, St. Luke's University Health Network is proud to announce that it has administered its 200,000<sup>th</sup> vaccination," Frank Ford, St. Luke's Sacred Heart Campus President said. "Currently, the Network is vaccinating up to 4,000 people a day at 11 hospital-based sites across the greater Lehigh Valley. This approach makes getting the vaccine safe for anyone who experiences an adverse reaction, since each hospital is equipped with a fully-functional emergency department. St. Luke's vaccination program, which runs seven days a week, has helped to make Lehigh and Northampton counties among the most vaccinated Pennsylvania counties with populations over 100,000."

St. Luke's has partnered with Lehigh Valley Muslim Community Activists, the Ortiz Ark Foundation, the Unidos Foundation, Promise Neighborhood of the Lehigh Valley and Lehigh on the Horizon along with many other community organizations such as churches, the Hispanic Center and the NAACP to reach other racial and ethnic minority populations and meet Pennsylvanians where they are.

The Muslim Aid Initiative has also done extensive work to help not only with vaccine hesitancy in the Muslim community, but to also distribute vaccine through a local vaccine clinic and help with other COVID-19 efforts throughout the pandemic, such as distributing Personal Protective Equipment to medical personnel and local residents, supplying and delivering groceries to the community, and proactively hosting events to mitigate the impact of the virus.

"We consistently serve all members of the local community, regardless of race, religion, or socioeconomic status," Rabiul Chowdhury, founder of the Muslim Aid Initiative said. "In fact, at the onset of COVID-19, we focused on providing masks and gloves to the homeless, elderly, churches, temples, mosques, and other community centers. The purpose of the Muslim Aid Initiative is to disseminate accurate health information and resources to communities in the Greater Philadelphia Region. We are determined to keep our community strong and continue to protect the most vulnerable among us through education and service."

**While vaccine supply from the federal government remains limited, the Department of Health is working to ensure the vaccine is provided in a way that is ethical, equitable and efficient. To keep Pennsylvanians informed about vaccination efforts:**

- The [Your Turn](#) tool provides a way to register to be alerted when it's your turn to be vaccinated.
- A [commonwealth COVID-19 vaccination guide](#) explains the current process for getting one. Pennsylvanians with questions about the vaccination process can call the Department of Health hotline at 1-877-724-3258.
- [Vaccine provider map](#) to find a COVID-19 vaccine provider near you.
- All of the locations that received vaccine and how much they have received can be found on the [COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution webpage](#).
- [Vaccine dashboard data](#) can also be found on the website to find more information on the doses administered and showcase demographic information.
- Pennsylvanians can provide feedback on the [Pennsylvania COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan](#) by clicking on the Plan Feedback Form square under Popular Vaccine Topics [here](#).
- Frequently asked questions can be found [here](#).

**The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:**

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.
- Download the COVID Alert PA app and make your phone part of the fight. The free app can be found in the [Google Play Store](#) and the [Apple App Store](#) by searching for “covid alert pa”.

### **Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics**

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)
- [Photos of the state's lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)
- [Community preparedness and procedures materials](#)

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Barry Ciccocioppo, [ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov)

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