



For Immediate Release: 03/12/2021
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North Country Responds: Regional COVID19 Update 03/12/21

The North Country Health Consortium (NCHC), as the North Country's Regional Public Health Network, is committed to providing the community with regular updates on COVID-19 response in the North Country.

What happened last week:

Teacher vaccinations are underway! North Country regional partners have hit the ground running, ironing out details and scheduling for K-12 school staff clinics across School Administrative units (SAUs) in the region.

Conversations between the Public Health Network (PHN), local hospital officials, municipalities, and SAUs had begun in the weeks leading up to the anticipated release of the State's Phase 2A guidance. When regions got the green light that they could start scheduling 2A vaccinations beginning the 12th, staff clinics started that very day for the Berlin school district and the next day, March 13, for the Monroe, White Mountains Regional and Groveton school districts. These clinics were conducted by Androscoggin Valley Hospital (AVH) and Coos County Family Health Services (CCFHS) in Berlin, Littleton Fire & Rescue, and Weeks Medical Center in Lancaster.

In addition to K-12 school staff, Phase 2A also includes staff of childcare programs, Head Starts, and youth recreational camps. A multitude of approaches will be used to deliver vaccines to these groups of staff working with youth, including opening up slots in clinics for school district staff and 1B clinics, as well as the development of separate events.

Next on deck for vaccination is Phase 2B, which includes New Hampshire residents aged 50 – 64 years. Vaccine appointments for this group will be available for registration beginning March 22, with the first of these clinics starting March 25.



The PHN continued development of a plan to vaccinate homebound residents, convening with home health and human services partners across the region and working with the State to create a list of individuals identified as being homebound. Partners North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency and Coos County Family Health Services have already been able to get ahead of the State directive by identifying eligible individuals and providing home vaccinations for a portion of this population in late February and early March.

Moving forward with Phase 1B this week, the North Country Public Health Network held clinics to vaccinate residents in age-restricted housing units in Littleton and Bethlehem, as well as a programs and congregate living facilities serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Littleton and North Haverhill.

Thirty-one members of the Northern NH Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) unit were deployed as registrars, COVID screeners, vaccinators, post-vaccination observers, and materials managers to cover 42 shifts at regional clinics this week.

What you need to know:

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued the first set of public health recommendations for fully vaccinated people. Those who have been fully vaccinated can now visit with other fully vaccinated individuals indoors without wearing masks or keeping physical distance. They may also visit with unvaccinated individuals from a single household without masking and distancing. Mask wearing and social distancing is still recommended for the fully vaccinated when visiting with someone who is unvaccinated and at increased risk for severe COVID or who has an unvaccinated household member who is at increased risk. Additionally, following a known exposure to COVID, quarantining and testing is no longer required for the fully vaccinated if they are asymptomatic.

When are you considered fully vaccinated? **Two weeks after** your second dose vaccine, if you were vaccinated with a 2-dose series like Moderna or Pfizer OR **Two weeks after** you receive a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson.



If it has been less than 2 weeks since your shot, or if you still need to get the second dose of your vaccine, you are NOT fully vaccinated yet.

Relaxing guidelines are providing glimmers of “normal” and light at the end of the tunnel, one year into the pandemic. But we are not out of the woods yet.

We’re still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19. Everyone— including fully vaccinated people— should continue to wear masks and keep physical distance when in public, avoid crowds and medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings, get tested if experiencing COVID symptoms, and follow guidance issued by individual employers, the CDC, and health departments.

It is also important to remember that COVID vaccines have not yet been recommended for children, while studies with youth are ongoing. Although representative of nearly a quarter of the population at large, the youth sector is not expected to get vaccinated before the beginning of the school year in the Fall, which means continuing to follow COVID-safety precautions through the Summer and Fall will remain essential.

Shoutout to partners:

Getting the North Country vaccinated has certainly proven to take a village. Partners across the region have had a hand in standing up clinics and other vaccination efforts through the phases. Our shoutout this week goes out to the teams at Androscoggin Valley Hospital (AVH) and Coos County Family Health Services (CCFHS) in Berlin, Weeks Medical Center in Lancaster, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital (UCVH) in Colebrook, and Littleton Regional Healthcare (LRH). While hospital and North Country PHN partners have worked together in the planning, these hospitals have stepped up to lead Phase 2A vaccinations, taking the initiative to host a majority of the clinics in the region that cover staff from our K-12 schools and other childcare staff. Thank you to AVH, CCFHS, Weeks, UCVH and LRH!

The North Country Health Consortium (NCHC) is a non-profit public health organization based in Littleton that collaborates with health and human services providers serving northern New Hampshire. Please direct any questions regarding the regional response to COVID-19 to

North Country Responds COVID-19



North Country
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

NORTH COUNTRY
Public Health
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COVID19@NCHCNH.org. To reach the North Country COVID Response line for general inquiries, call (603)259-4369 during business hours, M-F from 8 am – 4:30 pm.

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CAPTION: At the Lane House in Littleton, a Northern NH Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteer reviews resident Karl's vaccine card, readying him for a COVID shot as part of efforts to vaccinate residents of age restricted housing units in Phase 1B. The North Country Health Consortium's North Country Public Health Network continues to coordinate with partners and roll out vaccine clinics. For more information about NCHC and local efforts, go to NCHCNH.org.