North Carolina Introduces COVID-19 County Alert System

State to work with key counties to bring numbers down

Raleigh

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Governor Roy Cooper and Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) announced a new COVID-19 County Alert System to pinpoint counties with the highest levels of viral spread and offer specific recommendations to bring numbers down. This system will help give local leaders another tool to understand how their county is faring and to make decisions about actions to slow viral spread. The map will be updated every four weeks.

To see Frequently Asked Questions on the alert system, visit the alert page (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=39781839&msgid=484226&act=20YB&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Ffiles.nc.gov*2Fcovid*2Fdocuments*2Fdashboard*2FCOVID-19-County-Alert-System-Report.pdf&cf=13425&v=052f1301afa0d6b7ff595e86de055474961d278cd1944475696f2aa5b907a935__;JSUlJSUlJQ!!HYmSToo!OAMlYiUz5LtPsKORAnyEtM3BOQ6WMg$).

“By pinpointing counties with high virus transmission and asking everyone in those counties to work with us and do more right now to slow the spread of the virus, we can succeed,” Governor Cooper said. “It can help bring down their case rates, keep their communities safer, save lives and keep their hospital systems working.”

“It’s going to take all of us working together to avoid tightening restrictions like so many states are now doing,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen. “The COVID-19 County Alert System gives North Carolinians an easy way to see how their county is doing and know what they can do protect their family and neighbors and slow the spread of this virus.”

The system uses metrics informed by the White House Coronavirus Task Force and North Carolina’s key metrics to categorize counties into three tiers:

Yellow: Significant Community Spread

Orange: Substantial Community Spread

Red: Critical Community Spread

Because no one metric provides a complete picture, the COVID-19 County Alert System uses a combination of three metrics: case rate, the percent of tests that are positive, and hospital impact within the county.

To be assigned to the red or orange tier, a county must meet the threshold for case rate for that tier AND the threshold for either percent positive OR hospital impact.

- Case Rate: The number of new cases in 14 days per 100,000 people
- Percent Positive: The percent of tests that are positive over 14 days
- Hospital Impact: A composite score based on the impact that COVID-19 has had on hospitals including percent of COVID-19 hospitalizations, COVID-19 related visits to the Emergency Department, staffed open hospital beds, and critical staffing shortages over 14 days

	Counties must meet this:	And meet one of these:	
	Case rate	Percent positive	Hospital Impact within the county
Critical (red)	>200/100k new cases in 14 days with at least 42 cases in 14 days.	>10%	**High Impact on county hospital(s)**
Substantial (orange)	101-200/100k new cases in 14 days with at least 21 cases in 14 days.	8-10%	**Moderate Impact on county hospital(s)**

Counties that do not meet criteria for red or orange are categorized as being in the yellow tier (significant community spread) and should continue to be vigilant to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

Recommended Actions

The Alert System includes recommendations for individuals, businesses, community organizations and public officials in every county, as well as specific stepped-up recommendations for orange and red counties.

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