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THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2021 - 00:00

Governor Cooper Announces Accelerated Timeline for Vaccination Eligibility

State launches public private partnership on vaccine equity

RALEIGH

Governor Roy Cooper and North Carolina Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D., announced today an accelerated timeline for moving to Groups 4 and 5 for vaccine eligibility with the rest of Group 4 eligible on March 31st and all adults eligible beginning April 7th. The move will allow the state and vaccine providers to continue to get vaccines into arms quickly and continue to reach underserved and historically marginalized populations. A new public private partnership, Healthier Together: Health Equity Action Network, will enhance the state's work to deliver equitable access to vaccines, and DHHS released a new biweekly equity data report to provide another avenue for

transparency.

“I’m grateful for North Carolinians who are taking this seriously and getting the shot when it’s their time and I’m encouraged that North Carolina will be able to open eligibility to all adults well ahead of the President’s May 1 goal,” said Governor Cooper.

Beginning on March 31, additional essential workers and people living in other congregate settings such as student dormitories will be eligible for vaccination. Essential workers include frontline workers who do not have to in person for work and those in a range of sectors such as construction, energy, financial services, public works and others as categorized by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=39781839&msgid=488465&act=20YB&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Fwww.cisa.gov*2Fsites*2Fdefault*2Ffiles*2Fpublications*2FECIW_4cf=13425&v=d18c9c7d2763b42b506b947ed3bcca755f4fbe5e021a2513ecf34bd705a95ccd__;JSUlJSUlJSU!!HYmSToo!PfNmpkVWso6hCWLCALqRhp6Y36RsTMa9WBRI5Sn93oPTmAzbUL-oZHZTgWW84MPMUXz3$). All North Carolinian adults will be eligible to be vaccinated beginning on April 7.

The accelerated timeline will allow the state to double down on its “fast and fair” approach to getting shots into arms. Healthier Together (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=39781839&msgid=488465&act=20YB&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Fcovid19.ncdhhs.gov*2Fvaccines*2Fnc-vaccine-strategy*2Fhealthier-together-health-equity-action-network&cf=13425&v=6624f89cce376a2bbbc3fa7538c12f6942a116898b00270a87ff2125e00451bd__;JSUlJSUl!!HYmSToo!PfNmpkVWso6hCWLCALqRhp6Y36RsTMa9WBRI5Sn93oPTmAzbUL-

oZHZTgWW84ODg_T3-$), a new public private partnership with the NC Counts Coalition, will help increase the number of individuals from historically marginalized populations that receive COVID-19 vaccinations and provide a foundation for a longer-term framework for health equity.

Healthier Together will implement strategies to increase access to vaccines to historically marginalized populations by conducting outreach and education efforts, coordinating local vaccine events at trusted and accessible locations, helping people schedule and get to vaccine appointments, providing on-site translation services, and helping ensure people get to second dose appointments.

“Our work will support the state’s ongoing priority to maximize the speed and efficiency of North Carolina’s COVID-19 vaccine distribution while adhering to its commitment to equity," said Stacey Carless, Executive Director of the NC Counts Coalition. “Through Healthier Together, we will begin working with the state to address and dismantle systemic and structural barriers to healthier equity.”

As part of this initiative, Healthier Together will provide grants to community-based organizations to do this work and hire regional health equity teams to support community-based organizations in their outreach and education efforts, help match vaccine providers with community-based organizations, and work with DHHS to ensure that communities have the vaccine supply, outreach, and transportation resources they need to get people vaccinated. The program is funded by federal COVID-19 dollars.

“Healthier Together is another embodiment of our commitment to equity,” said Secretary Cohen. “It brings together the expertise and

relationships of trusted community-based organizations with the policy tools and resources of state government to create a new partnership model to address vaccine equity."

The state's experience with the federally-supported site in Greensboro demonstrates that the principles guiding Healthier Together produce results. NCDHHS has partnered with grassroots, nonprofit, and community organizations on the ground to lead on outreach and facilitate appointments. The Department set aside half of all appointments for these trusted partners to schedule. To date, 22 percent of vaccinations at the Greensboro Community Vaccination Center have gone to Black/African American populations and 14 percent have gone to Hispanic/Latinx populations.

Throughout the pandemic, NCDHHS has relied upon data transparency, with a focus on disaggregating data by race and ethnicity, to keep itself and its partners accountable and to drive inform needed actions. A new report expands upon this work. *Promoting COVID-19 Vaccine Equity in North Carolina* (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=39781839&msgid=488465&act=20YB&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Fcovid19.ncdhhs.gov*2Fmedia*2F2388*2Fopen&cf=13425&v=02b616d0d9592aaba37228dd731618e1a7f6f444283dc4a8c68c474c638da350__;JSUlJSUl!!HYmSToo!PfNmpkVWso6hCWLCALqRhp6Y36RsTMa9WBRI5Sn93oPTmAzbUL-oZHZTgWW84Lflwgad$) reports the share of vaccinations in the past week going to Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and American Indian or Alaskan Native populations as well as key metrics for earning trust, embedding equity in vaccine operations, and promoting accountability through data transparency. The report also highlights best practices to promote equitable access to

vaccinations. It will be updated every two weeks.

North Carolina has been recognized nationally for its work to get COVID-19 vaccines to historically marginalized populations. North Carolina was named the only state to collect and publicly report race and ethnicity data for nearly 100% of vaccinations. According to the CDC, two-thirds of those vaccinated in North Carolina between December 14, 2020 and March 1, 2021 were from “highly” or “moderately” vulnerable communities, ranking the state in the top ten for equitable vaccine coverage. North Carolina was also featured in Bloomberg News for its data-driven approach to reducing disparities in vaccination rates.

For accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines, visit YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=39781839&msgid=488465&act=20YB&c=1346310&destination=http*3A*2F*2FYourSpotYourShot.nc.gov*2F&cf=13425&v=97ff1cf18594c93ac1971d5cd5ea656b85c73c1015b59c66aa2310525923bb19__;JSUlJQ!!HYmSToo!PfNmpkVWso6hCWLCALqRhp6Y36RsTMa9WBRI5Sn93oPTmAzbUL-oZHZTgWW84DeESYvH$).

The NC Counts Coalition is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization committed to building a healthy, just, and equitable North Carolina through cross-sector partnerships that advance systemic solutions for communities facing systemic barriers, including BIPOC communities, LGBTQ+, low wealth, immigrant, and other communities.

Resources

Deeper Give on Essential Workers Not Yet Vaccinated and Other

Group Living Settings (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=39781839&msgid=488465&act=20YB&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Fcovid19.ncdhhs.gov*2Fmedia*2F2238*2Fdownload&cf=13425&v=b17c2d9ebe5a41b7a3c37d9722c26981da788bc2ccb1eb1e27e92c784a04e05b__;JSUlJSUl!!HYmSToo!PfNmpkVWso6hCWLCALqRhp6Y36RsTMa9WBRI5Sn93oPTmAzbUL-oZHZTgWW84M0WtuGC$)

Healthier Together (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vaccines/nc-vaccine-strategy/healthier-together-health-equity-action-network)

Promoting COVID-19 Vaccine Equity in North Carolina (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=39781839&msgid=488465&act=20YB&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Fcovid19.ncdhhs.gov*2Fvaccines*2Fnc-vaccine-strategy*2Fhealthier-together-health-equity-action-network&cf=13425&v=6624f89cce376a2bbbc3fa7538c12f6942a116898b00270a87ff2125e00451bd__;JSUlJSUl!!HYmSToo!PfNmpkVWso6hCWLCALqRhp6Y36RsTMa9WBRI5Sn93oPTmAzbUL-oZHZTgWW84ODg_T3-$)

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