

NCAH Rural Hospital Conference

Responding to – and Recovering from – the COVID-19 Pandemic

NC Department of Health and Human Services

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Secretary

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Agenda

- **COVID-19 update & Lessons learned**
- **Recover Stronger - Our priorities**
- **Medicaid Transformation & Expansion**

Goals for North Carolina's COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Vaccines

Boosters

Masking

Save Lives



- Widespread Vaccine Access
- Transparent Communications
- Clear Messaging and Guidance
- Treatment Availability
- Convenient Testing
- Access to PPE
- Contact Tracing in High-Risk Settings

Protect Hospital Capacity



- Statewide Patient Coordination
- Regulatory Flexibilities
- Staffing Pool for Health Systems
- Non-Traditional Staffing Resources
- Federal Requests for Support
- Regular Communications
- Real-time monitoring of capacity

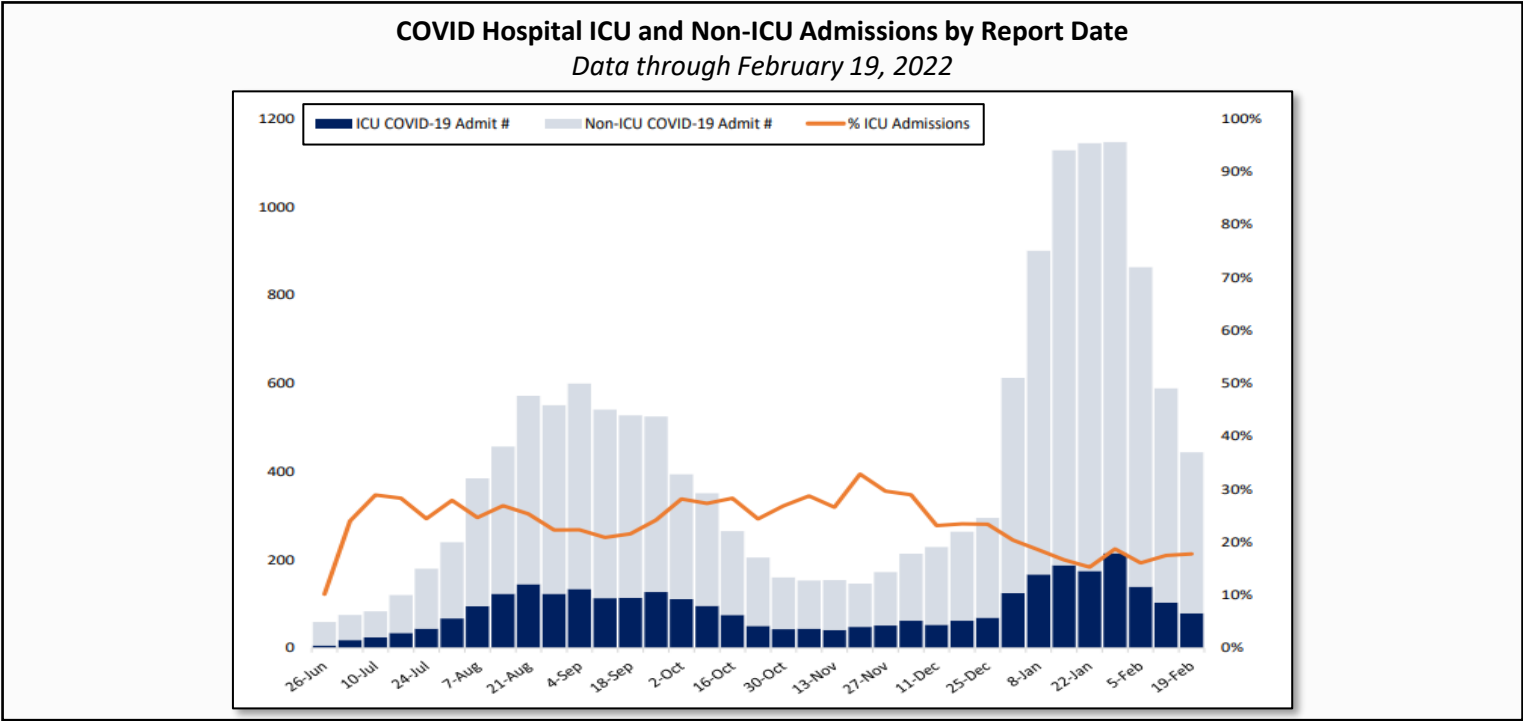
Keep Kids in the Classroom



- StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit
- COVID-19 Testing Program
- Frequent Communication and Coordination with Schools
- Monthly Meetings w/ State and Local Education Leaders
- N95 Mask Distribution

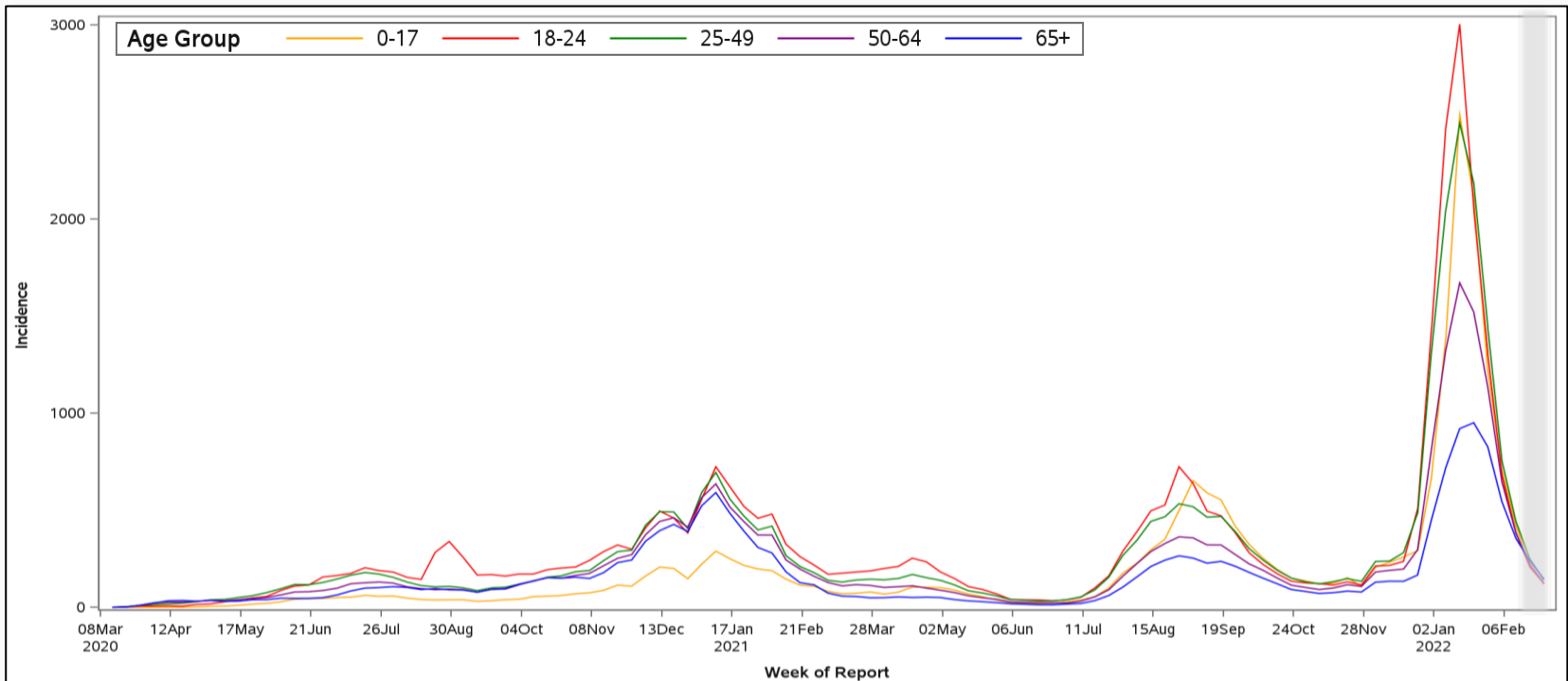
Hospital and ICU Trends

PHE Network hospital and ICU admissions decreased last week, while the percentage of patients with COVID-19 requiring ICU level of care remained stable.



Case Rates Continue to Decline

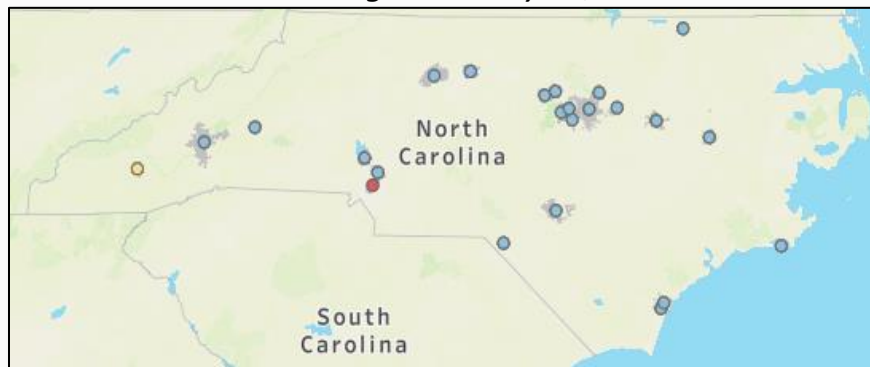
Case rates continue to converge for all age groups.



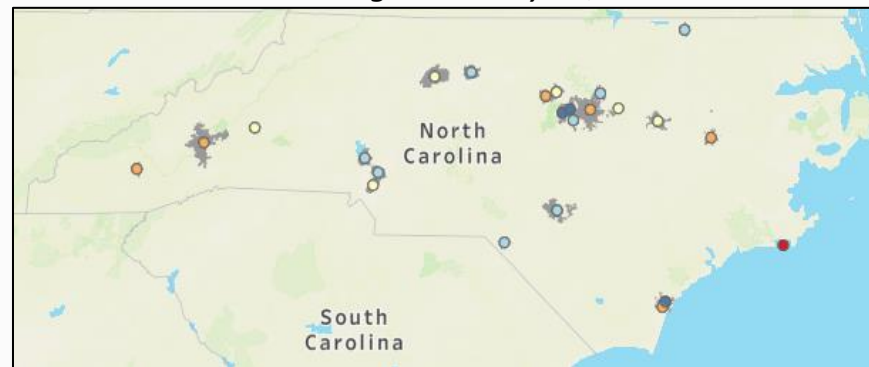
Wastewater Data Suggest Declining COVID Transmission

Concentrations of SARS-CoV-2 continue to decrease at most wastewater collection sites and are approximately in line with historical levels.

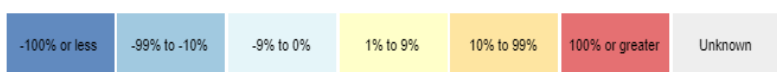
Current SARS-CoV-2 Wastewater Percent Change Category at NC Monitoring Sites
Data through February 16, 2022



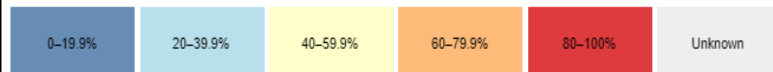
Current SARS-CoV-2 Wastewater Percentile Category at NC Monitoring Sites
Data through February 16, 2022



Color Legend ~ 15-Day Rate of Change



Color Legend ~ Percentiles



Equity Highlights

Measuring Community Impact (To Date)

1.7M+

Individuals served
by Community
Health Workers

480K+

NCCARE360 referrals
by Community Health
Workers

14K+

Individuals vaccinated
at Healthier Together
events

560K+

N95 masks
distributed by
Healthier Together

10K+

Food boxes delivered
through Support
Services Program 2.0

Leading with Equity

Building a Structure that Leads with Equity

- Hired Chief Health Equity Officer to oversee a new Office of Health Equity
- 2021-2023 strategic plan goals designed to advance health equity and reduce health disparities
- Launched Division of Child and Family Well-Being to close equity gaps amongst children and youth

Leveraging Funding to Lead with Equity

- Extending funding for community- and faith-based organizations through Healthier Together
- Offering interpretation/translation services at COVID-19 vaccine events
- Investing in foundational data infrastructure and skills to measure health disparities

Pillars to Build Upon

North Carolina's success has been driven by grounding ourselves in:

1. **Strong Collaborative Partnerships.** North Carolina's progress is the result of the collective efforts of government agencies, elected officials, business leaders from every industry, school officials, entertainment and sports leaders, health care providers, community leaders and individuals.
2. **Robust Data Infrastructure and Accountability.** Data drives an effective response, is essential to making progress on health equity, and relies upon modernizing information systems and data transparency
3. **Transparent Communications Focused on Earning Public Trust.** Communications in a time of crisis require transparency, managing of expectations, clear and understandable messages, actionable guidance, and partnership with trusted messengers.
4. **Adapting to Evolving Science and Research.** North Carolina has evolved its response based on the emerging science and lessons learned, focusing on strategies that are most effective at each stage of the pandemic

Recover Stronger

*These priorities and our work across the department are grounded in **whole-person health**, driven by **equity**, and responsive to the lessons learned responding to the greatest health crisis in more than a generation.*

Behavioral Health & Resilience



We need to offer services further upstream to build resiliency, invest in coordinated systems of care that **make mental health services easy to access** when and where they are needed and **reduce the stigma** around accessing these services.

Child & Family Wellbeing



We will work to ensure that North Carolina's children grow up safe, healthy and thriving in nurturing and resilient families and communities. **Investing in families and children's healthy development builds more resilient families, better educational outcomes and, in the long term, a stronger society.**

Strong & Inclusive Workforce



We will work to strengthen the **workforce that supports early learning, health and wellness by delivering services to North Carolina.** And we will take action to be an equitable workplace that lives its values and ensure that all people have the opportunity to be fully included members of their communities.

The health insurance coverage gap coupled with insufficient access to affordable care disproportionately impacts Historically Marginalized Populations who have also experienced worse outcomes than others under COVID-19. Medicaid expansion would help close the health insurance coverage gap.

Celebrating Together



Appalachian Regional Behavioral Health Hospital (ARBH)

- Appalachian Regional Healthcare System's new freestanding behavioral health hospital officially opened its doors on November 15, 2021 (the same number currently housed at Cannon Memorial Hospital)
- Expanded to 27-bed capacity on December 27, 2021
- Patients were able to begin self-presentation (walk-in) on December 27, 2021

Allegheny Memorial Hospital (AMH) Health Plex Redesign

- Reduced to 3 inpatient beds and 3 observation/swing beds
- In late 2021 a new state of the art Medical Office Building (MOB) was opened that consolidated ancillary services and outpatient clinics.
- Urgent care is part of the main hospital to facilitate efficient use of the ED, hospital beds and other services.



Chatham Hospital Opened New Maternity Center September 2020

- Chatham Hospital is proud to reverse the trend of many smaller, rural hospitals no longer delivering babies
- Chatham Hospital expects to deliver up to 120 babies during the first year
- The five-bed Maternity Care Center is designated to meet all the needs of low-risk mothers and newborns



NC Medicaid Managed Care

Vision

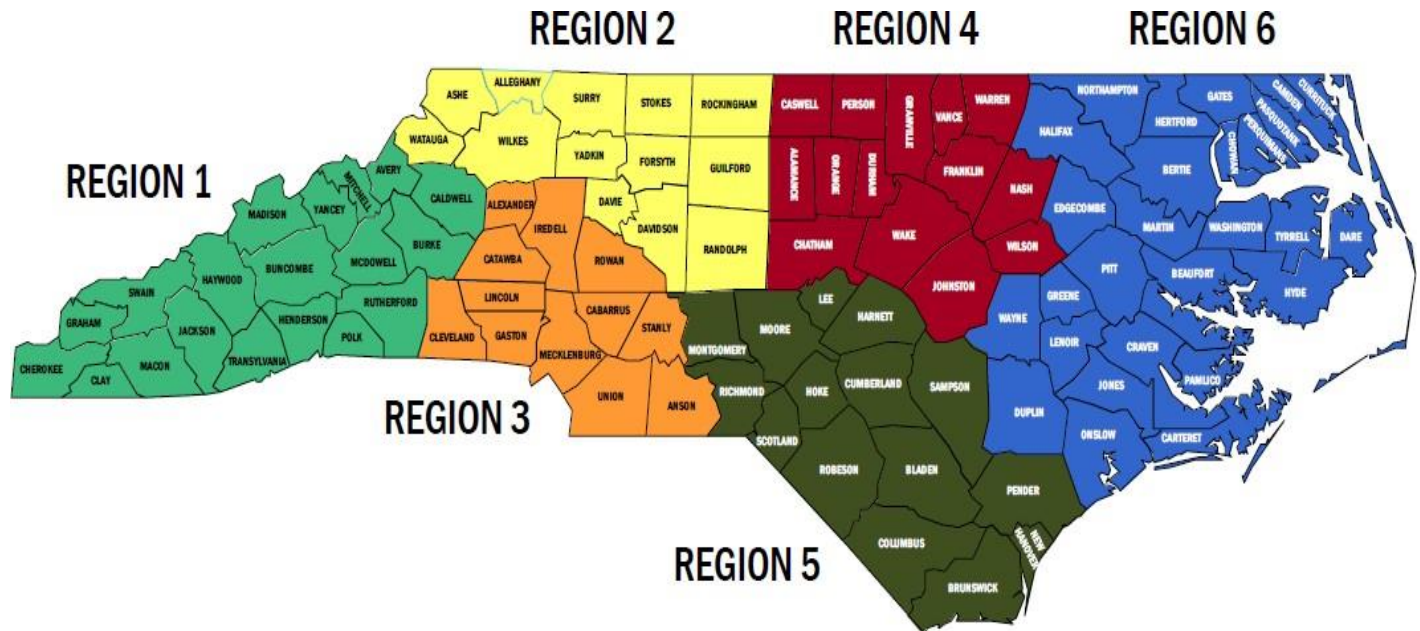
“To improve the health of North Carolinians through an innovative, whole-person centered, and well-coordinated system of care that addresses both the medical and non-medical drivers of health.”

Day 1 Priorities

Individuals get the care they need, and providers get paid

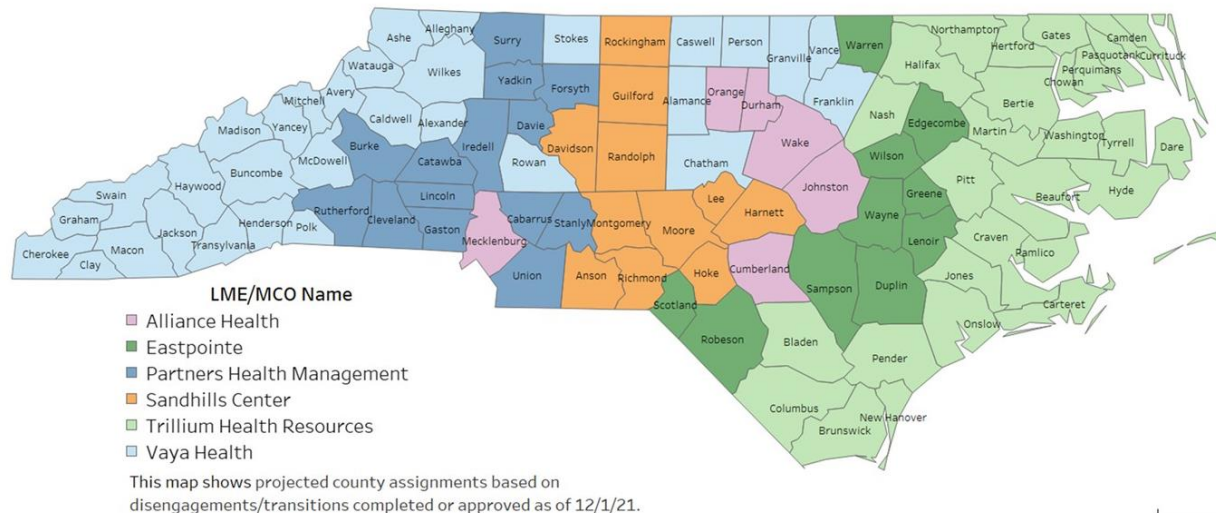
Transition to Managed Care Standard Plans

- About 1.7 million Medicaid beneficiaries enrolled in five plans
- Over 4,000 individuals enrolled with EBCI Tribal Option



Behavioral Health/IDD Tailored Plans

Regional Behavioral Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disability Tailored Plans -
Projected County Alignments at Tailored Plan Launch for December 1, 2022



- **Serve individuals with significant mental health and substance use disorders, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DDs) and traumatic brain injury (TBI), as well as people using state-funded and waiver services**
 - ~175,000 individuals
- **Fully integrated, whole person, physical and behavioral health care**
- **Same services as Standard Plans plus more**

Medicaid Expansion

Earlier treatment means better health

Lower income groups are more likely to be uninsured Medicaid Expansion would cover:

- Low-income parents
- Low-wage workers
- Veterans and their families
- Low-income childless adults
- Children who age out of Medicaid
- Women prior to pregnancy

Rural residents are 40% more likely to be uninsured and eligible for Medicaid expansion.

Research has shown Medicaid expansion has led to:

- Improved hospital financial performance and reductions in hospital closure *(11 rural hospitals have closed in North Carolina since 2005. Many others have cut key services.)*
- Improvements in self-reported mental health
- Reductions in opioid overdose deaths
- Improved access to medications and services for treatment
- Increases in people getting regular check ups

Uninsurance and uncompensated care leads to worse health for beneficiaries.