Communicable Disease Branch Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Weekly Key Points

September 22, 2020

The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) Communicable Disease Branch will be releasing COVID-19 weekly key points that includes information discussed on the weekly Tuesday Local Health Department call. Recordings of the call will not be made available; please use the information below as a summary of the topics presented on the call. As guidance changes, please use the most recent information provided. For questions, contact the NC DPH Communicable Disease Branch 24/7 Epidemiologist on Call at 919-733-3419.

Important updates
- **New:** NCDHHS_LHD Weekly Webinar_9.22.2020 FINAL.pdf (file attached)
- **New:** COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Agreement and Profile Form (attached)
- **Updated:** Find My Testing Place (file attached)

SlowCOVIDNC

Today is the official launch of the SlowCOVIDNC App! To learn about SlowCOVIDNC and to download the app, visit [https://www.covid19.ncdhhs.gov/slowcovidnc](https://www.covid19.ncdhhs.gov/slowcovidnc) and [https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/slowcovidnc/frequently-asked-questions](https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/slowcovidnc/frequently-asked-questions) which also includes an FAQ. The team would like to share with you the SlowCOVIDNC Communications Toolkit. The team has developed this Communications Toolkit for our partners, including Institutions of Higher Education and Local Health Departments, to promote the SlowCOVIDNC app and empower everyone to join the fight against COVID-19. The Toolkit is available in English and Spanish and includes the following collateral:

- SlowCOVIDNC Landing Page
- Printable Flyers
- Digital Banners
- Paid Digital Ads
- Social Media Graphics and Copy
- Launch Communications Video
- Demo Video
- Frequently Asked Questions

You can access all collateral in the **SlowCOVIDNC Communications Toolkit** [here](https://www.covid19.ncdhhs.gov/slowcovidnc). In addition, the team has created Talking Points, a University Promotional Checklist, and a SlowCOVIDNC University Announcement Mass Text and Email Template for you to use. The SlowCOVIDNC app will be an important tool to in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping our communities safe.

Dashboard Changes Coming

Antigen testing results will soon be displayed as part of our data. Refer to the call slides for more information about how this new data will be displayed. Dr. Moore also noted that COVID indicators for NC are improving compared to other southern states.
LTCF Testing and CMS Rules

Assisted living facilities will be receiving the BinaxNOW point of care machines from the federal government. The note to facilities from CMS included contact information for questions and is included below for reference: Training videos, modules, and frequently asked questions (FAQs) for the BinaxNOW test can be accessed here on Abbott’s website. For questions regarding the BinaxNOW test, please call Abbott Technical Services at 1-800-257-9525 or email ts.scr@abbott.com. For shipment issues or questions, email ARDxUSGovernmentSupport@abbott.com.

Secretarial Order 4 changes requirements for routine nursing home staff testing to be consistent with CMS rules for testing. The secretarial order is available here.

K through 5th Plan A Implementation

October 5, 2020 will mark the beginning of in person education for all K-5th graders. While the 6-foot requirement will become a recommendation for this group, all other prevention measures will remain in place. Factors in this decision include studies suggesting the low transmission efficiency in this age group and the benefit of in call instruction for our youngest students.

Contact Tracing

DPH is kicking off a call series for LHDs as an outlet to share feedback individually with program representatives. Feedback can consist of anything from challenges to benefits, tips, workforce training tactics, etc. These calls will occur 2x weekly between October and May 2021; LHDs will receive individual meetings invites as they are scheduled. We are collecting the feedback so that we can gain a better understanding of what is going well, what isn't going well, and to determine how we can better support this team moving forward.

We have also recently identified 5 top-performing LHDs based on metrics related to cases interviewed within 24 hours and outreach attempts within 48 hours: Davidson, Randolph, Yadkin, Columbus and Lee. The LHDs for these counties will be interviewed to learn more about the steps they have taken as a county to achieve such success. Best practices will be shared!

Many thanks go to Mecklenburg and Randolph counties for their participation with CDC in the MMWR publication highlighting the challenges of contact tracing. Visit the website for the full publication. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6938e3.htm?s_cid=mm6938e3_w
State Laboratory of Public Health Updates

The State Laboratory of Public Health has transitioned to use of commercially prepared media for ease of use. The email has gone out and you will soon notice the new tubes in the kits. Prior to use, the media can be stored at room temperature. Once used, please follow the specimen cold chain and packaging instructions as always. Please be sure to remove all old bar code labels on the outside of the package to avoid misdirection.

Vaccine Update

- CDC issued Interim Playbook last week and state plans are now due NLT than 10/16. There will be some sort of approval process for the state plan, but this has not been finalized.
- CDC issued a new plan template. NC will not be using the template as we already have a full draft of our plan. However, we will ensure all portions of the template are included in our plan. We will share the template with counties.
  - Locals should be organizing their local planning teams and planning now in parallel with the state using the CDC guidance, infographic, and operation warpspeed documents and the planning template. There will not be an approval process of local plans.
  - We are finalizing an FAQ document specifically for LHDs and hope to share this week.
- We are still working on an electronic enrollment system.
- CDC continues to reiterate that they do not want providers/jurisdictions to buy ULC storage solutions.
- ACIP has delayed their vote on priority groups saying that the ACIP COVID 19 vaccine working group has not fully worked out its plan for presentation so CDC decided not to ask ACIP for a vote. The issue seems to lie in the group that will immediately follow frontline health care workers.
- The NC Advisory committee is continuing to work on priority groups.
- Updates from National Governors Association:
  - In first 2 months, vaccine should be allocated in regimens not doses.
  - Allocations will be based in large part on population of a state in priority groups, particularly healthcare workers and they are using Federal databases to determine those numbers and they will share them with states.
  - ULC vaccine is most likely the first to be available and plans should be based in bring people to the vaccine not the vaccine to people.
Vaccination Program Provider Agreement

CDC has released the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Agreement. A copy is attached for your reference. Please do not use this copy to submit. We will send instructions on completion and returning of signed copies soon. We are providing this to give you a start at collecting the required information. We will begin the enrollment process with local health departments and hospitals and expand in the near future. You will note that this agreement, much like existing VFC agreements, requires a signature from the Chief Medical Officer or equivalent as well as the Chief Executive or Chief Fiduciary Officer. This agreement also asks several vaccine storage questions. As a reminder, we do not recommend, nor does CDC, purchasing cold chain vaccine storage equipment at this time. Though we are sending the enrollment agreements to hospitals and local health departments right now, we do encourage all local health departments to make sure they are reviewing lists from pandemic flu plans and H1N1 experience to make sure they have a full picture of providers in their community that may serve as vaccine access points.

Tuesday LHD Virtual Call Suggestion Box Survey

Is there a topic that has not been covered on the weekly LHD call that you would like covered? We have created an open ‘Suggestion Box’ to gather topics of importance from all LHD staff. Please use this link to submit topics you would like to see discussed on the weekly webinars: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/B8RVH59

Find My Testing Place

Please continue to review the updated ‘Find My Testing Place LHD’ Excel file weekly to ensure information is up to date and accurate. Please send the updated files or any related questions to SVC_Covid-19TestingSites@dhhs.nc.gov

Question & Answer

Q: We are seeing more patients with positive COVID tests after 3 months who were previously negative after their initial positive test. Are these individuals being counted as new cases in our surveillance system? 
A: Not at this time, but that may change. Right now, these labs are being incorporated in the original event in NC EDSS. There are discussions underway with CDC and the states about case definition for reinfection.