

*****SPAM*** For Immediate Release**

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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greetings:

Committee meetings and session will continue to take place throughout these next few summer months. On the days I am not in Raleigh, I will be meeting and handling business in the district. Please do not hesitate to contact the office if there are concerns or issues my office can assist with.

Sincerely,
Joyce Waddell

Highlighted Bills of the week

No bills were voted on in the Senate Chamber last week. We expect to begin a voting session this week.

Vaccines

The COVID-19 vaccine is only available for people age 12 and older,

which leaves out most elementary school students. Just 24% of children ages 12 to 17 are fully vaccinated, and more than half of adults in North Carolina are fully vaccinated, with 60% of adults receiving at least one dose. The Senate majority leader told reporters on the Senate floor after session Thursday that to mandate a vaccine available for emergency use is “somewhat problematic.”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has yet to grant final approval to the three COVID-19 vaccines — Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson — it authorized for emergency use. “The conversation changes ... once you get final approval from the FDA for the vaccine,” the majority leader said. He also said he doesn’t think that the UNC System ought to require vaccinations.

Vaccination Requirements

Several hospitals in the Triangle say they will require their employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19, changing a policy of voluntary inoculation that’s been in place since the vaccines became available last winter. All three Duke Health hospitals and UNC Health Hospitals in Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Siler City and Johnston County are among the first in North Carolina to require vaccination. The move comes as the association that represents hospitals in the state came out in favor of mandatory vaccination for all health care workers on Thursday. The N.C. Healthcare Association represents all 130 hospitals in the state. “Our state’s health systems and hospitals have seen first-hand how debilitating and deadly this disease can be,” the association said in a statement Thursday. “When the COVID-19 vaccines were first released, the NCHA and its members strongly encouraged all North Carolinians, including hospital and health system employees, to get vaccinated against COVID-19. In the months since, clinical data has shown the COVID-19 vaccines to be extraordinarily safe and effective, and our best tool to prevent the spread of the disease.”

Through voluntary measures, hospitals say as many as three-quarters of their employees are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, but those numbers have leveled off. Owens said more than 77% of Duke University Medical Center in Durham have been vaccinated, short of the hospital’s goal of 90%.

Duke and UNC are among several hospitals statewide that announced they intend to require COVID-19 vaccination. Others include Wake Forest Baptist Health in Winston-Salem, Cone Health in Greensboro and Atrium and Novant, both based in Charlotte. The UNC hospitals

adopting the policy are UNC Medical Center, UNC Rex, UNC Johnston, UNC Chatham, UNC Rockingham and UNC Southeastern.

Vaccine Mandate

Some private universities in North Carolina are joining the hundreds of schools nationwide requiring students to get a COVID-19 vaccine before returning to campus in August. But North Carolina's 16 public universities are not, citing a "lack of clear legal authority." Some public universities across the country have a coronavirus vaccine mandate. Indiana University just got the green light to require student vaccinations with a recent federal court ruling. The universities requiring vaccines will make exemptions for medical and religious reasons. Here's where COVID-19 vaccines are required for college students around North Carolina:

- **Duke University** — All Duke students must be vaccinated in order to attend classes and other campus activities this fall. All faculty and staff are expected to present proof of vaccination by Sept. 1. As of June 29, more than 81% of Duke's faculty and staff and nearly 10,000 students were fully vaccinated. All students will be tested when they arrive at Duke and will participate in weekly surveillance testing. Students who have an exemption from being vaccinated will have to get tested twice a week, wear masks and follow other COVID-19 protocols. Faculty and staff with a vaccination exemption will also participate in weekly COVID-19 testing.
- **Shaw University** — At Shaw University, the historically Black university in Raleigh, all new and returning students who intend to be on campus need to provide proof of vaccination to Student Health before they can enroll for the Fall 2021 semester.
- **Campbell University** — Campbell University will require all students to show proof of full vaccination or have tested negative for COVID-19 within 48 hours of returning to campus. Students who have not been fully vaccinated or have not submitted that negative COVID-19 test can get a rapid result COVID test on campus when they arrive. Unvaccinated students are required to wear a mask when inside campus facilities.
- **Elon University** — All Elon University students must provide documentation of being fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine. The rule applies to all undergraduate, graduate and law students enrolled in classes, living on campus, participating in study abroad/away or participating in on-campus activities on

- any Elon campus during Fall Semester 2021.
- **Wake Forest University** – Wake Forest University requires all students to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to the fall semester. Starting Aug. 1, students who have not yet provided the required documentation will be removed from enrolled courses and assigned housing.
 - **Davidson College** – While Davidson College is not requiring COVID-19 vaccines, students and employees who are not vaccinated must follow stricter rules. Unvaccinated students and employees must wear a mask indoors, participate in and pay for weekly COVID-19 testing and will have limited access to some campus facilities.

UNC System universities, including UNC-CH and N.C. State, will not require vaccines. But they are strongly recommending students get vaccinated before the fall semester and will have free vaccine clinics set up at several campuses. At a recent faculty meeting, UNC-CH Provost said the university is operating under the presumption that state law prohibits a COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The Provost said the university also can not require students to reveal whether or not they have been vaccinated. While UNC-CH students do not have to get vaccinated, they will not have to participate in regular COVID-19 testing if they report their vaccination to the university. As of last week, about 20,000 UNC-CH students had reported through CarolinaConnect that they are vaccinated.

Meredith College in Raleigh has not announced a vaccine mandate for students, but has said it has the “right to require vaccinations, following full FDA approvals, if campus or local conditions warrant stronger action.”

Prison Vaccines

COVID-19 vaccination rates for people serving time in North Carolina state prisons outpace the general public by a little and prison workers by a lot. The differences are not necessarily surprising, but advocates worry that the group most likely to bring coronavirus into a prison – corrections workers – are significantly less likely to get the shot. Systemwide, 63 percent of people incarcerated were vaccinated as of last week, according to the state Department of Public Safety, compared with about 50 percent of prison staff. About 57 percent of North Carolina adults are fully vaccinated, according to state Department of Health and Human Services numbers.

Vaccination rates among both prisoners and staff vary widely at the system's 55 facilities for reasons that aren't always obvious. "What we're finding is a lot of people have their own reasons," said the prison system's medical director. "Unfortunately, a whole lot of things have been interjected into this argument. It's way more political than it should be." he also said a "fair number of people" have already had COVID-19 and feel like they don't need to get the vaccine.

As for staff, the medical director said their hesitancy tends to reflect the surrounding area, where they typically live. That's difficult to tease out of the numbers, though. In some counties, prison staff vaccination rates far outstrip the county's rate. In others, it's well below, while in still others, they're just about the same. In all but five counties, staffer vaccination rates outpace the county where the facility is located. The North Carolina chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union called prison staff vaccination rates "very concerning, given that they are the primary vectors for COVID-19 outbreaks in the state prisons and jails" and questioned whether the prison system is doing enough to ensure staff are vaccinated.

So far, the state hasn't required any employees to get vaccinated except for those working in 14 state-run health care facilities, a change announced last week. But the Governor announced Thursday that the state will soon require vaccinations for cabinet agency employees, or else they'll have to wear masks and submit to routine testing for the virus. State prison guards already are required to wear masks, though advocates say the mandate isn't always followed, and the system does routine random testing of employees, according to a Department of Public Safety spokesman.

Zoo Vaccinations

A COVID-19 scare at a zoo nearly 2,500 miles away from North Carolina sparked a push for an experimental vaccine to keep the virus from spreading among the great ape population. Now the North Carolina Zoo is capitalizing on it. The zoo is slated to receive six vials of an experimental COVID-19 vaccine specifically designed for animals by the American drug company Zoetis. Each vial has 10 doses — enough to fully vaccinate the zoo's great apes and then some, said the director of animal health and chief veterinarian.

Similar to Pfizer and Moderna, the vaccine requires two doses. The first animals to receive them at the North Carolina Zoo will be a troop of 15 chimpanzees and seven gorillas. That's for good reason — old-

world primates and great apes were found to have a very high vulnerability to infection in a study published last August in the peer-reviewed journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.

In January, a troop of eight gorillas at the San Diego Zoo were the first great apes in the world to test positive for the virus, National Geographic reported. The outbreak prompted the zoo to reach out to the drug company, which had been working on developing a COVID-19 vaccine for animals. The company provided a supply of the experimental vaccine for the San Diego Zoo's emergency use.

The zoo is considering vaccinating the bears, American Red Wolves, otters and skunks — whichever are most susceptible to the virus — once they finish with the great apes and big cats, director of animal health and chief veterinarian said.

This virus variant is spreading and we are now under an Executive Order to wear masks in public/government buildings. The mandate provides a layer of protection for the general public. Another form of protection is social distancing and hand washing. Please protect yourself and your family by following the safety recommendations from the CDC.

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