

# State Requests Federal Assistance Amid Hospital Strain + Equity Remains Main Focus As Racial/Ethnic Disparities Re-Emerge



**From** NCDHHS Communications <news@dhhs.nc.gov>  
**To** <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>  
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## COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) NC UPDATE

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### **NCDHHS Requests Federal Assistance Amid Hospital Strain**

The highly contagious omicron variant of COVID-19 is [sending record numbers of people to North Carolina hospitals](#), straining hospital capacity. As hospitals continue to take steps to protect their ability to provide patient care in the face of nationwide COVID-19 related staffing shortages, NCDHHS and North Carolina Emergency Management are [requesting federal support for the Charlotte region](#) to help alleviate capacity constraints.

[Vaccines and boosters](#) continue to provide the strongest protection against COVID-19 serious illness, hospitalizations and deaths. In the latest [Respiratory Surveillance Report](#), unvaccinated individuals make up 72% of hospitalizations and 83% of COVID-19-related ICU admissions statewide. Everyone age 5 and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine, and everyone 12 and older should get a booster as soon as they are eligible. Go to [MySpot.nc.gov](#) to find a vaccine location.

### **NCDHHS Continues to Focus on Equity as COVID-19 Disparities Re-Emerge in Omicron Surge**

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According to [NCDHHS data](#), the rate of COVID-19 infections is once again disproportionately impacting Black and Hispanic North Carolinians. Since Dec. 26, the rate of infections was twice as high among the Black population as compared to the white population and as much as 57% higher among the Hispanic population as compared to the non-Hispanic population.

To combat these disparities, NCDHHS continues its work through the [Healthier Together: Health Equity Action Network](#) and [NCDHHS' Community Health Worker program](#) to connect historically marginalized populations to vaccines. Additionally, to help families be able to safely quarantine or isolate because of COVID-19, NCDHHS' [Support Services Program](#) provides food assistance to people in 34 counties in partnership with the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina.

NCDHHS is also delivering N95 masks, which provide the best protection from the Omicron variant of COVID-19, to community organizations, childcare programs, farmworker programs and long-term care facilities across the state. Of the 4 million delivered so far, 2 million masks were given to local health departments to distribute to community partners for local jails, for providers for homeless services, for senior centers and at community-based events.

NCDHHS has been nationally recognized for its race and ethnicity data quality and has prioritized data transparency to hold itself and its partners accountable to promote equity in COVID-19 prevention and response efforts. [Read more](#) about how NCDHHS will continue its commitment to data accountability and equity to tackle disparities as we move forward in this global pandemic.

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### **[Federal Pharmacy COVID-19 Vaccine Information Now Available Through NC Portal](#)**



People who received their COVID-19 vaccine or booster in North Carolina from a pharmacy or grocery store participating in the [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](#) are [now able to access their COVID-19 vaccine information](#) in the [NC COVID-19 Vaccine Portal](#).

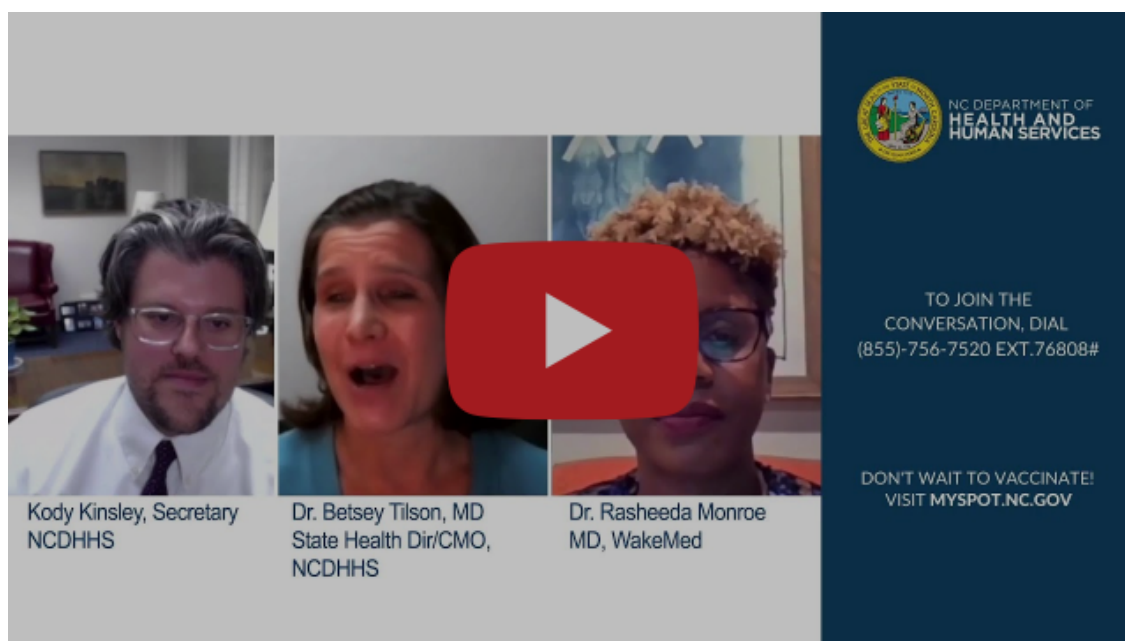
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For security purposes, people will need to first activate their Vaccine Portal by calling the COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center at (888) 675-4567 to verify their identity. The help center is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

For the most up to date information on how to access your COVID-19 Vaccine Information through the COVID-19 Vaccine Portal visit our website: [Your COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#) ([Spanish](#)).

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### **COVID-19 Fireside Chat**

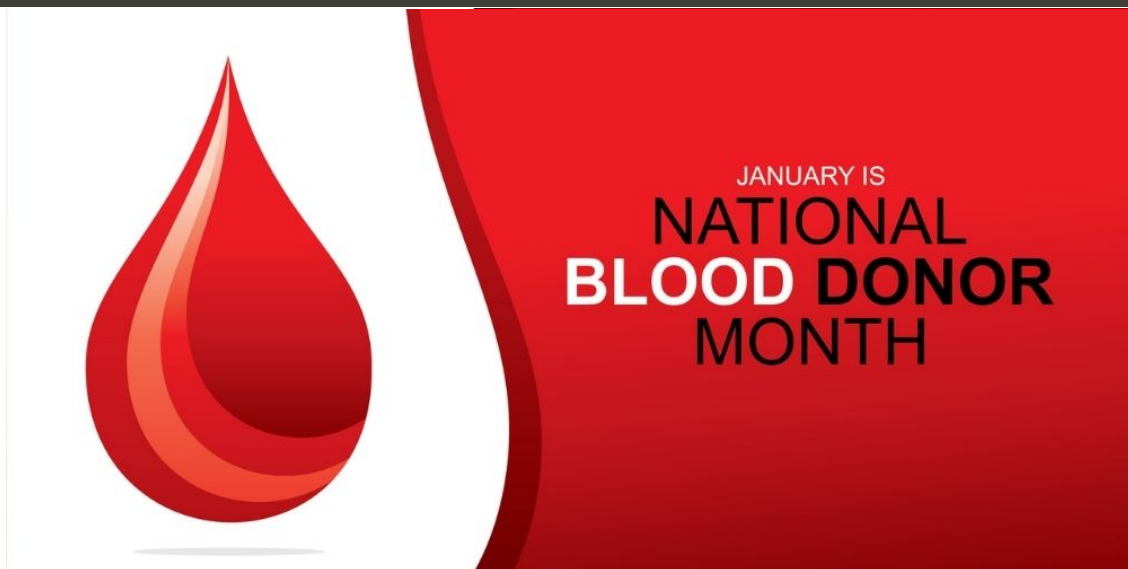


Yesterday, NCDHHS held a [COVID-19 Fireside Chat and Tele-Town Hall](#) regarding the recent surge in cases, steps to protect yourself, new guidance on vaccines and boosters, and when to isolate and quarantine.

The town hall featured NCDHHS Secretary, Kody Kinsley, NCDHHS State Health Director and Chief Medical Officer, Elizabeth Cuervo Tilson, MD, and Medical Director at Primary Care Pediatrics and WakeMed Physician Practices, Rasheeda T. Monroe, MD, FAA.

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### **Give Blood to Help During the Blood Shortage**



Yesterday, Governor Cooper donated blood at the American Red Cross of Eastern North Carolina and encouraged eligible North Carolinians to make an appointment to give blood. The American Red Cross is facing a severe blood shortage and the Governor has [proclaimed](#) January as [Blood Donation Month](#) in North Carolina.

Every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood. An estimated one in every seven patients will need a blood transfusion in a hospital. All types of blood are needed, especially types O positive and O negative. Visit [redcrossblood.org](https://redcrossblood.org) or go to [thebloodconnection.org](https://thebloodconnection.org) to learn more and schedule an appointment to donate blood.

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### **COVID-19 Testing**

Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been exposed to the virus should get tested as soon as possible. Seek medical attention immediately for serious symptoms such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips or face.

- NC Medicaid beneficiaries can [receive free at-home COVID-19 tests](#) from their local pharmacies. Beneficiaries should select an at-home test at their preferred pharmacy and present their NC Medicaid ID card to the pharmacy for no out-of-pocket cost. The pharmacist will be able to bill Medicaid on the patient's behalf.
  - Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order four, free at-home COVID-19 tests. Order your tests now so you have them when you need them at [covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov).
  - To find a PCR testing sites near you, visit [ncdhhs.gov/GetTested](https://ncdhhs.gov/GetTested). With increased demand for testing, try a different community-based site if your normal one is busy.
  - For an up-to-date list of no-cost community testing events, visit the [No-Cost Testing Events](#) webpage.
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## [Get the Latest Information](#)

- Visit the [NCDHHS COVID-19 website](#) for information, a [data dashboard](#), [updates](#), [live briefings](#), the [latest guidance](#) and more.
- Go to [North Carolina's COVID-19 Information Hub](#) for resources, information and assistance across state government, including the latest [news releases](#).
- Check out [YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov](#) to learn more about [finding your spot](#) to get your shot, [videos](#) about the COVID-19 vaccine, and other resources.
- Follow NCDHHS on [social media](#).



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Our mailing address is: NCDHHS, 2001 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699

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