

SWC Healthcare Preparedness Advisory Coalition (HPAC) Meeting Notes

March 16, 2022

Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health

Present at Meeting: Crystalynn Kuntz, Kalen Ost

Present Via Lifesize: DelRae Baumgartner, Archie Gilliss, Kaitlyn Green, Marlys Harrison, Lori Kottre, Tracy Kruger, Tammy Olson, Scott Osadchuk, Monica Paczkowski, Dana Pazdernik, Vanessa Raile, Daren Reknow, Mary Senger, Standing Rock Indian Health Services Hospital, Rochelle Vadervliet, George Walker, Sue Ziemann.

AGENDA ITEMS

➤ **Endemic Status of North Dakota**

- On March 10, Governor Doug Burgum announced that North Dakota is preparing for a shift toward an endemic status in the COVID-19 response. With this change, the North Dakota National Guard will cease COVID-19 operations in the state on March 17, marking 736 consecutive days of response by the Guard. The state is maintaining its response capacity and capability to be prepared in case of another surge or the emergence of a new variant.
 - An endemic is defined as when a disease is consistently present but limited to a particular region. This makes the disease spread and rates predictable. This is different from a pandemic, when a disease's growth is exponential, as growth rates skyrocket and each day cases grow more than the day prior. During this time, the virus has nothing to do with virology, population immunity or disease severity, it means a virus covers a wide area, affecting several countries and populations.
 - The change to an endemic status does not mean the COVID-19 virus is gone. The virus is still in our communities. However, we now have more tools, testing, vaccines, antivirals and therapeutics to fight the virus and protect our vulnerable population.
- North Dakota has ordered 2 million at-home COVID-19 test kits that are being distributed at no out-of-pocket cost to the public.
 - Businesses are encouraged to accept results of at-home or OTC tests. Individuals and employees can use the NDDOH COVID Calculator on the department's website (www.health.nd.gov/covidcalculator) to create a document that outlines the period of isolation as determined by the date of testing or the date of symptom onset.
 - The State is not able to verify or validate at-home tests.
- NDDOH will be making changes to the type of data displayed on the Coronavirus Dashboard and COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard.
 - The changes will be effective on Friday, March 18, and align with the current state of the pandemic and with the CDC COVID-19 Community

Level framework released in February.

- The data will shift from a focus on daily case counts and percent positivity rates and have an increased focus on trends over time and severity of the disease. Hospitalizations will include all individuals, regardless of state of residency. Reinfection and breakthrough data will not be reliable due to the increased use of at-home test kits, and will no longer be made available. NDDOH will move to a weekly publication of data.
- CDC provides a COVID-19 County Check online (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>) that shows a community risk level.
 - Presently, Burleigh County is in a low risk category, as is the majority of North Dakota. This risk is a combination of three metrics: new COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days, the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients, and total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.
 - People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. Individuals should take the following additional precautions based on the COVID-19 community level risk:
 - Low – Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if you have symptoms.
 - Medium – If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions, stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if you have symptoms.
 - High – Wear a mask indoors in public, stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, get tested if you have symptoms, additional precautions may be needed for people at high risk for severe illness.
 - COVID-19 community levels do not apply in healthcare settings such as hospitals and nursing homes. Instead, healthcare settings should continue to use community transmission rates and follow CDC's infection prevention and control recommendations for healthcare workers.

➤ **COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Update**

- On February 22, CDC updated its Interim Clinical Considerations for COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance with additional information to help vaccine providers determine if an individual patient's optimal interval between their first mRNA dose and second mRNA dose in a primary series should be eight weeks, rather than the

previously recommended 3-week (Pfizer) or 4-week (Moderna) interval.

- Some people ages 12-64 – and especially males ages 12-39 – may benefit from getting their second mRNA COVID-19 vaccine dose eight weeks after receiving their first dose.
- Providers should continue to recommend the 3-week or 4-week interval for:
 - Children ages 5-11
 - People who are moderately to severely immunocompromised
 - Adults ages 65 years and older
 - And others who may need early protection due to concern about an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or high levels of community transmission

➤ **Roundtable**

- **ASPR Test to Treat Program** – In this program, a one-stop center will be developed at hundreds of locations nationwide, including pharmacy-based clinics, federally qualified health centers and long term care facilities, that allow people to get tested, and if they are positive and treatments are appropriate for them, to receive a prescription from a healthcare provider and have their prescription filled at that location. More information is available online at <https://aspr.hhs.gov/TestToTreat/Documents/Fact-Sheet.pdf>.
- **ND Immunization Conference** – This conference is scheduled for June 21-22 in Bismarck. The conference can be attended virtually or in-person. To register, or for more information, visit <https://und.edu/conferences/nd-immunization/>.
- **LTC Conference** – The state’s LTC conference is scheduled for May 3-6 in Bismarck. The conference will include a full-day emergency preparedness workshop on May 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., as well as an evacuation exercise and HC Standard resident tracking training. For more information, visit <http://www.ndltca.org/education/events/45th-annual-convention-and-trade-show/>.
- **At-Home Test Kits** – If your organization would like COVID-19 at-home test kits, contact Crystalynn. There are two options for receiving kits: you may order them through the HAN Assets system and have them shipped directly to your organization, or pick up kits from Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health.

➤ **Potential Next Meeting:**

- May 18, 2022, 9 a.m., via Lifesize. Meeting is not yet finalized and more information will be provided as the date gets closer.

Respectfully submitted,

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