

MAHEC, State and Local Health Departments Partner to Bring More COVID-19 Vaccines to WNC

Asheville, NC, July 21, 2021 – A new mobile community vaccine center will make it easier and more convenient for people in Western North Carolina (WNC) to protect themselves and the community from COVID-19 as the region experiences increasing cases from the more contagious Delta variant that is spreading across the state. To identify mobile vaccination sites, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) is collaborating with the WNC Vaccine Acceleration Consortium, a group of over 80 regional vaccine providers that includes the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC), local health departments, hospitals, and emergency management offices. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has contracted for the mobile unit and staff to support this initiative.

“Too many unvaccinated North Carolinians are unnecessarily getting sick, being hospitalized, and dying,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. “Nearly all cases are in people who have not been vaccinated. This is preventable. Don’t wait to vaccinate.”

As of July 19, only 49% of North Carolina residents are partially vaccinated compared to 41% of those living in the 18 westernmost counties. Only 46% of those 18 and older are fully vaccinated.

In some WNC communities, vaccination rates are even lower, putting unvaccinated residents at greater risk of serious illness and death. The mobile vaccine center will help boost regional efforts to vaccinate people as quickly as possible to protect them from the highly contagious virus.



The mobile vaccine center can administer up to 250 vaccines each day. It will be at the Asheville Outlets on Brevard Road Wednesday, July 21 through Sunday, July 25 and at the Canton Recreation Park in Haywood County on July 28. Mobile vaccine teams will be deployed from the home base to support festivals like Merlefest and Folkmoot and communities across WNC.

No appointment is needed, and all three approved vaccines will be available. All three have proven effective against COVID-19 illness and its complications. More than 335 million doses of Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson and Johnson vaccines have been safely administered across the United States since December 2020.

“Having additional opportunities to make vaccination more convenient is important,” said Bryan Hodge, D.O., director of the Department of Community and Population Health at UNC Health Sciences at

MAHEC. “From day one, WNC’s vaccine consortium has worked to ensure regional vaccination efforts are well coordinated, distributed equitably, and are responsive to community needs.”

The WNC Vaccine Acceleration Consortium, with support from the Dogwood Health Trust, brings federal, state and local public health professionals together with regional partners to share information and resources and improve access to COVID-19 vaccines. The partnership with state and local health departments and FEMA is one of many strategies to put this powerful prevention tool within reach of all WNC residents.

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, Dogwood Health Trust has worked closely with healthcare providers and community organizations to keep our communities safe,” said Susan Mims, M.D., MPH, interim CEO. “Through convening the WNC Vaccine Acceleration Consortium, we are focusing with our partners to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available for all eligible residents in western NC.”

Over the next few months, the mobile vaccine center and outreach teams will travel to the Tryon International Equestrian Center, Fit Fest in Rutherford County and the Canton Labor Day Festival. New locations and events will be added to support community needs. To view the current schedule, visit www.mahec.net/covid19info

If you would like to learn more or schedule a mobile vaccine event for your community, please contact Marty Stamey, regional vaccine coordinator, at 828-400-4812 or Marty.Stamey@mahec.net.

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About NCDHHS

The Department of Health and Human Services manages the delivery of health- and human-related services for all North Carolinians, especially our most vulnerable citizens – children, elderly, disabled and low-income families. The Department works closely with health care professionals, community leaders and advocacy groups; local, state and federal entities; and many other stakeholders to make this happen. The Department is divided into 30 divisions and offices. NCDHHS divisions and offices fall under four broad service areas - health, human services, administrative, and support functions. NCDHHS also oversees 14 facilities. For more information, please visit ncdhhs.gov.

About MAHEC

MAHEC was established in 1974 and is a leader in healthcare, education, and innovation. Located in Asheville, MAHEC serves a 16-county region in Western North Carolina and is one of nine Area Health Education Centers in North Carolina. MAHEC’s mission is to recruit, train and retain the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina with a focus on primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources. MAHEC’s Biltmore campus is also home to UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC, an academic health center in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill that includes programs from the UNC School of Medicine, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, and UNC Adams School of Dentistry. For more information, please visit mahec.net.