



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH
SECRETARY

February 12, 2021

Dear County Leaders:

On Wednesday, Governor Cooper and I announced plans for how the state will move to Group 3 for COVID-19 vaccines. Because vaccine supply is still limited and the Group 3 population of frontline essential workers is so large, the state will move to the next group gradually. Therefore, we will begin with anyone working in child care or in PreK – 12 schools starting on February 24th and plan to move to additional frontline essential workers on March 10th. **Some vaccine providers may not be ready to open to frontline essential workers on these dates if they are still experiencing high demand for vaccines in Groups 1 and 2.**

Beginning on February 24th, those working in child care and schools, such as teachers, bus and van drivers, custodial and maintenance staff, and food service workers, will be eligible for vaccines. This includes staff in child care centers and homes, Head Start Programs, Preschool and PreK programs, traditional public schools, charter schools and private schools. (See [Deeper Dive](#) for additional detail.)

While staff in child care settings and PreK-12 schools will be eligible starting February 24th that **does not guarantee** they will get an appointment or get vaccinated between February 24th and March 10th because of very limited supply. However, the two-week period between February 24th and March 10th will allow for a more measured opening of the frontline essential workforce group.

NCDHHS is developing operational guidance to support child care and school staff in accessing vaccines. However, current prevention measures will not change. Schools can and should be providing in-person instruction. Under robust safety measures, all students can be in classrooms, with middle and high school students also following six-foot social distancing protocols.

North Carolina is currently vaccinating people in Groups 1 and 2, which include health care workers, long-term care staff and residents, and people 65 and older. Many local vaccine providers do not have enough vaccines to meet the needs of the currently eligible Groups. In the coming weeks, some providers will continue to vaccinate only these groups, whereas others may be ready to start vaccinating school and child care staff on February 24th. Whether vaccine providers can vaccinate school and child care staff will depend on vaccine supply and whether they are still experiencing high levels of demand from Groups 1 and 2.

We look forward to working with you to develop operational guidance to support vaccine distribution to child care and school staff. Thank you for your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mandy K. Cohen".

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Secretary