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Governor Cooper Issues Executive Order Closing K-12 Public Schools and Banning Gatherings of More Than 100 People

On Saturday, March 14 Governor Roy Cooper ordered all K-12 public schools in North Carolina to close for a minimum of two weeks in response to COVID-19. The Executive Order also bans gatherings of more than 100 people. On Saturday North Carolina had 23 people in 12 counties who had tested positive for COVID-19.

"We do not have the luxury of a wait-and-see approach. These are hard decisions but they are necessary so we can learn more about the virus," Governor Cooper said. "We do not want any regrets in the rearview mirror, and I am guided by one objective – doing what we must to keep people from getting sick and to make sure that those who do can get excellent care."

The Executive Order directs all public schools to close beginning Monday, March 16, 2020 for at least two weeks. The two-week period allows time for North Carolina to further understand the impact of COVID-19 across the state and develop a plan for continued learning for students should a longer closure be needed. Governor Cooper made the decision in consultation with State Board of Education Chair Eric Davis, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson, and North Carolina Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen.

Governor Cooper has appointed an Education and Nutrition Working Group to develop a plan to ensure that children and families are supported while schools are closed. The working group will focus on issues including nutrition, health, childcare access for critical health care and other front-line workers and learning support for children at home.

The Working Group will be co - chaired by Susan Gale Perry, Chief Deputy Secretary of NC DHHS and David Stegall, Ed.D, Deputy State Superintendent of Innovation at DPI, and will have representatives from DPI, NC DHHS, the State Board of Education, as well as other education, nutrition and childcare associations.

"I am standing up this new working group to ensure that children have enough food to eat, families have care in safe places for their young children, and student learning continues," Governor Cooper said.

In addition to closing schools, the Executive Order prohibits mass gatherings that bring together more than 100 people in a single room or space, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, theater, or other confined indoor or outdoor space, including parades, fairs and festivals. Violations of the order are punishable as a Class 2 misdemeanor.

The ban on gatherings does not include airports, bus and train stations, medical facilities, libraries, shopping malls and spaces where people may be in transit. Office environments, restaurants, factories, or retail or grocery stores are also excluded.

The Order received concurrence by members of the NC Council of State without objection.

Make sure the information you are getting about COVID-19 is coming directly from reliable sources like the CDC and NCDHHS.

For more information, please visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus and NCDHHS' website at www.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus, which includes daily updates on positive COVID-19 test results in North Carolina.

Town of Wadesboro Release Concerning COVID-19

The top priority for the Town of Wadesboro is and always will be the safety and security of the community. As such, Town officials are taking the recent developments concerning COVID-19 into consideration as we make decisions on how to practice effective social distancing while maintaining essential services. Here are some of the administrative and service delivery changes that are being implemented effective immediately:

- Town Hall will be limited to a drive-thru only operation until further notice. All transactions can be accomplished through either using the drive-thru, the night drop box, or calling Town Hall for payment via phone at (704) 694-5171.
 - Public entrances to the Police and Fire Stations will be closed until further notice. Please call (704) 694-2167 for information on how to access police reports, accident reports, etc. These services will be pickup only and should be arranged in advance via phone.
 - Garbage collection, limb/leaf pickup, and furniture item pickup will remain on normal operation, no schedule changes are anticipated at this time.
 - All Town parks will remain open and available at this time.
 - Any further changes to Town services or operating conditions will be communicated via the Town's website (townofwadesboro.org) and our Facebook page.
- Thank you, David Edwards, Town Manager

Library Canceling All Adult Programs

This is a release from the Hampton B. Allen Library: At this time, Hampton B. Allen Library is canceling all adult programming until further notice. This decision is a result of our concerns about COVID-19 and our desire to keep our patrons healthy and safe.

We look forward to getting back to our regular schedule, and hope you will visit our website and social media platforms frequently to receive current updates about programming.

If you have any questions or concerns please call us at 704-694-5177.

Grace Senior Center's Senior Prom is Canceled

The Senior Citizen Prom hosted by the Grace Senior Center has been canceled as a Coronavirus precaution. The event had been scheduled for Tuesday, March 31. For more information call 704-694-6616.



Anson Academy Girls with Pearls Discuss Career Aspirations

The "Girls with Pearls" of Anson Academy had the pleasure of chatting with Ms. Monica Grambling from Anson County's NC Works office. Ms. Grambling spoke with a group of eight young ladies about their career aspirations. The group was able to participate in transparent conversations about their family's work history, the importance of developing and maintaining good work ethics, and knowing how to create a plan to implement in order to achieve one's personal career goals.

The girls were excited to speak with someone about their interests, and equally excited to hear her suggestions for success. Ms. Grambling is a native of Anson County and enjoys giving back to the community by providing young adults with the tools they need to be productive citizens. The "Girls with Pearls" program is facilitated by Mrs. Kristen Mims.

Pictured above from left are Dr. Fannie Ratliff, Principal, Emily Walker, Summer Martin, Madison Hammond, Jovanda McRae, Jayla McClure, Brooklyn Banks, Dynasia Little, Aaliyah Bennett and Ms. Monica Grambling.

Insurance Commissioner Authorizes Extra Prescriptions During State of Emergency Due to COVID-19

North Carolina Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey has directed all health benefit plans licensed by the N.C. Department of Insurance to allow for extra prescriptions as a result of the state of emergency declared by Governor Roy Cooper.

This means covered persons may obtain one refill on a prescription if there are authorized refills and not contrary to the dispensing authority of the pharmacy.

This emergency authorization is in effect until April 9, 2020 or 29 days after NCDOI issued a bulletin March 11 to all insurance companies, the State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees, and any optional plans or programs, and other stand-alone prescription medication plans issued by entities licensed by the Department.

Local pharmacies Parsons Drug and Benzer Pharmacy offer delivery to encourage people at a higher risk for COVID-19 to stay home as much as possible.

Insurance Commissioner Causey reminds consumers the largest health insurer in the state, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, has agreed to waive copays for coronavirus diagnostic testing (not services) and NCDOI is encouraging other health insurers in the state to do the same.

Many insurers have also agreed to cover telemedicine or virtual visits to allow people to remotely speak to their doctors.

The Department understands the COVID-19 public health emergency is changing daily and encourages the public to visit their insurer's website for the most up-to-date information pertaining to their health coverage.

NC Medicaid Updates Policies to Address COVID-19

NC Medicaid is implementing several policy changes in response to COVID-19 to slow the spread of the virus, support healthcare providers and protect more vulnerable North Carolinians. The policies, which will go into effect March 13, address pharmacy benefits, supplies and access to care and are designed to facilitate access for patients experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and to limit close contact for routine care, particularly for those at higher risk of severe illness.

People at higher risk of severe illness are adults over 65 years of age, those with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease or diabetes, and people with weakened immune systems. Policy updates include:

- Supporting Access to Care**
 - Home Visits. Medicaid has existing clinical policies to reimburse for home visits. Providers are encouraged to conduct home visits, especially for vulnerable populations and group living.
 - Co-pays. Providers are reminded that co-pays are not required at the time of the office visit; a Medicaid patient should never be turned away for inability to pay a co-pay.
 - Virtual Consultation. Providers will be able to bill Medicaid for evaluations provided virtually by telephone for established patients who:
 - Are actively experiencing mild symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) or to assess prior to going to the emergency department, urgent care or other health care facility.
 - Need routine, uncomplicated follow up and who are not currently experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Would benefit from behavioral health assessment and management.
- Limiting In-Person Pharmacy Interactions** Supply Quantity. Medicaid beneficiaries will be able to access longer supply of prescribed medicine.
 - Beneficiaries will be allowed to obtain a 90-day supply of prescribed medicine, excluding controlled substances, for both generic and brand-name drugs. NC Medicaid has removed the 30-day wait requirement to qualify for a 90-day supply.
 - Early refills will be allowed to coordinate care.
 - Beneficiaries can receive an extended 14-day emergency supply of medicines that require a prior authorization (up from a 3-day supply).
 - Providers are encouraged to write prescriptions for a 90-day supply and pharmacies are encouraged to fill 90 day supplies whenever possible

Access to Needed Medicines. NC Medicaid will be tracking pharmaceutical supplies to respond quickly to modify the Preferred Drug List for Medicaid as needed.

- Accessing Medical Supplies**
 - Providers of medical equipment and supplies may be reimbursed for providing masks to ill patients who require frequent transportation or attend public places for treatment such as dialysis.
 - Providers will not need prior authorization in order to initiate new orders for oxygen and related respiratory supplies.
 - If medically necessary, oxygen equipment and supplies, respiratory assist devices, CPAPs and ventilators that typically require prior authorization may be provided to beneficiaries without first seeking prior authorization.

These new Medicaid policies will go into effect March 13. Additional details and guidance will be available online at www.medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus.

Special Meeting of Town of Wadesboro Called

A special meeting of the Town of Wadesboro has been set for Thursday, March 19 at 5 p.m. for the following:

- Discuss emergency plan for COVID 19
- Any other business to come before the Council

 The meeting will be held in the Wadesboro Fire Department's Training Room at 205 East Morgan Street.

Safe Kids Anson Hosting Operation Medicine Drop

Safe Kids Anson will host Operation Medicine Drop on Friday, March 20, from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. in Walmart parking lot in Wadesboro. Bring your unused or expired prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines to Walmart to be safely disposed. Syringes and needles will not be accepted for collection.

The average North Carolinian fills 17 prescriptions annually and studies show that as much as 40% of the drugs dispensed are never used. Abuses of unused and/or expired prescription medications is a public health issue, leading to accidental poisoning, overdose and abuse, as well as contaminating our water system. Poisoning is the number-one cause of injury-related deaths in the United States. The latest statistics show that the number of unintentional poisoning deaths in North Carolina increased from 279 deaths in 1999 to 1,178 deaths in 2014, an increase of 320 percent. From 1999 to 2016 more than 12,000 North Carolinians died from opioid-related overdoses. This epidemic is devastating families and communities.

Over the last 20 years 91% of all unintentional poisonings were caused by prescription or over-the-counter medications according to NC Injury and Violence Prevention, DHHS.

Operation Medicine Drop is a partnership of Safe Kids North Carolina, the River Keepers of North Carolina, NC State Bureau of Investigation, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of North Carolina and local law enforcement agencies working together to encourage the public to safely dispose of unused, unwanted and expired medication.

For additional information please contact Katie Sewell at (704) 694-4036.

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