



**NEVADA  
HEALTH  
RESPONSE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COVID-19 Press Bulletin for October 14, 2021**

Carson City, NV — Today, DuAne Young, Policy Director for Governor Steve Sisolak, Joan Hall, President/CEO of Nevada Rural Hospital Partners, Candice McDaniel, Deputy Director of Programs for the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services and Dr. Ellie Graeden of Talus Analytics provided information on Nevada's ongoing COVID-19 response and vaccination efforts during a call with members of the media.

This bulletin provides facts, figures, and informational items from the call. As a reminder, data is provided in a dashboard on the home page of the [Nevada Health Response](#) website.

**As a reminder, the next COVID-19 press call will be on October 28, 2021, at 1 P.M.**

**STATE EMPLOYEE VACCINATION:**

- In September, Governor Sisolak signed emergency regulations that require State employees who work with vulnerable populations in state-operated, licensed health care settings or state-operated detention facilities to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- This regulation was passed by the State Board of Health with the requirement that proof of vaccination be provided by November 1.
- Earlier this week the Governor's Office, Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Corrections hosted town hall meetings for staff to participate in a conversation about COVID-19 vaccination. They had an opportunity to ask questions of respected medical professionals and discuss the policy.
- This is one more step the Governor has taken to ensure the health and safety of some of our state's most vulnerable residents.

- It is imperative that those who work closely with these populations are protected from COVID-19 for themselves, their families and those they serve.
- This regulation follows the Governor's Medical Advisory Team review and recommendation for vaccination for certain groups.
- Additionally, it is in line with President Biden's plan and requirements for vaccination for facilities that accept Medicare and Medicaid.

### **MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES/RURAL NEVADA:**

- Despite declining trends across the board, COVID-19 cases in rural areas of the State continue to be of great concern to health officials.
- This week the State Board of Examiners approved a \$30 million contract to provide outpatient services for monoclonal antibody treatment.
- These treatments will help in areas of high caseload and low vaccination rates, including Nevada's rural communities.
- Nevada has already seen great success with a treatment center in Elko County.
- Since October 1<sup>st</sup> more than 60 people have received the therapy at the clinic at Great Basin College.
- Nevada's counties are working with the Board of Pharmacy to support this initiative to provide treatment to patients early.
- The Governor is committed to ensuring Nevada uses every tool available to fight the pandemic. This week's investment is another example of that.

### **HOSPITAL CAPACITY:**

- Hospital capacity in rural communities continues to be strained but significant challenges are not as widespread as they were in July and August.
- However, ICU capacity remains at 100% as do COVID units that hospitals have established.
- Critical access hospitals, by federal regulation, can only have 25 beds, so this has impacted the ability to admit non-COVID patients.
- Transfer for patients requiring a higher level of care continue to be disrupted, but fewer patients are being transferred to hospitals out of state.
- Emergency room volumes remain elevated due to patients with COVID symptoms as well as patients seeking COVID testing.

## **COMMUNITIES:**

- Rural hospitals and their associated clinics have set up both drive through testing areas as well as outdoor tent areas for testing and for vaccination to meet community needs.
- There is increased outreach and education for Nevada's communities and for populations such as the State's migrant workers.
- Monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-positive patients has proven very beneficial in keeping these individuals from requiring hospitalization.
- Supply chain issues for getting testing kits and supplies remains a challenge.
- Also, many rural home oxygen suppliers are having difficulties meeting the demand for oxygen cylinders or concentrators for home patients.
- Staffing is also a true challenge, as it is across the state and nationwide, especially in rural locations.
- Rural hospital staff vaccination rates have increased following the President's announcement that all Medicare and Medicaid providers must be vaccinated.
- The rural vaccination rate is between 60% and 90% currently.

## **FLU SHOTS:**

- While mask wearing, hand washing, and physical distancing help reduce the spread of flu – as well as the spread of COVID-19 – vaccination is still the best protection available.
- Flu vaccines protect against severe illness and the potentially serious and life-threatening complications of influenza.
- When fewer people get the flu, less people will need medical attention related to influenza complications, reducing the load on Nevada's hospitals and first responders so they can better care for the seriously ill and those suffering from COVID-19 infection.
- Influenza vaccination is available for those age 6 months and older and it is recommended for Nevadans to support personal health and protect the public.
- A COVID-19 and flu vaccine can be received at the same time.

## **VACCINE REVIEW:**

- Today and tomorrow the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee is meeting to discuss J&J and Moderna COVID-19 booster vaccines.

- The Nevada State Immunization Program is following these discussions related to a booster dose for those age 18 and older who completed the initial series of vaccination.
- The decisions and recommendations from this two-day meeting will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices next week.
- Also, later this month Pfizer's request to amend their Emergency Use Authorization for vaccine administration to children ages 5-11 years will be reviewed.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will be monitoring the meetings closely and as official recommendations are released, the State will communicate those to Nevada's health care providers and local health authorities so they can advise and protect Nevadans.
- Nevada's [COVID-19 Vaccination Playbook Brief](#) was updated recently to incorporate the recommendations provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on booster shots for those who received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.
- This document has been shared with partners and, similar to the playbook used early in the pandemic, it includes guidance and is tailored to Nevada's unique needs.
- Similar Playbook updates will be made and released as new information on boosters and vaccines for children is received by the federal government

#### **DATA UPDATE:**

- As of Monday, October 11, the Delta surge continues to recede across Nevada, with all key COVID-19 metrics declining.
- Cases declined 26% in Nevada between September 21 and October 5, higher than the 24% decline nationally.
- However, the surge is not over. Rural hospitalizations remain near their peak, and Nevada is still averaging 5 times more cases than in June.
- Nevada's statewide test positivity fell to 8%, the lowest since early July.
- Southern and Northern Nevada have 7% test positivity rates, while rural Nevada is at 14%.
- Cases are also declining in Nevada's schools. The number of new COVID cases reported among staff and students has decreased by 22% over the past two weeks.
  - Statewide hospitalizations declined 11% between September 23 and October 7, less than the 21% decrease nationally.

- o COVID-related deaths in Nevada decreased 25% from September 21 to October 5, above the 12% decrease nationally.
- Predicting the future of the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging, but most models agree that cases will continue declining as Nevada moves into the fall, both in the state and nationally. Critically, these predictions assume that mask usage and vaccination continue at current rates.
  - o Upcoming surges are not expected to be as significant as prior surges. Nationally, one model predicts a continuous decline in cases until March 2022, and another predicts that cases will rise back to near current levels by January 2022.
  - o A severe winter surge is more likely if a new, more transmissible variant emerges, or if people stop wearing masks or getting vaccinated.
  - o Importantly, Nevada could cut anticipated deaths by as much as half if vaccinations continue at the current pace and with widespread mask use.
- Nevada has successfully combatted the current COVID-19 surge, which is helping to keep schools and businesses open. Vaccines and masking are the strongest and most effective tools we have to help protect the economy.
  - o Less than two weeks since announcing a vaccine mandate, over 81% of Nevada System of Higher Education employees are fully vaccinated, significantly higher than the state's overall vaccination rate.
  - o This aligns with a White House Report found that vaccine mandates increased coverage from 70% to over 90% across health care systems, educational institutions, public agencies, and private businesses.
  - o Full vaccination mandates in the workplace could encourage 5 million workers nationwide to return to the workforce, increasing the size of the US workforce by 3%.

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