
Coates' Canons Blog: One Year of COVID-19 in North Carolina

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Article: <https://canons.sog.unc.edu/one-year-of-covid-19-in-north-carolina/>

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The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in North Carolina was announced one year ago today, on March 3, 2020. Since that date, the state has recorded over 860,000 cases and over 11,000 deaths due to COVID-19. The state's Black, Latino, and Native American populations have experienced disproportionate rates of illness and death, exacerbating health inequities that were already known to exist.

The pandemic disrupted the lives of North Carolinians in previously unimaginable ways, affecting work, school, community and family life. Every person and agency in local government in North Carolina has been affected by COVID-19 and some have been consumed by it. Public officials and employees have shown ingenuity, flexibility, and incredible resilience as the state has responded to one issue after another: initially scarce tests; school, business, and government agency closures; mass gathering restrictions; face mask requirements; summer and holiday surges; and the tremendous achievement of successful vaccine development, immediately followed by the practical challenges of making the vaccine available to the public as quickly and equitably as possible.

As we move into the second year of the pandemic in our state, there are many reasons to be hopeful. There are now three vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use in the United States. About 1.5 million first doses of vaccine have already been administered in North Carolina, and yesterday the Governor announced an acceleration in the rollout of vaccines under North Carolina's priority plan: frontline essential workers are eligible for vaccination beginning today, and on March 24th eligibility will extend to certain individuals with high-risk medical conditions, as well as those in group living settings not already reached. Based in part on studies conducted in North Carolina, the CDC has developed detailed guidance on how to reopen schools safely. The use of face masks as a COVID-19 control measure has been studied extensively and found to be effective at protecting the mask-wearer as well as others. Spring is coming, providing more opportunities to be outdoors where there is a decreased risk of COVID-19 transmission, as well as the chance to experience other positive health effects.

In March 2020, the School of Government launched its COVID-19 microsite to compile resources and information for public officials in North Carolina. The site now hosts a large collection of bulletins, blog posts, and recorded Zoom calls on issues ranging from employment law, to the court system, to public health. We hope that you have found these resources helpful, and we will keep adding to them as we continue to work our way through this challenging time.

It has been a very tough year and today is a somber anniversary. The work of local government has never been more important, but those doing the work may be exhausted and experiencing grief of many kinds. I am confident that I speak on behalf of my SOG colleagues as well as myself when I say, thank you very much for your service.

Links

- governor.nc.gov/news/north-carolina-identifies-first-case-covid-19
- covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard/cases
- files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/EO143-Addressing-the-Disproportionate-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Communities-of-Color.pdf
- covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vaccines
- www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines
- covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard/vaccinations
- covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vaccines/find-your-spot-take-your-shot/deeper-dive-group-3
- covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vaccines/find-your-spot-take-your-shot/deeper-dive-group-4



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- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html
 - jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2776536
 - www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/a-prescription-for-better-health-go-alfresco
 - www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/coronavirus-covid-19