


MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Devdutta Sangvai, Secretary, North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services
Dr. Lawrence Greenblatt, State Health Director and Chief Medical Officer, North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services

From: Josh Stein, Governor, North Carolina 

Date: September 12, 2025

Re: Statewide Standing Order regarding COVID-19 Vaccines

As we enter peak season for respiratory viruses, making vaccines accessible to those who want them remains critically important. This includes the COVID-19 vaccine, which continues to be an important way for many people, including those over 65 and others with certain high-risk conditions, to protect themselves. In the past year, North Carolina had more than 120,000 emergency department visits for COVID-like illness, resulting in more than 21,600 hospitalizations.

The COVID-19 vaccine protects people from severe disease, hospitalization, and death. On August 27, 2025, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized COVID-19 vaccines for individuals ages 65 or older and for individuals ages 6 months to 64 years with certain medical conditions and risk factors established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, more than 70% of COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered at pharmacies in North Carolina during the 2024-2025 season. Despite the FDA's approval, North Carolina is currently among the minority of states where all adults must obtain a prescription to receive the COVID-19 vaccine from an immunizing pharmacist. *See* N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-85.15B(a)

As demonstrated by the FDA's approval, COVID-19 vaccines reduce health risks from COVID-19. The [Vaccine Integrity Project](#) housed at the University of Minnesota recently released a comprehensive, independent evidence review with the latest data that continues to support COVID-19 vaccine safety and efficacy. Removing burdensome and unnecessary barriers to accessing the COVID-19 vaccine for vulnerable populations who want them therefore furthers public health.

The Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has authority to provide, under the rules of the North Carolina Commission for Public Health, for the prevention, detection, reporting, and control of communicable diseases and to develop and carry out health programs necessary for the protection and promotion of the public health and the control of diseases. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 130A-5. The State Health Director may exercise authority delegated to him by the Secretary. *Id.* §§ 130A-3, 130A-6.

Therefore, pursuant to Article III, Section 5(4) and N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-12(1), I hereby direct the State Health Director, as a measure for the prevention and control of communicable disease, to issue any statewide standing order that, in his medical judgment, will facilitate access to the COVID-19 vaccine for those who wish to receive it. Any statewide standing order issued pursuant to this directive shall be consistent with the approvals from the FDA, notwithstanding any actions that the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) may take. Any standing order shall further be consistent with approvals under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act, 42 U.S.C. § 247d-6d, including administrative actions implementing the Act.