

ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



FEBRUARY 2021

MONTHLY REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS

PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT: COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE

The months of January and February represented significant progress for the Essex County Health Department. Our highest number of active cases since the pandemic began was recorded at **143** on January 15. We ended February with **55** active cases, and at the time of this report, we are at 36. This time frame also marked the beginning and scale up of our COVID-19 vaccine clinic operations. All of this occurred alongside a considerable statewide push to re-open the economy, resulting in updated guidelines and requirements for schools, gatherings, travel, businesses, and other venues.

ISOLATION & QUARANTINE DATA

Essex County Data*	Total
All Cases/Isolation Orders (to date)	1,443
Current Cases /Isolation Orders	36
All Contacts/Quarantine Orders (to date)	5,854**
Current Contacts /Quarantine Orders	167**

*Query run 03.05.21

**Excludes blanket quarantine orders for schools and organizations with multiple exposures

COVID VACCINATION PROGRESS

In our January Human Services Committee update, we reported that about 12% of the Essex County population had received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, with just over 2% being fully vaccinated. **As of March 4, those numbers have increased to 22% and 13%, respectively.** This is significantly better than the state average of 15.7% for first dose vaccinations, and 8.2% for second dose. The Essex County Health Department has strived to offer vaccine clinics in as many different locations throughout the county as possible, taking important factors into consideration, such as, adequate space/parking for clinic operations; population size; availability of other vaccine providers in the area, ease of access to state-run vaccination sites, etc. To date, we have served the



townships of Saranac Lake, Lake Placid, Ticonderoga, Moriah, Willsboro, Elizabethtown, and Schroon Lake.

Each new week of the vaccine roll-out has been accompanied by changes to the populations eligible to receive the vaccine, the quantities delivered to vaccine providers, and entities slated to receive vaccine. Perhaps the biggest change occurred at the end of February, with the emergency use authorization of Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine. This one-dose vaccine was tested in an international study of about 40,000 people, half of whom got the vaccine and half of whom got a placebo. The study found the vaccine to be 66% effective overall in preventing moderate to severe COVID-19 disease. For disease judged severe or critical, the effectiveness was 85%.



FDA Authorizes J&J COVID-19 Vaccine For Emergency Use : Coronavirus Updates

The Food and Drug Administration authorized Johnson & Johnson's vaccine for emergency use Saturday, a day after a panel of advisers to the ...

5 days ago

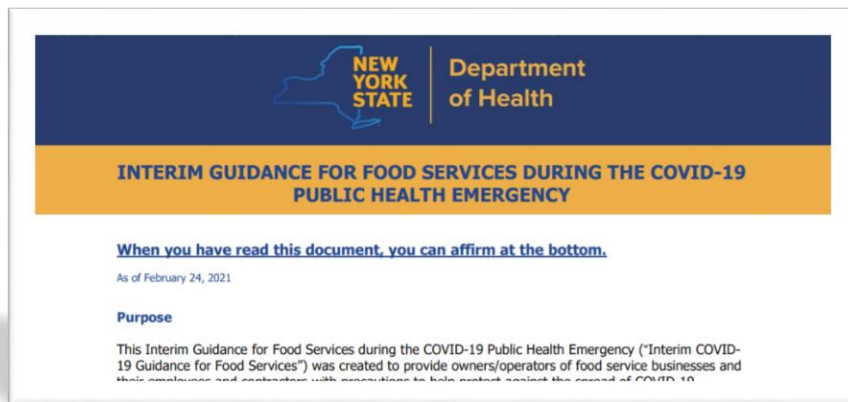




Through collaboration with our Home Health Unit and the Essex County Office for the Aging, our department submitted a proposal (which was approved!) to the North Country Regional COVID-19 Vaccine Network and the NYSDOH to vaccinate our homebound populations in Essex County with the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine. We received an initial allocation of 100 doses this week and we are working on finalizing protocols for vaccine administration.

Updated NYSDOH Guidance

Schools: the NYSDOH COVID-19 Pre-K to Grade 12 Tool Kit was re-released in February, including updated recommendations that align with the changes to quarantine timeframe (14 days to 10 days), as well as other clarifications to streamline the process for identifying and excluding from school sick students or staff. Schools also worked with the department throughout the month of February to develop and submit plans to their Boards of Education and Medical Directors for the resumption of high risk sports. Although the department is not approving these plans (per the guidance issued at the end of January), we are providing technical assistance, as needed.



Food services, catered events, weddings: the guidance for businesses in this industry category was updated on February 24, with detailed requirements for holding large events that exceed the state’s current gathering limit.

Responsible Parties are expected to notify the health department if they plan to host in-person and catered events above the State’s maximum social gathering limit. For each event above the social gathering limit, Responsible Parties must submit event details to the local health authority, at least 5 days in advance of the event date, and such details shall include but not be limited to the (1) Responsible Parties’ contact information, (2) event name or function, (3) event address, (4) event date and time, (5) event duration (including loading and unloading times), (6) expected number of event attendees, (7) expected number of event staff, and (8) location on premises (e.g., indoor, outdoor) indicated by description and/or on event floor plan.

The department is working on creating a form that businesses/venues can utilize to submit plans to us as evidence of compliance with this requirement.

Gathering Limits: Venues will be able to host up to 100 people indoors and up to 200 people outdoors. With testing, this increases to up to 150 people indoors and up to 500 people outdoors. Social distancing and face coverings are still required.

Beginning March 22, outdoor residential gatherings expanded to 25 people; non-residential social gatherings expanded to 100 people indoors and 200 people outdoors.



Travel and Other Quarantine Changes: Domestic travelers are no longer required to quarantine or test-out within 90 days of full vaccination. International travelers must continue to follow CDC guidance. Individuals who are within 90 days of full vacation are also exempt from the requirements to quarantine if they are a close contact of a positive case. Essex County residents with known exposure risks (either via contact or travel) will not be required to quarantine if the following circumstances apply at the time of their exposure:

- They are fully vaccinated with a with FDA-authorized vaccine product;
- They are within 90 days following receipt of the last dose in the series;
- They have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure; and
- Their vaccination status can be verified in the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS), the state’s online portal that allows health care professionals access to vaccination histories,

New Staff:



This month, we welcomed Jasmine Phillip to the Public Health Unit. Jasmine is a Health Educator for COVID Response (full-time temporary position) and will be fully dedicated to working on COVID-related activities. She has jumped right in, training in CommCare, Case Investigation & Contact Tracing duties.

We're incredibly happy to welcome her to our team and know she will be a great addition!