

February 25, 2022



To All Staff:

PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE NEWSLETTER FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON COVID. THIS IS THE PRIMARY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION ON THIS TOPIC.

Changes in the information below are highlighted in green.



BOOSTER MANDATE FOR HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES

NYS announced it will not enforce the booster mandate that went into effect 2/21/22 and that they will re-assess this in 3 months. However, GSC still strongly urges all staff to receive the booster when they are eligible to protect themselves, our residents, our staff and the greater community.

The CDC posts the following on its website:

Data Supporting Need for a Booster Shot

Studies show after getting vaccinated against COVID-19, protection against the virus and the ability to prevent infection with variants may decrease over time and due to changes in variants.

- Although COVID-19 vaccines remain effective in preventing severe disease, [recent data](#) [1 MB, 68 pages] suggest their effectiveness at preventing infection or severe illness wanes over time, especially in people ages 65 years and older.
- The recent emergence of the Omicron variant further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and prevention efforts needed to protect against COVID-19.
- Data from clinical trials showed that a booster shot increased the immune response in trial participants who finished a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna primary series 6 months earlier or who received a J&J/Janssen single-dose vaccine 2 months earlier. With an increased immune response, people should have improved protection against getting infected with COVID-19. For Pfizer-BioNTech and J&J/Janssen, clinical trials also showed that a booster shot helped prevent severe disease.

Booster clinics, available to employees, are scheduled for;

GS Village Endwell: Monday 2/28/22 at 11am

GS Fairview Home: Monday 2/28/22 at 9:30am

GS Chase: TBD

Booster Vaccinations are also available at many local pharmacies; CVS, Walgreens, etc., by appointment.

Once you have received your booster, please provide your HR RN Wellness Nurse (DON @ Chase) with your updated COVID vaccination ID card.

Any questions please contact the HR RN Wellness Nurse, DON at Chase, Human Resources or your Supervisor.

On 2/18/22, NYS made the following press release:

The New York State Department of Health today highlighted progress in getting healthcare workers boosted and announced additional efforts to increase booster rates among healthcare workers.

According to the latest data reported to New York State by healthcare facilities, 75% of the State's healthcare workforce have either received or are willing to receive a booster, including 88% among direct care staff in hospitals.

The State will continue to work closely with hospitals and healthcare facilities to make sure employees are up to date on their vaccines. Efforts will focus on expanding access for healthcare workers to receive a booster dose, including bringing boosters directly to healthcare settings.

"The vaccine and booster are critical tools to keep both healthcare workers and their patients safe, and we continue to urge everyone to get vaccinated and receive a booster dose when eligible," said **State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. "While we are making progress with 75% of staff received or are willing to receive their booster, the reality is that not enough healthcare workers will be boosted by next week's requirement in order to avoid substantial staffing issues in our already overstressed healthcare system. That is why we are announcing additional efforts to work closely with healthcare facilities and ensure that our healthcare workforce is up to date on their doses."

In order to avoid potential staffing issues and give healthcare workers more time to get boosted, the State will no longer enforce the booster requirement that will go into effect on February 21. The State will reassess in three months whether additional steps need to be taken to increase booster rates among the healthcare workforce. The original vaccination requirement for healthcare workers remains in effect.

See below a healthcare workforce booster summary as of February 15, 2022:

TOTAL STAFF:

	Received Booster	Willing and Awaiting Booster	Total	As a % of Total Staff
Hospitals	278,164	154,598	432,762	84%
Nursing Homes	62,540	12,536	75,076	51%
Adult Care Facilities	14,548	4,359	18,907	63%
LHCSAs (Home Care)	83,341	106,292	189,633	70%
Hospice	3,719	2,088	5,807	95%
CHHAs (Home Care)	6,680	4,646	11,326	84%
Total	448,992	284,519	733,511	75%

DIRECT CARE STAFF:

	Received Booster	Willing and Awaiting Booster	Total	As a % of Total Direct Care Staff
Hospitals	188,732	119,565	308,297	88%
Nursing Homes	39,621	8,574	48,195	51%
Adult Care Facilities	6,888	2,491	9,379	62%
LHCSAs (Home Care)	75,583	96,695	172,278	68%
Hospice	2,627	1,419	4,046	91%
CHHAs (Home Care)	5,205	3,594	8,799	85%
Total	318,656	232,338	550,994	76%

GSC STATISTICS

as of 2/24/2022	GSFH	GSVE	Chase
Year To Date + residents			
SNF	1	0	17
ACF	2	5	n\a
IL	0	0	n\a
Year To Date + Staff			
SNF	21	8	22
ACF	12	13	n\a
IL	n\a	6	n\a
Year To Date Deaths			
SNF	0	0	1
ACF	0	0	n\a
IL	0	0	n\a
Active Residents Cases (in-house or hospitalized)			
SNF	0	0	0
ACF	1	0	n\a
IL	0	0	n\a
Staff Furloughed			
SNF	0	0	0
ACF	0	1	n\a
IL	n\a	0	n\a

The CDC website reports the following information for Broome and Chenango Counties:

Broome County, New York

[State Health Department](#)

7-day Metrics | [7-day Percent Change](#)

Community Transmission ● High

Everyone in **Broome County, New York** should wear a mask in public, indoor settings. Mask requirements might vary from place to place. Make sure you follow local laws, rules, regulations or guidance.

[How is community transmission calculated?](#)

	February 25, 2022
Cases	413
Case Rate per 100k	216.81
% Positivity	8.43%
Deaths	<10
% of population ≥ 5 years of age fully vaccinated	66.5%
New Hospital Admissions	50

Chenango County, New York

[State Health Department](#)

7-day Metrics | [7-day Percent Change](#)

Community Transmission ● High

Everyone in **Chenango County, New York** should wear a mask in public, indoor settings. Mask requirements might vary from place to place. Make sure you follow local laws, rules, regulations or guidance.

[How is community transmission calculated?](#)

	February 25, 2022
Cases	79
Case Rate per 100k	167.35
% Positivity	8.78%
Deaths	0
% of population ≥ 5 years of age fully vaccinated	63.9%
New Hospital Admissions	4

CDC CHANGES GUIDANCE AND ADVISES LONGER INTERVALS BETWEEN VACCINE DOSES

US health officials say some people getting Pfizer or Moderna Covid vaccines should consider waiting up to eight weeks between the first and second doses, instead of the three or four weeks previously recommended.

CDC officials said they were reacting to research showing that the longer interval can provide more enduring protection against the coronavirus. Research suggests that 12- to 64-year-olds – especially males ages 12 to 39 – can benefit from the longer spacing. They also say the longer wait may help diminish an already rare vaccination side effect: a form of heart inflammation seen in some young men.

The suggestion to wait up to two months does not apply to all. The original, shorter interval is still recommended for people with weakened immune systems; people 65 and older; and anyone who needs fast protection due to risk of severe disease.

Primary series

COVID-19 Vaccination Schedule*

Vaccine	0 month	1 month	2 month	3 month	4 month	5 month	6 month	7 month
Pfizer-BioNTech (ages 5–11 years)	1 st dose	2 nd dose (3 weeks after 1 st dose)						
Pfizer-BioNTech (ages 12 years and older)	1 st dose	2 nd dose† (3–8 weeks after 1 st dose)					Booster dose† (at least 5 months after 2 nd dose)	
Moderna (ages 18 years and older)	1 st dose	2 nd dose† (4–8 weeks after 1 st dose)					Booster dose† (at least 5 months after 2 nd dose)	
Janssen (ages 18 years and older)	1 st dose		Booster dose† (at least 2 months after 1 st dose)					

NYS Mask Mandate

The Governor has lifted the mask mandate for businesses, but noted Counties, Cities and businesses can choose to continue to require masks. The mask requirement remains in effect for the following:

- State regulated Health Care Settings
- State regulated Adult Care Facilities and Nursing Homes

- Correctional Facilities
- Schools and Child Care Centers
- Homeless Shelters
- Domestic Violence Shelters
- Buses and bus stations, trains and train stations, subways and subway stations, and planes and airports

NYS State of Emergency Extended

Gov. Kathy Hochul has extended the COVID-related state of emergency in New York through March 16, 2022.

The Governor signed an executive order to sustain the state government's disaster emergency powers, which allow state officials to continue various efforts to support COVID-19 vaccine distributions and enforce other regulations intended to limit the virus' spread

NYS NEW COVID GUIDANCE UPDATE

VISITORS: The guidance has not changed since last week.

- **SNF Visitors Masking and Distancing:**
 - All visitors must wear a well-fitting non-surgical paper mask or a mask of higher quality (i.e., surgical mask, KN95, or N95) at all times during any visitation at the facility. If the visitor wishes, a cloth mask may be placed over the paper mask. The masks must cover both the nose and the mouth.
 - All visitors must physically distance from facility personnel and other patients/residents/visitors who are not directly associated with the specific resident(s) being visited by that individual.
- **SNF Visitor Testing**
 - All nursing homes “must verify that visitors have received a negative SARS-CoV-2 test result one day prior to visitation for antigen tests and two days prior to visitation for NAAT (e.g., PCR) tests.” This means, for example, that a test for a Sunday visit should be conducted no earlier than Saturday if it’s an antigen test or Friday if it’s a PCR test. We can accept lab results or the results of a home test.
 - Results should be presented at screening.
 - GS will provide rapid tests for those unable to obtain them elsewhere. These tests can be obtained from the receptionist screening the visitor, but must be administered outside of the facility independent of any assistance from our staff. Unfortunately, our staff will not be able to provide direction or physical assistance with the testing, so visitors who are unsure of their ability to self-administer the test should make alternate arrangements. For visitors who visit for multiple days, including a visitor who comes every day, proof of negative testing is required as often as feasible, at a minimum every third day (meaning at a minimum testing is required on day 1, day 4, day 7, and so on).
 - Exemptions:
 - Ombudsman representatives. Under certain circumstances, the resident and ombudsman should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting, and the visit should take place in the resident’s room.
 - Compassionate care visitors who are visiting in anticipation of end of life or in the case of significant mental, physical, or social decline or crisis. Other compassionate care visits are not exempted- only those that are so urgent in nature that the requirement to provide test results would result in an unacceptable delay in visiting. The visitor must wear any additional PPE that the facility deems appropriate.
 - Emergency Medical Services personnel.
 - **Protocol for SNF visitor testing:**
 - When visitors enter the building for screening they will be asked for their negative test results. Negative tests results could be: a test card (Antigen Rapid test), electronic results (shown from their phone or tablet), or a paper laboratory result (PCR.)
 - Receptionist/designee will confirm negative results on the visitor sign in log
 - If the visitor does not present negative test results they will be given an iHealth OTC COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test.
 - The visitor should then return to their car and complete the test
 - All tests cards should be discarded in a red biohazard bag located in the lobby.

- In the event a visitor refuses testing they will not be permitted in the facility. The receptionist should contact the HC Nurse immediately. The visitor may provide their contact information and the Nursing Home Administrator will contact them on the next business day.
- Note: If a visitor enters the facility after normal reception hours, the House Charge Nurse will be responsible to confirm negative test results and document on the visitor sign in log.
- **Positive Results and Infection within Prior 90 Days:**
 - If a visitor tests positive, they should be excluded until they meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria for discontinuing isolation for the general public (i.e., currently for five days) and present a negative test.
 - If a visitor has had COVID-19 in the past 90 days, they must still be tested. If they test positive, they must be excluded.

COVERAGE OF AT HOME COVID-19 KITS

For employees with health insurance benefits through CDPHP

Effective January 15, 2022 CDPHP is covering at-home COVID-19 test kits that are FDA-approved or issued an EUA by the FDA.

CDPHP will be reimbursing for kits purchased out of pocket (up to \$12 per test or \$24 for a kit containing two tests). The test kits will be covered under pharmacy benefits.

Members may obtain up to eight tests (or four kits containing two tests) per covered family member, per calendar month. For example, if the first test kit is purchased on January 15, a maximum of eight tests can be purchased by February 14.

To avoid an upfront cost, members will need to purchase the test kit at a pharmacy window or pharmacy counter of a pharmacy in the CDPHP network. If members choose to purchase a test kit at a non-participating pharmacy or other retailer, there will be an upfront cost and a reimbursement request form required for reimbursement.

For Chase employees with health insurance benefits through Excellus BlueCross BlueShield

Effective January 15, 2022 Excellus BlueCross BlueShield will cover at-home COVID-19 tests.

How it will work

Eligible members who purchase an at-home COVID-19 test on Jan. 15 or after will be able to submit a paper claim for reimbursement. Members should save the receipts and the box the test came in.

Who is eligible?

Members are eligible for no-cost tests if they receive their pharmacy benefits from Excellus BCBS.

Members can acquire up to eight tests at no cost per 30-day period. Please note: If multiple tests are included in one kit, each test in the kit counts once toward the total of eight tests allowed.

Which tests are eligible?

Please note the following regarding coverage for COVID at-home tests at no cost:

- Tests purchased before Jan. 15 are not eligible
- Tests must be authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and not require a lab for processing.
- No-cost coverage is for at-home tests purchased for any reason except to fulfill an employment, school or travel requirement (per the federal guidelines)

Where else can I get free tests?

- Starting Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, all Americans will be able to order free at-home COVID-19 tests through the federal government website, [covidtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov). **An order placed on 1/27/22 in Broome County is not due for home deliver until 2/26/22, so please plan accordingly.**

- Check with your county health departments. Many health departments periodically offer free tests.
- The federal government is also providing up to 50 million free, at-home tests to community health centers and Medicare-certified health clinics for distribution at no cost to patients and community members.

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