

Legislative Update

- Late last night, **sponsors of House Bill (HB) 12-1232 – the public option proposal – agreed to postpone the bill’s first committee hearing in the House Health and Insurance Committee, which had been scheduled for today at 1:30 p.m.** CHA is continuing negotiations with the sponsors, the Polis administration and other key stakeholders and will keep members apprised of additional developments.

What Has Changed Since Last Update

- The **White House announced new actions to increase COVID-19 vaccinations:**
 - Expanding the [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](#) to 20,000 more local pharmacies, bringing the total to nearly **40,000 pharmacies**.
 - Distributing \$100 million to expand COVID-19 vaccine access for vulnerable and at-risk seniors and people with disabilities with nearly \$100 million in grants to community-based organizations in the [aging and disability networks](#). Funding will be distributed in two weeks (i.e., on or around April 12).
 - Increasing mass vaccination centers with 12 more [federally supported mass vaccination centers](#). To date, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has launch 21 mass vaccination sites.
- **Pfizer-BioNTech announced that in a Phase 3 trial its COVID-19 vaccine was 100 percent effective in preventing infection and showed no serious side effects in adolescents aged 12 to 15.** The companies plan to submit the data to the FDA for a requested amendment to the Emergency Use Authorization so use can be expanded to this age group as quickly as possible.

Things to Know

- CDPHE [reminded](#) Coloradans to access testing when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or following an exposure to another person with COVID-19. It notes that **Colorado is following the national trend of decreased testing numbers recently**.
- As of March 29, **more than 1,170 Colorado providers have administered 2,587,865 COVID-19 vaccine doses** for 1,634,183 people with first doses and 987,088 people who are fully immunized. The state’s percent positivity continues to rise, with the three-day average up to 5.58 percent.

Upcoming Webinars/Calls

- April 13-15: ASPR 2021 Virtual Preparedness Summit. [Register here](#).

COVID Resources

COVID Coverage

Colorado's COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations were roughly stable over March. Can that survive reopening?

The Denver Post

Colorado has been walking a fine balance, with a rough stalemate between COVID-19 and the vaccines and precautions meant to beat the virus. It's not clear if that balance will hold as the state continues to open up. As of Monday, COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are at about the same level they were at the beginning of March, said Beth Carlton, an assistant professor of environmental and occupational health at the Colorado School of Public Health. Normally, cases and hospitalizations would fall as more people are vaccinated, or would rise as people begin mixing more — especially with more-contagious variants of the virus spreading.

As more vulnerable Coloradans get the vaccine, who is still in the hospital for COVID-19?

KUSA-TV (Denver)

The COVID-19 unit at the Sky Ridge Medical Center in Douglas County is much quieter now than it was in 2020. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Eric Lung said at the peak of the winter surge, up to 65 patients were in the unit. Now there is one COVID-19 patient in the ICU, and nine getting treatment on other floors. He said none of them have had one or two doses of the vaccine. The youngest of those patients is 38 years old, and the oldest is 92, with an average age of about 60. Many of them have underlying health conditions.

Q & A: How and where to find a COVID vaccine in Colorado

KUSA-TV (Denver)

Starting this Friday, April 2, everyone age 16 and older in Colorado who wants to receive a COVID-19 vaccine will be eligible to do so, the governor announced Monday. With that influx of people becoming eligible, don't expect to get a vaccine right away. You won't be able to sign up for an appointment until you're eligible, you can, however, take some steps now, to make the process a little smoother. For example, you don't need to wait until then to get on a waitlist, you can sign up now.

Colorado tries to combat COVID vaccine hesitancy

Axios

Colorado announced it will make COVID-19 vaccines available to everyone over 16 starting Friday. The problem is that not everyone wants one. The vaccine-hesitant population in Colorado shrank since September, but remains persistent, according to a recent poll commissioned by the state and obtained by Axios. One in five Coloradans say they "definitely" wouldn't get the vaccine, or would do so only if required.

COVID-19 cases rising again in Pueblo, threatens to push county into Level Yellow

The Pueblo Chieftain

Moving the test site to the mall opened the Fairgrounds to be used for a state-run regional vaccination clinic, which is operated by Centura Health. Evetts said total vaccinations administered throughout the county have now topped more than 45,000 first doses and approximately 30,000 second doses — 22,847 of those first doses and 17,402 of those second doses were administered through the Pueblo County Unified COVID-19 vaccination program, with the others coming through local hospitals, medical clinics and pharmacies like Walgreens, King Soopers, Walmart, JB Pharmacy and Kaiser Permanente.

UCHealth Develops COVID Mass-Vaccination Playbook

EMS World

Vaccinating 5,000 drivers/passengers in one day against COVID-19 sounds like a tall order. However, this is precisely what Colorado's UCHealth system has been achieving with its Denver drive-through clinics since late January. As a public service to other vaccination authorities, UCHealth has compiled the detailed plans for these events in a "mass-vaccination playbook" that can be freely downloaded.

Resiliency proved greatest medicine for health care workers on frontlines of pandemic

The Longmont Leader

But even as concerns arose statewide about available hospital beds and ventilators, those on the frontlines at Longmont hospitals said teamwork and community support helped buoy their spirits as they worked to provide the best care possible. "What was tough was the unknown," Jeanine Snyder, a post-anesthesia care unit nurse at UCHealth's Longs Peak Hospital, said of the pandemic's earliest days.

Boulder Community Health invites LGBTQ+ community to share COVID-19 vaccine concerns

Colorado Hometown Weekly (Boulder)

Boulder Community Health on Sunday will host a virtual meeting called Vaccine Concerns of the LGBTQ+ Community, where people are invited to hear from experts and share their questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. The meeting will be from 6 to 7 p.m. on Zoom, according to a Boulder Community Health news release Thursday.

Father of four becomes Colorado's first lung transplant patient due to COVID

KDVR-TV (Denver)

The only person in Colorado to receive a lung transplant due to COVID is now recovering at UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital on the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. Bryan Raymond

underwent the eight-hour surgery on March 6 and is now on the rehabilitation floor. "I feel great now," he said.

How DaVita is working to directly administer Covid-19 vaccines to patients across the country

Denver Business Journal

Denver-based DaVita Inc. is using its global network of dialysis clinics to help get Covid-19 vaccines distributed to patients. There are three ways dialysis patients can get access to vaccines, DaVita's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jeffrey Giullian told Denver Business Journal.

'We're skating on a knife's edge right now': Scientists worry US could be headed for yet another COVID-19 surge

USA TODAY

Average daily reported cases are up 10% compared to a week earlier, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows, with more than 30 million COVID-19 cases reported since early last year. Hospitalizations and deaths, which usually lag cases by a few weeks, have inched upward as well, after a decline and plateau that began in early January. Reich and others say they expect that the immunity from natural infections plus the successful rollout of vaccines, which are now reaching nearly 3 million people a day, will help moderate this surge.

With older Americans largely vaccinated, more new COVID-19 cases among younger adults

ABC News

As more older Americans get vaccinated an increasing number of new COVID-19 cases are impacting younger adults, prompting warnings that Americans remain vigilant in an effort to prevent more people from becoming sick. The number of new COVID-19 cases increased more than 10% in 26 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico since last week, a possible signal that the country is on the cusp of a new surge.

The Fourth Surge Is Upon Us. This Time, It's Different.

The Atlantic

We appear to be entering our fourth surge. The good news is that this one is different. We now have an unparalleled supply of astonishingly efficacious vaccines being administered at an incredible clip. If we act quickly, this surge could be merely a blip for the United States. But if we move too slowly, more people will become infected by this terrible new variant, which is acutely dangerous to those who are not yet vaccinated.

Demand for vaccines is already waning in some parts of the country

Axios

Some states are expanding vaccine eligibility partially because of a troubling reason: Not enough people want to get vaccinated. Vaccine supplies are still limited, but they're already outpacing demand in some parts of the country, especially rural areas. And that could be a bad sign for the future. 14 states have made all adults eligible to receive a coronavirus vaccine, and the vast majority have said they will do so by or before President Biden's May 1 goal.

Pfizer, Moderna COVID-19 vaccines highly effective after first shot in real-world use, U.S. study shows

Reuters

COVID-19 vaccines developed by Pfizer Inc with BioNTech SE and Moderna Inc reduced risk of infection by 80% two weeks or more after the first of two shots, according to data from a real-world U.S. study released on Monday. The risk of infection fell 90% by two weeks after the second shot, the study of nearly 4,000 U.S. healthcare personnel and first responders found. The results validate earlier studies that had indicated the vaccines begin to work soon after a first dose, and confirm that they also prevent asymptomatic infections.

Pfizer says its COVID-19 vaccine protects younger teens

The Associated Press

Pfizer announced Wednesday that its COVID-19 vaccine is safe and strongly protective in kids as young as 12, a step toward possibly beginning shots in this age group before they head back to school in the fall. Most COVID-19 vaccines being rolled out worldwide are for adults, who are at higher risk from the coronavirus. Pfizer's vaccine is authorized for ages 16 and older. But vaccinating children of all ages will be critical to stopping the pandemic.

Covid-19 Vaccinations of Pregnant Mothers Also Protect Newborns, Studies Suggest

The Wall Street Journal - Subscription required

Pregnant women who get the coronavirus vaccine pass their antibodies on to their newborns, recent studies suggest, a promising sign that babies can acquire from their mothers some protection against Covid-19. At least three studies have found that women who received either the Pfizer Inc. - BioNTech SE vaccine or the Moderna Inc. shots during pregnancy had coronavirus antibodies in their umbilical-cord blood. That indicates the women's babies got the antibodies, too.

Insurers test re-enacting cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment

Modern Healthcare - Subscription required

Among the other more than 60 nationwide Blue Cross and Blue Shield affiliates that Modern Healthcare reached out to ask when they planned on re-enacting cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment, Blue Cross NC appears to be the nation's first to send bills back to patients. Earlier this month, Blue Cross Rhode Island announced plans to restart cost-sharing for coronavirus treatment, although the insurer quickly reversed the decision after pushback from the state's Office of Insurance Commissioner.

'It Felt Like Deception': An Elite NYC Hospital Charges Huge Virus Test Fees

The New York Times - Subscription required

Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan advertised its "Covid-19 Testing" on a large blue and white banner outside its Greenwich Village division's emergency room. The banner said nothing about cost. But cost turned out to be the testing's most noteworthy feature. Lenox Hill, one of the city's oldest and best-known hospitals, repeatedly billed patients more than \$3,000 for the routine nasal swab test, about 30 times the test's typical cost.

With light at the end of the tunnel, loved ones feel the anguish of Covid-19 deaths particularly hard

STAT

Murray, 60, an old soul who cooked huge spreads of soul food and loved Mahalia Jackson, died on March 16. His death was another tally in the nation's confirmed Covid-19 death toll of more than 550,000 — one that is still growing by 1,000 every day. Each has been a tragedy in its own right, an

individual loss that has been drowned out in a period of mass, unfathomable death. But with vaccines rolling out, and promises of a return to life come summer, the grief of losing loved ones now is shaded in some cases by the anguish that they made it through so much of the pandemic and were so close to being protected.

'I Can Breathe Again': Older Adults Begin to Test Freedom After Covid Vaccinations

Kaiser Health News

With a mix of relief and caution, older adults fully vaccinated against covid-19 are moving out into the world and resuming activities put on hold during the pandemic. Many are making plans to see adult children and hug grandchildren they haven't visited for months — or longer. Others are getting together with friends indoors, for the first time in a long time. People are scheduling medical appointments that had been delayed and putting trips to destinations near and far on calendars. Simple things that felt unsafe pre-vaccination now feel possible.



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