

COVID-19: Joint statement from departments of health regarding travel & quarantine

Upcoming school breaks raise concerns about travel-based COVID-19 cases

The leaders of the five Western New York county health departments (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara) are providing the following joint statement related to the upcoming school breaks and the New York state travel advisory:

Our departments share a common goal to keep the students, families and staff associated with schools healthy and safe, and to keep schools open. Reducing the risk of travel-based cases, and reducing the spread of variant COVID-19 strains to and within WNY communities is one part of our collective COVID-19 response.

With vacation breaks scheduled in February and April for many schools, our departments are strongly discouraging travel to areas of the country with high rates of COVID-19 transmission, known cases of variant COVID-19 strains, or areas that do not have COVID-19 safety measures in place. All NYS travel advisory guidance applies, because vaccinated individuals may still be able to infect others

following an exposure to the virus.

If school staff or families choose to travel, NYS travel advisory guidance will apply for travelers who are in a noncontiguous state for more than 24 hours:

- Quarantine option: Travelers must quarantine for 10 days following arrival in New York.

-Or-

- Quarantine plus test option:
 - √ Travelers must obtain a diagnostic COVID-19 test within three days of departure, prior to arrival in New York; and

- √ The traveler must, upon arrival in New York, quarantine for three days; and

- √ On day four of their quarantine, the traveler must obtain another COVID-19 diagnostic test. If both test results are negative, the traveler may exit quarantine early upon receipt of the second negative diagnostic test.

County health departments have fielded questions from school leaders about whether school staff who have received one or both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine



need to quarantine after out-of-state travel. To date, the New York State Department of Health has not issued any guidance that removes a quarantine requirement for people who have been vaccinated against COVID-19. All travel advisory guidance applies.

Vacation breaks in other parts of the country also mean that travelers could arrive for visits into

WNY. For those arriving for visits, our departments advise visitors to heed the NYS travel advisory and take other public health measures like wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, staying home when sick and avoiding gatherings.

For staff and families who choose to travel to areas with high levels of COVID-19 transmission,

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has information for travelers to consider before, during and after travel. Households where someone is at increased risk for getting very sick from COVID-19, including adults over 65 and individuals with certain chronic medical conditions, should seriously consider postponing travel. Individuals who do not show COVID-19 symptoms may still be infected and able to spread COVID-19 to others. That includes children, who may have no symptoms or very mild symptoms.

As a reminder, New York State Department of Health guidance from November noted that, although teachers, school staff and child care workers are considered essential, the NYS travel advisory exemption for essential workers does not apply to teachers, school employees, or child care workers, due to the sensitivity of these congregate settings.

Our Lady of Peace completes 2nd COVID-19 vaccinations

Associates and residents at Ascension Living Our Lady of Peace wrapped up a second COVID-19 vaccine clinic at the end of January, during which time Walgreens administered 312 vaccines.

"The second COVID-19 vaccine clinic went very smooth when considering the large number of vaccinations that were given," said Aaron Mruk, RN, director of quality at Ascension Living Our Lady of Peace. "Our team and the Walgreens pharmacists worked seamlessly to accomplish this important part in ending the pandemic."

OLP said family members joined employees in feeling a sense of relief knowing their loved ones are being vaccinated.

Shown are OLP staffers who participated in the vaccination effort. From left: Lexus Carlisto, activity associate; Katey Dulak, activity director; Jennifer Gaetano, activity associate; Michelle Wirth, social worker; and Meaghan Oswald, health information manager. (Submitted photo)



IN THE NEWS

County to hold info session on COVID-19 vaccinations

The Town of Lewiston Senior Center and Lewiston Senior Club announced Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh and officials of the Niagara County Health Department will hold a COVID-19 information session at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 9, at the Senior Center on Lower River Road.

County officials are expected to provide information covering the eligibility process, including preregistration and scheduling of COVID-19 vaccinations for area seniors age 65 and older.

The session is open to area seniors, with limited seating and is expected to take place following the center's lunch program.

For more information, call the center at 754-2071 or contact member Paulette Glasgow at 297-4749.

Ash Wednesday ashes

St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Lewiston will offer "Ashes to Go," in accordance with COVID-19 guidelines, between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17, at Hennepin Park (corner of Center and South Fourth streets).

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