



HEALTH CARE RECAP

February 12 - 18, 2021

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SESSION STATUS

At 1:22 p.m. on Friday, February 5, 2021 the House returned briefly and now stands adjourned until Monday, March 15, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

At 1:26 p.m. on Friday, February 5, 2021 the Senate stands in recess until Monday, February 22, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

UPCOMING SESSION DAYS

House

March 15-17, 22-24
 April 5-7, 19-21, 26-28
 May 3-5, 24-26
 June 7-9, 14-16, 21-25, 28-30
 Sep. 13-15, 27-29
 Oct. 4-6, 25-27
 Nov. 8-10, 15-17
 Dec. 13-15
 Budget hearings: Feb. 16 -
 March 4

Senate

Feb. 22-24
 March 15-17, 23, 24
 April 19-21, 26-28
 May 10-12, 24-26
 June 7-9, 14-16, 21-23, 28-30
 Budget hearings: March 8 -
 April 22

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Around the Rotunda

PLS coverage of Capitol events including press conferences, bill signings and media availabilities

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROVIDES COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

By Jeff Cox and Matt Hess, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | February 17, 2021

Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam and Senior Advisor for COVID-19 Response Lindsey Mauldin met with reporters to provide an update on the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine in Pennsylvania.

Sec. Beam told reporters, “As the Department of Health (DOH) works to improve the complex processes necessary to get the COVID-19 vaccine from the manufacturers into the arms of Pennsylvanians as quickly as possible, we discovered some providers inadvertently used the Moderna vaccine shipped to them intended as second doses as first doses.” She explained, “It seems the perfect storm of circumstances: an eagerness to get vaccines to residents, incredible pent-up desire by the public to get this vaccine, dedicated vaccine providers trying to deliver what their customers are demanding, inconsistent vaccine allocations, confusion about Operation Warp Speed vaccine deliveries, and the need for more frequent and clearer communications from the department all converged to bring us to the point in which we are in today.”

Sec. Beam said, “In the short term we are faced with second dose Moderna vaccine requests far exceeding the Moderna vaccine allocated to the state this week.” She stressed, “Allow me to be abundantly clear: the Pfizer vaccine is not affected.” Sec. Beam stated, “After careful review and discussion with legislators on Gov. Tom Wolf’s COVID-19 Vaccine Joint Task Force, we have a clear path forward. Again, we are committed to ensuring that second doses are available.” According to Sec. Beam, the department explored excess inventory not scheduled for administration this week and, to the extent they were able to, used it to help address this issue. She reported that one of the remedies includes adjusting the timing of Moderna second dose administration. Sec. Beam explained that all providers will be following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines that set the minimum time between doses at 28 days and the maximum time at 42 days. According to Sec. Beam, “By extending the time between doses while remaining within CDC guidelines, we can minimize any disruption to first dose vaccinations.” She asserted, “Our goal remains getting the extremely limited supply of vaccine to people as quickly and as efficiently as possible.”

Sec. Beam told reporters, “The department is working directly with vaccine providers throughout this process and, in line with the vaccine order that the governor and I signed last week, we will soon be able to provide more precise information on vaccine allocations each week to increase transparency and predictability with first doses.” She stated, “This situation is a stark reminder that right now there is not enough vaccine for everyone who is eligible to get it. We know there will be more vaccine in the future and we are working to get as much vaccine as we can into the arms of Pennsylvanians.” Sec. Beam concluded, “We will find ways to enhance that process. In the meantime, we must mask up, wash up and social distance to save lives.”

Mauldin reported that through February 16, 1,749,949 doses have been administered by local vaccine providers. She said that 82 percent of first doses have been administered and 38 percent of second doses have been administered. Mauldin explained, “That means over 1.5 million Pennsylvanians have received their first dose and nearly half a million people have received both doses and are now fully vaccinated.” According to Mauldin, “This week Pennsylvania has been allocated 183,575 first doses of vaccine and 143,275 second doses of vaccine.” She pointed out that the federal government is also sending thousands of vaccine doses directly to Rite Aid and Topco stores in Pennsylvania under the Federal Retail

Pharmacy Program and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health receives its own, separate allocation of vaccine. Mauldin said in total 326,850 doses are coming to Pennsylvania vaccine providers this week, which is an increase of almost 8,000 doses from last week.

Mauldin commented, "We know that getting vaccinated is such an important step in the effort to stop COVID-19 and we know people may be struggling to get a vaccine appointment." She continued, "Right now there is simply not enough vaccine available to meet the incredible demand and Pennsylvania is not unique in this regard." Mauldin said, "There will be more vaccine available in the future and Pennsylvania has a large network of trusted local vaccine providers ready to deliver it when that day comes." She noted, "Meanwhile, last week we launched the Your Turn tool to help everyone understand where they fall in the vaccination prioritization effort."

Mauldin also commented, "While most of the focus across the country has been on the vaccination effort, it is important to remember that testing for COVID-19 is still widely available in Pennsylvania. In fact, our COVID-19 testing provider continues to offer regional testing in five counties each week." She reported over 11 million test results have been received in Pennsylvania to date. Mauldin concluded, "The virus remains a very real threat and one we must take seriously by following existing mitigation orders and continuing to test. Ultimately, all protective mitigation measures, testing and vaccinations work in conjunction to provide a safe and healthy Pennsylvania."

Sec. Beam responded to questions from the news media.

How many doses were impacted, who are the providers, and who will decide who will not receive a first dose?

Sec. Beam said the department has communicated with the legislative task force and with providers to reinforce that every action will be taken to provide secure second doses. "Providers will have the ability to communicate with us as they learn through today and tomorrow what the allocations will be and the impact to them. If there is one message to provide to individuals it is that this is all in an effort for second dose security," she stated.

But you didn't answer my question; who are the providers?

Sec. Beam explained that the amount of doses requested was 200,000 second doses of Moderna. "That's roughly our entire Moderna allocation for the week so we had to be able to adjust. We were able to partner with our federal pharmacy partners and retail partners to identify any inventory we could use in the immediate to address this. We also communicated to our partners that they could avail themselves to CDC's permission to go to the 42nd day, which is the rescheduling of a second dose appointment to the fifth or sixth week...All of that was done to minimize any disruption to those first doses, which will have a reduction for the following week. Providers will be finding out their allocations throughout the day today and we are also holding frequent provider communications for them to engage with us directly with any questions they may have," she stated.

Were all 200,000 second doses given out as first doses?

Sec. Beam said the matter is a structural issue that began in the beginning of January. "There was inadvertent use of Moderna second doses and it was an issue that compounded week over week. This is the week that we addressed it because it has become so significant. The amount of requested second doses of Moderna was almost equal to our entire allocation of Moderna. Over the next two to three weeks we will have corrected for it. By increasing our provider communications we will hopefully be better aligned with our provider community and prevent it from happening moving forward," she stated.

Has the narrowing down of providers begun?

Sec. Beam said the department is attempting to concentrate the vaccine to providers that are able to handle volume and speed. "Our first doses will progressively be going to a smaller provider network. Second doses will remain secure and providers will receive the second doses that they have administered the corresponding first dose for," she stated.

Does this impact individuals who had a second Moderna shot scheduled?

Sec. Beam indicated those individuals will be rescheduled for the following week or the week after they were scheduled to receive their second shot. "Patients will be able to secure their second shot within the 42-day window," she stated.

Will primary care physicians still be able to administer the vaccine?

Sec. Beam said the ability for primary care physicians to administer first doses will taper off but affirmed that second doses will still go to the provider that administered the first dose.

Why have places like Lancaster General Hospital not received vaccine shipments for two weeks?

Sec. Beam said the department's press team would follow up.

Other hospitals have said weather issues have impacted their ability to receive vaccine shipments, is that accurate?

Sec. Beam said weather has been an issue, noting the past few weeks have been concerning as well as upcoming weather forecasts. Regarding specific causations for hospitals, she stated she would have the press team follow up.

Is the issue with the second shots due to a lack of a centralized system for vaccinations?

Sec. Beam said the issue is not related to a lack of a centralized system. "Ultimately it is a scarcity of commodity. We do not have enough vaccine to go around. We still need more vaccine. At this stage a centralized registry has not been identified as something that would help remedy the circumstance that we're dealing with right now," she stated.

What provider made this mistake?

Sec. Beam stated, "We are not here to have blame placed anywhere. All of us are focusing on the path forward and moving Pennsylvania forward as well."

How many people will be impacted?

Sec. Beam said 30,000 to 60,000 second dose appointments may need to be rescheduled and there could be 30,000 to 55,000 first doses that providers had anticipated that will not be delivered this week.

So it could be over 100,000 people impacted by this. Who will be communicating with them?

Sec. Beam said DOH is working with providers to make sure that people are rescheduled for their second dose appointment at their first dose provider. "The controls we put in place are not only in reference to clearer communication but also allow us to all synch on the same calendar, making sure that we are all ordering in alignment with Operation Warp Speed policies, the state's policies, and each of the provider policies. We are really right-tracking this and it will take this week, next week, and the following week to be able to put us on more stable ground," she stated.

Isn't it incumbent on the department to tell people what providers they have to get in touch with?

Sec. Beam reiterated that it was a structural issue that was compounded since early January. "This is an unprecedented rollout. This issue is of such magnitude that there is always an opportunity to do better," she stated.

Do individuals have to start the vaccination process over again and receive another first dose?

Sec. Beam said individuals should secure their second dose. "There is no difference in the medicine in the first and second doses. They started their regimen with their first dose; they should fulfill the vaccine by having that second dose administered by the same provider they had for the first dose," she stated.

###

WOLF ADMINISTRATION PROVIDES UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO SNOWSTORM AND COVID-19 VACCINE

By Maggie Doldt, Pennsylvania Legislative Services | February 18, 2021

State agency representatives held a press briefing today on the recent snowstorm and the status of COVID-19 vaccines.

Randy Padfield, executive director, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), noted that this storm may not "be severe as it could be," but they still take on every storm with a clear planning process, knowing weather changes always have the potential to affect the commonwealth. He acknowledged the southern states that are experiencing storms currently show "how quickly conditions can change, lives can be significantly impacted, and daily routines significantly disrupted." He emphasized that weather changes across the country also affect the operations of the state, including shipments of vaccines from areas that are seeing these weather conditions. He stated, "It takes awareness of these interdependencies, anticipation of impacts, and dedicated planning to compensate for situations that occur outside the commonwealth and ultimately affect functions within the state."

Padfield noted that leading up to this storm the state monitored the forecast and had conference calls with multiple state agencies to plan. He remarked that they added staff to the Commonwealth Response Coordination Center and are working with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Turnpike Commission to "monitor conditions and adjust plans accordingly." He stated they have seen no "significant impacts" since the storm began but they are prepared to respond if needed. He emphasized the importance of being prepared at local and individual levels, noting that when individuals are prepared, "we are as a whole more resilient and better able to handle impacts such as loss of power, loss of heat, difficult traffic conditions, and disruptions in the supply chain for necessities such as food and water."

Jeff Jumper, state meteorologist, PEMA, noted they have been watching the storm since early in the morning and have watched it move to southern and eastern parts of the state. He remarked that it has been a "moderate to heavy snowfall" and areas east of the Interstate 83 corridor and south of Interstate 81 to 78 corridors have seen most of the snow. He added the heaviest precipitation occurred this morning and it is "starting to wrap up now." He noted that there may be some areas with light to moderate

snow tonight but it should be out of the state by tomorrow morning. He explained they are expecting only a couple more inches tonight with a lull in the precipitation currently. He stated there has been about one foot of snow in the southeast but reiterated “it is all wrapping up at this point” and there have been some winter storm advisories that are being updated to “match what is going on here.” He remarked that temperatures will stay below freezing into the night and the beginning of tomorrow but will begin to rise tomorrow afternoon. He added that the weekend should be quiet and will stay quiet into early next week.

Melissa Batula, deputy secretary for highway administration, PennDOT, stated they have been in constant contact with other agencies and states. She noted that due to current weather conditions, driver’s license centers in many counties are closed today, including the Riverfront Office in Harrisburg. She remarked people can check dmv.pa.gov for more information on the status of these centers. She noted that across the state they have seen some “isolated incidents that often occur during these types of storms” and they have put speed and vehicle restrictions on “roadways in the most highly impacted areas of the state.” She stated that they might put additional restrictions on roads if necessary and people can check 511pa.com for updates on restrictions. She remarked that they have mobilized teams in southwest Pennsylvania to help with the hardest hit areas. She emphasized staying home and avoiding travel if possible, but indicated higher traffic routes are being prioritized for those who need to travel can “as safely as possible.” She noted that it will take time to have all lanes clear, and even if a road seems clear drivers should be aware of slow-moving plows on the roads.

Lindsey Mauldin, senior adviser for COVID-19 response, Department of Health (DOH), acknowledged that these weather conditions impacted shipments of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine from manufacturing facilities. She clarified that the Moderna vaccine was not shipped Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday; Pfizer was not shipped on Monday; and “limited doses” were shipped on Tuesday and Wednesday. She stated that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is currently working with shipping partners “to resume shipments as quickly and safely as possible, however there will be a significant backlog of orders for distribution as a result of the adverse weather.” She noted that the current weather in Pennsylvania may delay shipments that were sent out this week from reaching vaccine providers, but the department is working with PEMA to “monitor the inventory of vaccines in Pennsylvania.” She acknowledged that these delays will affect the state’s ability to “get vaccines into arms” and anyone who has a vaccine appointment should contact their provider before traveling.

To what extent will this affect the ability to fix the issues described and can you still get the doses to people within the necessary 42-day period?

Mauldin responded that they are still monitoring that but “we believe that we can,” affirming they are working with their partners to make sure to get vaccines out as quickly as possible.

Do you have an estimate on how many providers were impacted this week and how many will be affected next week by the weather?

Mauldin stated it “is safe to say a majority of our providers have been affected by the weather” and she could discuss what exactly those numbers are with the press office. She added that they are working with PEMA to see what those numbers may look like next week as well and will continue contact with the CDC.

When a shipment does not come in, what happens to those vaccine allotments? Do those vaccines go through DOH? If they do not, how does that process work?

Mauldin responded that she would get back with more accurate information on how the process works, but their role at DOH is to get the vaccines rolled out as quickly as possible to providers.

Should patients be aware of anything if they had a vaccine appointment coming up?

Mauldin answered that patients should be in contact with their providers to “understand if there are any delays on their end” because there have been many closings across the state.

Do you know what kind of entities will be affected and will second dose orders be filled by family doctors that have already given the first dose?

Mauldin responded that many people may be seeing delays because of the weather and “we are happy to give more specifics.” Regarding the second question, she stated that “it is hard to say with specific providers” but she will investigate how second doses are being affected by the weather and issues in the department.

Were the doses that did not get delivered not delivered to DOH or were they not delivered directly to providers?

Mauldin answered that it has been a “little bit of both,” with some hospitals receiving delayed shipments due to the weather.

For the doses that did get delivered to DOH, how will the department prioritize who receives the limited number of doses?

Mauldin responded that they will maintain the same distribution strategy they have been working on this week and will “continue to work with providers to help them understand the delays” and how this will affect distribution in the upcoming week.

Will you prioritize hot-spot counties when shipments start to trickle in?

Mauldin stated that they are continuing to work with counties and “partners on the ground” to make sure they can get the vaccines they allocated for as they understand what these delays and distribution may look like.

Is there advice DOH is giving to vaccine providers about how to move forward in situations of delay?

Mauldin responded that they are continuing to work with providers and PEMA about how these delays will affect counties, so they will continue to update providers on how delays will affect them in the upcoming weeks.

Would there be any indication that providers will get extra allocations next week to make up for the lost vaccines?

Mauldin answered that they are trying to stay on track with the allocation plan they created to make sure those who need the vaccine the most are receiving them.

Can you give any details about the consulting group DOH is bringing in to determine where vaccines should go? Do you have a cost for the consulting group?

Mauldin stated that they have brought in a consulting group to help with distribution and allocation, which they felt was necessary so the department can respond with the best solution possible. She stated she does not have a cost at this time, but she will follow up.

Do you have an update on the three-week timeline considering weather problems and the Moderna mix-up?

Mauldin stated that at this time she does not think these issues will change the timeline, but they are preparing for a change with their partners working on the ground and if the timeline does change, they will keep everyone updated and providers would be the first to know.

How does the snow that is falling this year compare to past years?

Batula responded that they “are using more salt than we have in the last few years by quite a bit.” Jumper added that from the beginning of the season to February 11, they noticed the snowfall was top 10 in certain counties that saw the most snow. He explained that they still have many weeks left where there might be more snow.

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Committee News

Comprehensive coverage of the House & Senate public hearings and voting meetings

House Democratic Policy Committee

2/16/21, 1:00 p.m., G-50 Irvis Office Building, Livestream

By Sheri Melnick and Claire Ergood, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a public hearing on COVID-19 in long-term care.

Chairman Bizzarro thanked Rep. Hohenstein for his "tireless advocacy" for residents of long-term care (LTC) facilities.

Rep. Hohenstein said recent data shows that Pennsylvania has the third-highest rate of deaths in nursing homes in the U.S. at a rate of three per 100 residents. He emphasized that LTC facilities provide care for "many vulnerable populations." While noting that LTC facilities have been prioritized for vaccines, he pointed out that the committee wants to know what can be done differently to reduce the death rates in Pennsylvania nursing homes and how to make changes in LTC facilities to prevent similar impacts in the future.

[Keara Klinepeter](#), executive deputy secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), noted that as of today, LTC facilities had 65,555 resident cases of COVID-19, 12,695 employee cases, and 12,023 deaths in 1,556 facilities. She pointed out that despite the numbers being "significant," the epi curve available on the DOH website is "looking really strong." She continued that despite the fall resurgence of COVID-19, the death and case counts have fallen since December. Regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, she pointed out that under the Federal Pharmacy Partnership, CVS provided 239,391 total doses in LTC facilities, including 79,201 partial doses and 79,756 full doses. Klinepeter noted that Walgreens, through the Federal Pharmacy Partnership, administered 39,093 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine including 21,450 partial doses and 8,814 complete vaccinations across 782 facilities.

Klinepeter addressed the vaccine rollout and noted that DOH anticipates that all three clinics for skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) will be completed by March 2021 and in other LTC facilities by the middle of April 2021. She commented on vaccine hesitancy from LTC facility employees and expressed her interest in hearing testimony from SEIU hoping that they would partner with DOH in stressing the importance of the vaccine.

Klinepeter noted that early in September, the federal government provided vaccine guidance for SNFs which DOH is required to follow. She continued that DOH is anticipating updated guidance regarding visitation at LTC facilities. She said, "We are very hopeful that the federal government will issue clarifying guidance to potentially allow visitation at LTC facilities."

Klinepeter commented on the efforts of the Regional Congregate Care Assistance Teams (RCAT) that continued efforts by the Regional Response Health Collaborative (RRHC) program that ended at the end of December 2020. She stressed that RCAT continues some services previously provided by the RRHC such as infection prevention, education, and providing staffing and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Rep. Hohenstein asked about the DOH assessment of the problems faced by LTC facilities and the degree to which they are symptomatic of pre-COVID-19 problems such as staffing levels. He stressed the importance of having more staff per resident and asked when the anticipated new regulations regarding staffing levels will be implemented. Klinepeter said the people who work in LTC facilities are "absolute heroes" in their continued work during a global pandemic. Regarding staffing and the pandemic, she asserted that staff have shown different ways to minimize the isolation of residents and have gone above and beyond with care. She continued that the Long-Term Care Task Force (LTCTF) focused on providing staffing assistance to facilities falling below the 2.7 per patient day (PPD) requirement that addresses the number of staff hours spent per day with each resident. She noted that DOH has worked with facilities to provide more than the minimum hours during outbreaks. Klinepeter pointed out the difficulty in finding qualified workers at LTC facilities. She remarked that DOH Acting Secretary Alison Beam continues to focus on continuing education for the frontline workers. [Andy Pickett](#), director, Bureau of Public Health Preparedness, DOH said DOH recognized there are key areas where facilities need support especially during an outbreak. He commented on the LTCTF which includes representatives from DOH, the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Pennsylvania National Guard, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA).

Rep. Hohenstein asked when the regulations regarding changes in staffing levels will be implemented. Klinepeter said she will need to follow up with a timeline of the regulations' implementation.

Rep. Isaacson asked whether DOH must wait for guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding visitation at LTC facilities and if DOH is mandated to follow that guidance. She emphasized the impact of social isolation on residents at LTC facilities. Klinepeter said the guidance originated from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as the federal agency providing licensure to SNFs, and DOH is responsible for licensure, inspection, and surveys to ensure compliance with the regulations. She stressed that CMS guidance is "binding," and DOH, as the survey agency, is required to uphold the regulations. She noted that DOH counsel determined that DOH needs to adhere to CMS guidance and needs to enforce the requirements of CMS guidance.

Rep. Isaacson asked if DOH would incur penalties relating to funding if violations occurred at DOH-supervised facilities. Klinepeter said if DOH permitted visitation against CMS's guidance, DOH would then need to cite facilities for violating CMS guidance.

Rep. Isaacson asked if DOH is engaging in conversations about getting LTC facilities open for visitation. Klinepeter said she has monthly calls with CMS, has raised the topic over the last two months, and is advocating for visitation.

Rep. Longietti asked about the current CMS guidance regarding family caregivers' visitations in nursing homes. Klinepeter said CMS designated a caregiver based upon the facility and patient's determination that they need a caregiver for their support. She continued that the caregiver should be someone who provided routine care prior to the pandemic. Pickett said he was not particularly involved with the policy but can get the information as soon as possible. Klinepeter referenced a CMS memo addressing nursing home guidance and said she could call Rep. Longietti to provide additional information. Rep. Longietti noted that he has heard from constituents who provided care prior to the pandemic and want to visit residents.

Rep. Daley commented on the CMS and CDC guidelines and asked if the adherence to them relates to a disaster declaration or if they were standard operating procedures. Klinepeter said the adherence is related to the standard operating procedures.

[Matthew Yarnell](#), president, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare Pennsylvania, noted that his organization represents over 45,000 health care workers in Pennsylvania. He emphasized that the nursing home crisis is "more urgent and deadly than it has ever been" and pointed out the "chronic understaffing." He remarked on the over 11,000 deaths of Pennsylvania LTC facility residents from COVID-19 and the over 63,000 caregivers who have contracted COVID-19. Yarnell noted that the nursing home regulations have not been updated in 30 years, stressing that PPD care is "inadequate" and has not changed since the 1990s. He asserted that low staffing levels were a "key factor in resident COVID-19 deaths" of nursing home residents and called for immediate changes to the regulations to 4.1 hours PPD. He emphasized that advocates agree that 4.1 is the minimum necessary PPD. He pointed out that the workforce in LTC facilities is "an important piece of our economy." Yarnell said, "We believe that part of what we need to do is to call on DOH, the Wolf administration, and elected officials to invest in good jobs," he said in reference to workers at LTC facilities.

Yarnell commented on the need to protect workers at LTC facilities by ensuring an adequate supply of PPE, transparency in the change of ownership at LTC facilities, and updates to regulations. He pointed out that New Jersey made mandatory changes to staffing ratios to assist caregivers and provided updated infection control measures while ensuring that 90 percent of revenue is spent on patient care.

Artinese Malachi, licensed practical nurse (LPN), SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, noted that she has been an LPN for at least 30 years. She said, "Nursing homes are ground zero for COVID-19." She stressed that LTC facility workers care for vulnerable people and emphasized the need to connect with nursing home residents who could not see their families or leave their rooms. She commented on the broken nature of the system which was aggravated by COVID-19, resulting in additional deaths, staffing shortages, and a lack of PPE. She pointed out that 50 of the residents where she worked died when the facility closed, and they were transferred to other facilities. Malachi asserted that facilities where residents were transferred did not have adequate staffing, and residents were at greater risk for contracting COVID in crowded rooms. She urged legislators to increase staffing levels to 4.1 hours PPD "right now."

Kristin Ahrens, deputy secretary, Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), explained that her office works with people with intellectual disabilities and autism. She stated that of the 56,000 people enrolled in their facilities, they had 4,00 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 242 deaths. She noted that ODP had 5,900 confirmed cases among staff. She explained that in their residential system they have 14,000 residents and 2,231 confirmed cases. Ahrens said that in the 165 intermediate care facilities with 1,850 residents they had 500 confirmed cases. She noted that in the four state centers have 640 residents, 312 confirmed cases, and 12 deaths and that 700 of the staff have tested positive for COVID.

Ahrens went on to explain the steps they have taken including translating guidance from DOH and CDC. She noted that guidance called for larger facilities. She explained that they are also translating difficult instructions to their community, using visuals and other concepts to help their community conceptualize the important procedures in place including social distancing and the importance of vaccinations.

Ahrens then went on to explain the facilities where the office works with the Department of Aging. She stated that the guidance the facilities use is parallel to what they use in schools regarding community spreads.

Ahrens stated that as a result of their rapid response they have been able to keep the outbreaks down to just one or two individuals. She noted that they have a 19 percent staff vacancy rate, and a single outbreak can suddenly result in 25 staff out sick. She acknowledged that they have been very concerned about the staffing crisis and have been working to relocate. She explained that they have been reminding their county partners and providers of all the flexibilities they have in technical assistance.

Ahrens states that in terms of vaccinations, there were several facilities that were not included in the Federal Pharmacy Partnerships and that smaller facilities were excluded. She stated that DHS and DOH have stood up a partnership with Rite Aid where they are trying to push vaccination into DHS facilities with more than 50 residents. She explained the possibility of setting up specialty clinics where they can organize a central location and Rite Aid vaccinates the residents. She explained that they have indicated 300 facilities with DHS where they have indicated they need a vaccine location on site.

Anne Henry, senior vice president and chief government affairs officer, LeadingAge Pennsylvania, explained that LeadingAge Pennsylvania represents more than 360 not-for-profit providers of senior housing, health care, and community services across Pennsylvania. She stated that their members include around 200 nursing facilities, nearly 200 personal care homes or assisted living residences with more than 80 affordable housing developments, and more than 175 continuing care retirement communities.

Henry explained that Pennsylvania is 9th in population over 65. She explained the hardships with rapidly changing guidance. She explained that in terms of testing, the summer of 2020 federally mandated surveillance for residency and staff relied on the rates of the county. She explained that when there were high rates, residents had to be swabbed twice a week. She explained that this was difficult on the residents.

Henry explained that one of the biggest issues is that providers have done everything they could for there to be payments for tests, but now health insurance companies are denying claims for mandated testing. She reported that their testing for staff was \$75,000 a month. She explained that this is not sustainable for some facilities and that a lot of facilities are self-insured.

Henry explained the issues that long-term care providers continue to struggle financially. She noted that even before the pandemic, facilities were reducing capacity or closing and dealing with systematic underfunding of medical assistance. She explained increasing costs of PPE, an increase of liability insurance, and rising costs. She noted that the vaccine does not add to the financial fragility and added that through the Federal Pharmacy Partnership they have complete the first clinics.

Henry explained the confusion with seniors' vaccine appointments and being told not to leave. She noted that the average age living in continuing care is 85 years old and most no longer drive nor access to computers. She noted that she is perplexed why seniors and providers have continually been turned away. She explained the importance of delivering vaccines to facilities, the number of vaccine providers, providing more qualified individuals to administer, and working together so seniors are not forgotten.

Rep. Hohenstein acknowledged the financial state of long-term care. He explained his concern in the sale of facilities to those who do not share the same admission of service. He asked what the impact of Medicaid changes and other policy changes would make. He explained his concern that if too many facilities close, that people will have nowhere to go. Henry responded that they have not seen rate increases in seven years. She explained that managed care has not helped the situation and that rates are now negotiated and there is very little transparency in how they use that money. She explained that some facilities shrink, resulting in the serving fewer Medicaid residents. Yarnell added the importance of reform and being transparent and honest. He noted the importance in a change of ownership.

Chairman Bizzarro thanked everyone for coming together to do the best for seniors. He acknowledged the sale of St. Mary's facility in his county.

Rep. Longietti asked about vaccines are administered to people new to facilities. He asked if the clinics are set up for new people and if they can administer vaccines as people are brought in. Henry explained that every facility has a long-term care pharmacist that specialized in senior issues. She noted that they need to work with pharmacies to vaccinate new staff and new residents, she explained that we need to allow the pharmacists to vaccinate the residents.

Chairman Bizzarro explained that they have a lot of work to do and that they are focusing on collaborating as much as possible. He stated that they need accountability but solutions.

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House Appropriations Committee budget hearing with IFO (BH)

2/16/21, 2:00 p.m., House Floor, Main Capitol

By Derek Danneker, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a budget hearing with the Independent Fiscal Office, represented by:

- Matthew Knittle, director, IFO;
- Brenda Warburton, deputy director, IFO

Rep. James inquired about the revenue estimates for the upcoming year. He noted that Gov. Tom Wolf has instituted restrictions and closures on businesses "many times" in the past 12 months. He asked how the governor's actions impact the ability of small business to operate with profit. Knittle estimated that this year the state is \$950 million over budget than the administration estimate, and \$300 million higher than the administration for the next fiscal year. Regarding small businesses, Knittle commented that "we're finding there have been a number of closures," however it has not been as high as previously thought six to seven months ago. Knittle attributed the limited closure rate to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). "That's really providing a shot in the arm for a lot of small businesses," he said.

Rep. James explained that Gov. Wolf has proposed tax increases which he believes will impact small businesses and their employees. He added that the governor is also advocating an increase in the minimum wage and asked Knittle how that proposal and others would impact the underlying economy in the IFO baseline forecast. Knittle responded that the IFO is conducting analyses, but believes the higher personal income tax with a higher forgiveness threshold would generate about \$3.9 billion. For the minimum wage, Knittle explained that the policy would eliminate 27,000 job opportunities, but generate \$15 million in additional revenues for the general fund and a pay increase for approximately 1 million workers.

Rep. James asked Knittle to comment on how a higher personal income tax and minimum wage would impact consumption. Knittle explained that the minimum wage would increase overall economic growth and income for individuals. He expounded that PPP has not been factored into the overall consumption, however in early April IFO plans to do a comprehensive analysis of the revenue proposals in the executive budget.

Rep. James commented, "I can't say that I've ever seen any economic analysis that included higher taxes making more economic growth." He asked how Knittle would characterize the financial state of Pennsylvania. Knittle stated that it is difficult to determine due to the uncertainty with the revenues received from the federal government and the economic situation. "I don't think we have a truly good snapshot of exactly the implications from the pandemic," he said. "Long term, we do think there is a structural deficit, we estimated that at about \$2.5 billion in our five-year outlook."

Rep. Sanchez asked Knittle to elaborate on the related costs and impacts a fee or ban on the use of plastic bags would carry, and referenced a study the IFO completed in relation to the previous' years budget proposal. Knittle explained that the report evaluated several policy options, which included a ban and a 10-cent fee on bags. The study found that a 10-cent fee on bags was the superior policy, he stated, and would effectively eliminate 1.83 billion plastic bags, reduce costs by \$82 million and increase employment by 260 jobs or \$10 million in labor earnings. "The reason we came to that result is because a lot of the spending on plastic bags actually flows out of the state and by implementing a fee and spending less on plastic bags, those monies are retained in the state and they're redirector to other purposes," he said.

Rep. Sanchez asked if the conclusion of the report was to pursue a policy that would implement a fee on single-use plastic bags. Knittle stated that the report did not make a recommendation, only determined a superior option. "I would also say that this is a rare instance where a fee or tax was imposed and it had an economically beneficial impact where we where we would see that it would actually increase jobs," he said.

Rep. Rothman referenced the hearing packet the IFO has made available on their [website](#) where it was determined that the number working-aged people in Pennsylvania had decreased while those older than 64 years old have increased their representation in the workforce by 280,000 workers, at the same time those younger than 19 years old have also reduced their number in the workforce. "We expect a decline of 341,000 in our population zero to 64 while 65 and older is going to grow by 307,000," he said. He asked if there are any policy recommendations to secure Pennsylvania's future budgeting when the number of people who provide tax dollars will eventually exceed those who are receiving tax dollars. Knittle stated that the demographic analysis is worrying, and is partially attributable to a lower birth rate and a small "net-out" migration from Pennsylvania. He added that many students come into the state to attend college and universities and suggested that a policy that would work to retain those students would be a beneficial endeavor.

Rep. Hershey asked how the IFO determined that an increase in the minimum wage would decrease 27,000 job opportunities in Pennsylvania while the Department of Revenue (DOR) estimated that it would result in a decrease in 10,000 job opportunities. Knittle delineated that IFO uses slightly different Occupational Employment Statistics (OAS) to determine a percentage change in those who currently make under the proposed minimum wage, then apply standard employment elasticities. "We're just applying data from academic studies to the occupational employment statistics," he said. Knittle speculated that DOR uses different elasticities and a different data set.

Rep. Hershey asked if IFO will adjust how the number of job opportunities lost as related to the raising of the minimum wage in the future. Knittle stated that he would change the calculation based on the altered workforce created after the COVID-19 pandemic. "We have a projection of what the market looked in 2019, and then we have it in 2022 and we think there's going to be 230,000 fewer jobs in 2022 and most of these jobs will be low-income jobs," he said. "So, the minimum wage will have a much different effect going forward than it did in 2019 and we're undertaking that analysis right now."

Rep. Davis inquired how the trends of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce, such as in ability to find childcare or work, will impact Pennsylvania's budget challenges in the future. Knittle noted that female workers are disproportionately affected and may create strong implications in the future, however "We don't know quite yet why the left the labor force," he said. "I think that is a significant challenge for economic growth."

Rep. Davis questioned what the impacts to the workforce are when families have access to affordable childcare. Knittle cited a study that the IFO conducted several years ago that found "high multiplier effects" from access to affordable childcare because it allows other individuals to work.

Rep. Owlett reported that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) found that an increase in the minimum wage would increase the costs of goods and services. He asked if Knittle would come to the same conclusion. Knittle said, "In general, we believe about 60 percent of the higher minimum wage would get pushed forward into prices," and 20 percent is due to lower profits.

Rep. Owlett noted that he was concerned that the proposal would adversely affect senior citizens who live on fixed incomes. He asked if there was anything in Gov. Wolf's proposal that would decrease costs for seniors living in the commonwealth. Knittle said he had not seen anything that would but has yet to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the proposal.

Rep. Bullock cited a study released by the Economic Policy Institute in June 2020 that showed when policies work to improve the lives of Black women, Black women succeed. She asked if Knittle had conducted a study akin to that, or another study that examined policies to improve lives based on gender. Knittle replied that IFO had not examined specific investment in ethnicity but did find that a rise in minimum wage was more likely to have a positive impact on women.

Rep. Bullock asked if IFO found any racial disparities in enrollment in PPP. Knittle stated that IFO had not yet "dug deep enough" into the data to determine if there have been any racial disparities.

Rep. Bullock commented that increasing racial and gender equity in state government agencies can help move families into the middle class and asked how the IFO has worked to commit themselves to increasing diversity. Knittle explained that his office employs 12 people and has not hired anyone in two years. He added that IFO lacks a human resources department and has not made any commitments.

Rep. Bullock asked if IFO has made any commitments to specifically study racial equity. Knittle said he had not, but his office is open to any suggestions from the General Assembly.

Rep. Struzzi asked if the IFO had taken into consideration the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and if the IFO would work with the General Assembly to provide such a study. Knittle stated that the IFO only studies current law and would likely have to employ a contractor to produce a study with such a large economic impact.

Rep. Cephas encouraged the IFO leadership to study the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on different races and genders. She asked how the General Assembly should strategize a full recovery from the pandemic. Knittle recommended the state divert federal aid funds to the industries that have been most impacted, like food service and accommodation, retail and wholesale trade. He noted that the public education may also be affected.

Rep. Cephas delineated that some industries may never return as strong as they were before the pandemic and asked how other states are pivoting in taking that into consideration. Knittle pointed out that the industries related to travel, food service, and wholesale trade may not return for a time. "Particularly, I think this move to online shopping will not reverse," he said.

Rep. Greiner cited legislation in the previous session that would allow for the indefinite carry forward of net operating losses to create "fiction-type losses and extending the ability to use these losses to even more years seems like we're going in the wrong direction." He asked if Knittle believes registering losses in this way is valid. Knittle responded that its valid to the extent that firms follow the law and that losses are legitimate.

Rep. Greiner noted that the secretary of revenue stated in a prior hearing that not all corporations pay income tax and asked if every corporation pays income tax in Pennsylvania and if all would be subject to a 46 percent income tax increase. Knittle confirmed.

Rep. Greiner advocated for a combined reporting method for income tax and asked if Knittle agreed that the state should decrease corporate income tax, rather than expand the tax base to larger than what the government requires. Knittle cited previous studies in confirming that if Pennsylvania were to utilize a combined reporting method, the tax base would expand 12 percent and lead to a \$400 million increase in revenue. "Of course, the phasing of the lower tax rate down to about 6 percent, we have about a \$1.2 billion tax reduction, but it's phased in over several years," he said.

Rep. Fiedler noted that about one quarter of the state's working public would benefit from a raise in the minimum wage and many of them would be parents or full-time workers. She asked Knittle to detail the state and human component of raising the minimum wage. Knittle cited the IFO study from 2019 that found about 1 million workers would be paid a collective \$3.3 billion more and \$2,300 more annually on an individual basis. He added that the minimum wage increase acts as an income transfer to lower income individuals "who spend all the money that they receive." Knittle stated that IFO is working with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to estimate cost savings or additional costs of the higher minimum wage.

Rep. Quinn asked if the IFO is fully staffed to meet the requirements that the General Assembly has asked them to meet. Knittle stated that his office is fully staffed but is putting in full-time work for the extra duties that are required.

Rep. Quinn asked if the IFO has had to prioritize legislators' requests. Knittle said IFO has not yet had to prioritize inquiries.

Rep. Kim questioned if the 27,000 job opportunities that the IFO estimates would be lost in increasing the minimum wage are full-time or part-time employment positions. Knittle explained that the job loss would not immediately take place following a minimum wage increase, but would slow the rate of replacing positions. He reported that job opportunities refer to both part-time and full-time positions. He noted that minimum wage jobs currently experience a large amount of "churn," or people leaving and others coming to those positions at a high rate. He expounded that a reduction in that churning would result in a cost savings.

Rep. Kim asked how many minimum wage workers are aged 60 or older. Knittle reported that the number of minimum wage workers who are aged 60 or older is rapidly increasing and makes up 22 percent of minimum wage workers.

Rep. Ecker questioned the profitability of legalized recreational marijuana for state revenue. He asked if IFO had conducted any studies to examine the revenue the state would generate if the General Assembly legalized recreational marijuana. Knittle said the state could see somewhere between \$400 million to \$1 billion in revenue if an excise tax is used.

Rep. Heffley stated that many minimum wage earners are aged 16 to 21, and are looking for their first job to learn how to operate in the workforce. He said that raising the minimum wage would preclude many first-time workers from entering the workforce. He asked if increasing the minimum wage would decrease the number of jobs available to those individuals. Knittle explained that the next analysis would include an age breakdown to determine that answer.

Rep. Heffley asked how raising the minimum wage would affect workers who currently make \$12 to \$15-dollars an hour. Knittle said, "In our analysis when it was raised to \$12 an our we assume that everybody from \$12 to \$15 an hour would be indirectly affected and would also get a bump," he said.

Rep. Heffley expressed concern for counties and school districts that utilize many positions that are below the proposed minimum wage, and in turn, would need to raise property taxes. He inquired if that was an accurate assumption. Knittle reiterated that 60 percent of the higher minimum wage cost would be pushed forward into prices.

Chairman Bradford asked what kind of economic growth the state could expect in utilizing Gov. Wolf's personal income "tax shift." Knittle replied, "When income flows to lower income individuals because they will spend all of that income and we'll have more of an immediate economic impact."

Chairman Bradford asked if counties or cities have been allowed to set their own minimum wage. Knittle confirmed that there were many examples.

Chairman Bradford asked if Pennsylvania's lower minimum wage as compared to other states has caused a higher amount of minimum wage jobs in Pennsylvania relative to other states. Knittle responded that there has not net been a study on that.

Chairman Bradford estimated there to be \$4 billion in deferred payments that the state annually pays about \$480 million on interest each year. He said additionally, there is \$730 million in fund transfers. "We talk about this DHS overspend but we know when we write these budgets that there are entitlement lines that we're going to underfund to artificially deflate our spend number," he said. "If you're not having an honest discussion in terms of how big the holes in this budget are and how big the structural deficit is, you're not beginning with an honest set of facts."

Chairman Saylor noted that it has been the Wolf administration who both advocated for deferred payments and wanted other deflated numbers. He pointed out that DHS has been mismanaged to spend beyond what was proposed. "You would think a secretary that lost all of her deputy secretaries as soon as she took over would have found a way to make sure that her departments were run more accurately and give this General Assembly an accurate account of why she constantly overspent the budget that she requests," he said.

Chairman Saylor pointed out several instances of the minimum wages increasing the costs to customers or employees who have lost benefits and hours. "There's only so much profit that can be made for any company and anybody who believes that the minimum wage being raised will not raise the cost to seniors and people in poverty as well as to the rest of us is just kidding themselves," he said.

Chairman Saylor commented that legalizing recreational marijuana would increase the rates of DUI in the state, which would also increase insurance rates. He added that many jobs use drug tests to ensure their employees are not using marijuana, and already face workforce shortages stemming from the drug's use. "We need more commonsense in government, rather than more taxes and more responsibility by our secretaries controlling how they spend dollars," he said.

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House Appropriations budget hearing with Department of Aging (BH)

2/16/21, 3:00 p.m., House Floor

By Matt Hess, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held a budget hearing with the Department of Aging (Aging), represented by Secretary [Robert Torres](#), Deputy Secretary [Steve Horner](#), and Bureau of Pharmaceutical Assistance Director [Tom Snedden](#).

Rep. Fritz questioned if the department was consulted when Pennsylvania expanded vaccine eligibility. Sec. Torres said Aging was not consulted and the decision was made by the Department of Health (DOH) when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised the guidelines for vaccine eligibility. He added that 88 percent of the individuals who passed away due to COVID-19 were over the age of 65. "The governor wanted to make sure any individual 65 and older and those with underlying health conditions have the opportunity to seek the vaccine," he stated.

Rep. Fritz asked what grade he would give the department. Sec. Torres opined that he would give the department a high grade and said Aging has done a "tremendous amount of work" for Pennsylvania seniors during the pandemic. "We are making sure their needs are being met in terms of meals and making sure they are not suffering from social isolation," he stated.

Rep. Fritz asked what role the area agencies on aging (AAAs) are playing in scheduling vaccinations. Sec. Torres explained that there are 52 AAAs throughout Pennsylvania and their resources widely vary. He indicated that some AAAs have formed vaccine delivery task forces with local and county partnerships and highlighted the Somerset County AAA's assistance in vaccine delivery.

Rep. Fritz questioned if there are specific AAA employees who are tasked with scheduling vaccine appointments for older adults. Sec. Torres reiterated AAA capacity varies throughout Pennsylvania but affirmed that the AAAs are committed to assisting Pennsylvania's senior citizens. Sec. Torres added that Aging has a six-person team helping PACE enrollees in any way they can to get a vaccination.

Rep. Fritz explained that there are many seniors who do not have access to a computer and questioned if there are resources for "good Samaritans" who assist individuals with scheduling a vaccination appointment. Sec. Torres said DOH's website has vaccine information available and indicated that Aging is currently surveying the AAAs to deploy resources to assist older Pennsylvanians.

Rep. Bullock asked how racial disparities impact access to health care. Sec. Torres said the pandemic magnified health disparities in Pennsylvania and emphasized that the department has worked with diversity commissions and has been sensitive to the needs of communities. "We are being effective in our outreach and being responsive in the services we are providing," he stated. "We

need to work with trusted partners in our community, especially when you are talking about the pandemic and vaccines. In the African-American community there has been a lot of distrust, for a lot of historic reasons...in taking a vaccine that is fairly new, and sometimes it's distrust of government. We are establishing partnerships and collaborations at the local level with organizations that we can work with to get good information into the community and address any questions and concerns they may have."

Rep. Bullock questioned what the department has done to address racial equity in Aging. Sec. Torres said 14 percent of the department's staff is diverse and employees have received unconscious bias training and received training on issues related to LGBTQ seniors.

Rep. Struzzi asked how many Pennsylvanians over the age of 65 are vaccinated. Sec. Torres said he did not have that information. Rep. Struzzi asked how the department addresses seniors who are homebound. Sec. Torres noted that the Butler County AAA held a mass vaccination event and indicated that other AAAs are discussing ways to get seniors vaccinated.

Rep. Fiedler questioned what the department's plan is for coordinating with DOH and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to ensure there is adequate staffing in long-term care (LTC) facilities. Sec. Torres said Aging speaks regularly with those departments and added that Aging's long-term care ombudsman advocates on behalf of residents of LTC facilities and their families. "Anything the long-term care ombudsman was observing in the field was being relayed back to me and we have routine opportunities to discuss our observations with DOH and DHS," he stated.

Rep. Fiedler questioned if staffing at LTC facilities is adequate. Sec. Torres said staffing at LTC facilities has been a challenge and noted that the National Guard had to assist some facilities. "There's no question there were significant challenges with staff being sick and needing to quarantine and we did our best as an administration to support LTC facilities that needed help, especially when there was an outbreak," he stated.

Rep. Schroeder questioned if mobile sites are appropriate for seniors to receive a vaccine. Sec. Torres said mobile vaccination sites are being considered and planned at the local and county level.

Rep. Schroeder asked what the department has heard regarding mental health for older adults, particularly for individuals with dementia. Sec. Torres said the lack of visitation and other restrictions have been "very challenging" for individuals with dementia and their families. He added that Aging has the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Task Force and has partnered with the Jewish Healthcare Foundation to provide outreach and training efforts.

Rep. Krueger inquired about the department's work with the Older Adult Financial Exploitation Task Force. Sec. Torres said the task force has held two meetings and will be conducting a third next week. "We are coming up with concrete recommendations we can implement to try to stem the tide of financial exploitation...I'm hoping to have recommendations at the end of April," he stated. Rep. Krueger questioned if the pandemic has caused an increase in older adult financial exploitation. Sec. Torres indicated that financial exploitation was on the rise for the last several years and there are new COVID-19 and vaccine scams as a result of the pandemic that target senior citizens.

Rep. Rosemary Brown said reports of need increased by 80 percent and questioned why the proposed line item for protective services is being decreased. Sec. Torres indicated that he would get back to the committee with that information.

Rep. Kinkead asked what the department is doing to address social isolation. Sec. Torres said Aging made social isolation a priority during the pandemic and worked with AAAs and the AARP to provide resources to seniors, including distributing tablets to some LTC living facilities. He added that Aging partnered with Slippery Rock University on a program that pairs older adults with students.

Rep. Kinkead asked what the department is doing to continue support for senior centers. Sec. Torres said 95 percent of senior centers were closed due to the pandemic and explained that Aging split over \$2 million in grant funds to centers across Pennsylvania. "Senior centers are an integral part of seniors being able to participate and engage socially and receive education and wellness programs; it's a big part of what we need to support in communities, particularly when this pandemic is over," he stated.

Rep. James questioned how many AAAs are in the "red" according to the department's performance measurements. Sec. Torres said there are six AAAs in red, 10 in yellow, and 36 in green. Rep. James questioned if the AAAs have addressed staffing issues. Sec. Torres said staffing levels vary throughout the AAAs but staffing is an issue that Aging monitors.

Rep. James asked if some AAAs will be penalized financially if they disregard Aging's directives. Sec. Torres said the department receives federal funds that dictate what is expected from the AAAs. "We provide technical assistance and put together quality assurance reports to help AAAs. I don't approach issues with a stick; if there is a situation that requires that it's perhaps that the attempts at remediation are not succeeding or there are other issues. I work very collaboratively with the AAAs," he stated.

Rep. Culver questioned if there is a waiting list for the PENNCARE program. Sec. Torres said there are 3,344 individuals on the waiting list but many of those individuals are receiving some form of assistance. He explained that at the beginning of 2020 the list was over 4,000, but using federal funding from the COVID-19 relief bills, they were able to reduce it by 19 percent. Rep. Culver asked if all 52 AAAs have a waiting list or PENNCARE. Sec. Torres said 40 AAAs have a waiting list. Rep. Culver questioned why the state is not utilizing excess Lottery funds to reduce the waiting list for PENNCARE. Sec. Torres indicated that there are federal funds that can be utilized to further reduce the waiting list.

Rep. Owlett questioned if Aging was consulted prior to DOH issuing a directive in March to require nursing homes to admit individuals discharged from hospitals who tested positive for COVID-19. Sec. Torres said Aging was not consulted. "Whatever decisions were being made from a public health standpoint were made at DOH," he stated. Rep. Owlett questioned if DOH's directive led to a higher number of nursing home deaths. Sec. Torres stated "that's not a question that I'm prepared to answer at this point" but emphasized that former Health Secretary Rachel Levine was doing her best to keep people as safe as possible.

Rep. Owlett said New York had issues related to the accurate reporting of nursing home deaths and questioned if the figures are accurate in Pennsylvania. Sec. Torres said the question would be better directed to DOH. "Our department's role with LTC facilities is to advocate and support the residents and their families. I do not have licensing authority over them," he stated.

Rep. Lawrence questioned why Aging filed a request to "quash" a subpoena regarding the federal investigation into the Brighton Rehabilitation and Wellness Center. Sec. Torres said state law does not allow Aging to provide the kind of information requested through a subpoena. "It must be a court order; it's just a procedural issue. No one is trying to withhold information, we are complying with state law," he stated. Rep. Lawrence said the secretary's response is "baloney" and indicated that the Older Adults Protective Services Act provides the secretary flexibility to protect seniors. "I see you standing in the way of a federal investigation into what happened at a nursing home under the supervision of a state-appointed manager," Rep. Lawrence stated.

Rep. Lawrence asked if Sec. Torres discussed the situation at Brighton with Gov. Tom Wolf. Sec. Torres said he has not spoken to Gov. Wolf. "I follow the advice of counsel. This is a legal matter," he stated. Rep. Lawrence asked again if Sec. Torres spoke with Gov. Wolf about the Brighton situation. Sec. Torres stated, "I have discussed it with our counsel; that's who I discussed it with."

Rep. Zimmerman asked what percentage of department staff is working remotely. Sec. Torres said around 90 percent are working remotely. Rep. Zimmerman questioned what oversight is in place to ensure that agency employees are being productive. Sec. Torres said he meets with management teams every morning. "We have not suffered in terms of our productivity because of the pandemic...We're keeping up with the workload and trying to be as responsive as we can to older adults and anyone else who needs our support," he stated.

Rep. Sanchez asked if the department has seen an increase in food insecurity for seniors. Sec. Torres affirmed Aging placed an emphasis on addressing food insecurity since the beginning of the pandemic and has worked with the Department of Agriculture, AAAs, and other stakeholders to ensure that older adults have food.

Rep. Topper questioned how many investigations were impacted by Aging's decision to suspend face-to-face interactions. Sec. Torres said he did not have an exact figure but noted that decision was at the height of the pandemic and face-to-face investigations are now being conducted when appropriate.

Rep. Samuelson, minority chairman of the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee, questioned how Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding was allocated by the department. Sec. Torres said Aging received \$37 million and it was used for supported services, nutrition services, and caregiver services.

Rep. Day, chairman of the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee, asked what impact the proposed minimum wage increase would have on private long-term living facility residents and their families. Sec. Torres said the increase in the minimum wage would likely lead to some increased cost but emphasized that the higher wage would cause increased staffing stability.

Rep. Day questioned what the plan is to get older Pennsylvanians vaccinated. Sec. Torres said AAAs are working at the local level to provide vaccines to senior citizens and highlighted the Somerset County AAA. "They have a good model...By working with their local health system they are getting about 300 allocations a week and that allows them to line up older adults to get their vaccines. Last week they had a waiting list of 900 but if the system has a cancellation they can move someone up the list. That type of local model is a model we have to replicate," he stated.

MAAC

No MAAC this week.

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DOI: WORKERS' COMPENSATION SECURITY FUND ASSESSMENT; NOTICE 2021-01

The Department of Insurance has determined that no contributions will be required during 2021 to maintain the balance of the Workers' Compensation Security Fund. The Workers' Compensation Security Fund Act may be viewed [here](#), and 31 Pa. Code Chapter 165 (relating to the Workers' Compensation Security Fund) may be viewed on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Additional information regarding the Fund is located on the department's [website](#).

STATE BOARD OF PHARMACY: CANCER DRUG REPOSITORY PROGRAM; INCOME LIMITS FOR ELIGIBILITY

The State Board of Pharmacy is providing notice that to participate in the Cancer Drug Repository Program in 2021, a patient's 2020 income cannot have exceeded specified limits. Additional information may be found on the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Cosponsor Memos

HCO1285	Fiedler, Elizabeth(D)	Addresses toxic and unsafe conditions in public school buildings.
HCO1286	Neilson, Ed(D)	Ensures unemployment compensation benefits for workers ordered into quarantine and requires that benefits remain available for the duration of the quarantine period.
HCO1293	Bizzarro, Ryan(D)	Allows patients to register themselves and their families as willing to receive the vaccine, provide proof of eligibility for a risk category, and provide how far they are willing to travel.
HCO1296	McClinton, Joanna(D)	Creates a statewide tracking system for sexual assault evidence, housed within the Pennsylvania State Police.
HCO1306	Quinn, Chris(R)	Amends the Acupuncture Licensing Act to provide for title protection for licensed acupuncturists and practitioners.
HCO1317	Frankel, Dan(D)	Establishes teledentistry in our Commonwealth and requires insurance plans to cover this service through negotiated rates by the insurer and the provider.
HCO1322	Nelson, Napoleon (F)(D)	Expands the age eligibility for low-income uninsured and underinsured individuals to access cancer screenings and establishes the Pennsylvania Colorectal and Lung Cancer Early Screening Program.
HCO1328	Shusterman, Melissa(D)	Allows students receiving special education services to repeat a grade level due to COVID-19.
HCO1332	Frankel, Dan(D)	Bans outpatient facility fees for certain procedures as well as COVID-19/PPE fees.
HCO1333	Miller, Daniel(D)	Provides for an optional, discrete disability designation on driver's license or state-issued identification card.
HCO1334	Ecker, Torren(R)	Requires certain cases alleging personal injury damages as a result of exposure to COVID-19 to be subject to expedited compulsory arbitration programs.
SCO 695	Hughes, Vincent(D)	Addresses toxic, unsafe conditions in public school buildings throughout the commonwealth.
SCO 701	Williams, Lindsey (F)(D)	Creates a COVID-19 vaccine registry.
SCO 703	Boscola, Lisa(D)	Establishes a regular reporting on deaths related to drug use in Pennsylvania.
SCO 714	Mensch, Bob(R)	Requires certain protocols to be followed by the secretary of health to better ensure the safety of those living in long-term care facilities during state emergencies relating to a communicable disease.

Bill Actions

HB 526	Pashinski, Eddie Day(D)	<p>(PN 490) Amends the Dog Law, in licenses, tags and kennels, further providing for issuance of dog licenses, compensation, proof required, deposit of funds, records, license sales, rules and regulations and for applications for dog licenses, fees and penalties. Provides that the amount for each dog license sold shall be \$2 and \$3 for each lifetime license sold, and, beginning one year from the effective date, the secretary shall have the authority to establish by regulation the amount of compensation collected. Further provides that the fee schedule shall be \$10 and \$49 for a lifetime license. For Pennsylvania residents who are at least 65 years of age and persons with disabilities, the fees shall be \$7 and \$33 for a lifetime license. Further provides the department may promulgate regulations to adjust the dog license fees under the section. Effective in 60 days.</p> <p>Bill History: 02-12-21 H Filed 02-16-21 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Agriculture and Rural Affairs 02-17-21 H "Press conference held"</p>
HB 532	Ciresi, Joseph(D)	<p>(PN 495) Amends the Insurance Company Law, in casualty insurance, providing for health insurance coverage for immunizations administered at a pharmacy by a pharmacist. The bill establishes that all health insurance policies shall provide coverage for immunizations administered at a pharmacy by a pharmacist. Effective immediately.</p> <p>Bill History: 02-12-21 H Filed 02-16-21 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Insurance</p>
HB 543	Boback, Karen(R)	<p>(PN 506) Amends the Unemployment Compensation Law adding a new section requiring the Department of Labor and Industry to make reasonable accommodations upon request for all claimants with a disability who are eligible for compensation and referred to employment offices for reemployment services. Effective in 60 days.</p> <p>Bill History: 02-12-21 H Filed 02-16-21 H Introduced and referred to committee on House Labor and Industry</p>
HB 575	Markosek, Brandon(D)	<p>Amends Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure), in particular rights and immunities, providing for good Samaritan civil immunity for acquiring, maintaining or administering naloxone.</p> <p>Bill History: 02-17-21 H Filed</p>
HB 582	Neilson, Ed(D)	<p>Amends the Unemployment Compensation Law, in compensation, providing for compensation during quarantine or isolation.</p> <p>Bill History: 02-17-21 H Filed</p>
HB 593	Zabel, Michael(D)	<p>Act providing for Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Prohibited Gifts Act.</p> <p>Bill History: 02-17-21 H Filed</p>
SB 169	Yaw, Gene(R)	<p>Amends Title 35 (Health and Safety), in prescribing opioids to minors, providing for prescribing opioids to individuals and further providing for definitions, for prohibition and for procedure; and making editorial changes.</p> <p>Bill History: 02-18-21 S Filed 02-18-21 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Consumer Protection & Prof. Licensure</p>

[SB 235](#) [Brooks, Michele\(R\)](#) (PN 204) Amends Title 40 (Insurance), in regulation of insurers and related persons generally, establishing Chapter 41 regarding association health plans. The bill provides policy requirements for associations offering health insurance and insurer requirements regarding the health insurance policy. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 02-16-21 S Filed
02-16-21 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Banking and Insurance

[SB 241](#) [Brewster, Jim\(D\)](#) (PN 200) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, exempting individuals participating in therapeutic recreation programs. Effective in 60 days.

Bill History: 02-16-21 S Filed
02-16-21 S Introduced and referred to committee on Senate Game and Fisheries

Upcoming Events

Department of Human Services

February 23, 2021 - 8:30 a.m., Via Conference Call

Mental Health Planning Council Meeting. For additional information: (717) 409-3790

House Education

February 23, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

Public Hearing on the impacts of Covid-19 in PA's elementary and secondary schools

Department of Health

February 23, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Via Conference Call

Medical Marijuana Advisory Board. For additional information: (717) 547-3047

House Democratic Policy Committee

February 23, 2021 - 11:00 a.m., Room 60, East Wing

Public hearing on Health & Safety in Public Transportation

Joint Legislative Budget & Finance Committee

February 24, 2021 - 8:30 a.m., Broadcast Via Live Stream

Meeting on the election of LBFC officers; A study of the Adequacy of Fees Charged for PA's Instant Check System; An Evaluation of Department of Health Grants Funded Through the Governor Robert P. Casey Memorial Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Trust Fund; A Study in Response to HR 515 (2019): Community Mental Health Services

House Education

February 24, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., G-50, Irvis Office Building

Public Hearing on COVID-19 impacts in PA's institutions of higher education

State Board of Examiners of Nursing Home Administrators

February 24, 2021 - 10:30 a.m., Via Conference Call

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 775-8147

House Appropriations

February 24, 2021 - 3:00 p.m., House Floor

Budget Hearing - Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs

House Appropriations

February 25, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., House Floor

Budget Hearing - Department of Health

House Labor and Industry

February 25, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building

Public hearing on: [HB 262](#) Diamond, Russ Act re mandatory screenings & vaccinations

Department of Human Services

February 25, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Via Conference Call

Medical Assistance Advisory Committee (MAAC) Meeting. For additional information: (717) 772-6341

House Appropriations

February 25, 2021 - 1:00 p.m., House Floor

Budget Hearing - Department of Health (continued)

House Appropriations

March 3, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Forum Building, 500 Walnut St., Harrisburg

Budget Hearing - Department of Human Services

House Democratic Policy Committee

March 3, 2021 - 11:00 a.m., Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

Public Hearing - Roundtable: Mental Health Services in Schools

House Appropriations

March 3, 2021 - 1:00 p.m., Forum Building, 500 Walnut St., Harrisburg

Budget Hearing - Department of Human Services (continued)

House Appropriations

March 4, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Forum Building, 500 Walnut St., Harrisburg

Budget Hearing - Budget Secretary/Governor's Executive Offices

State Board of Occupational Therapy

March 4, 2021 - 10:30 a.m., Via Conference Call

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 775-8147

State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language and Hearing

March 5, 2021 - 10:30 a.m., Via Conference Call

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 775-8147

Senate Appropriations

March 8, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Senate Chamber

Budget Hearing - Independent Fiscal Office

Department of Human Services

March 9, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Via Conference Call

Managed Long-Term Services & Supports Subcommittee Meeting. For additional information: (717) 857-3280

State Board of Medicine

March 9, 2021 - 10:30 a.m., Via Conference Call

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 775-8147

Senate Appropriations

March 10, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Senate Chamber

Budget hearing - Department of Human Services

State Board of Chiropractic

March 11, 2021 - 10:30 a.m., Via Conference Call

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 783-7155

State Board of Dentistry

March 12, 2021 - 10:30 a.m., Via Conference Call

Board Meeting. For additional information: (717) 783-7162

Press Conference

March 12, 2021 - 11:00 a.m., Main Capitol Steps, Harrisburg

Caregivers for Compromise Rally (unconfirmed)

Senate Appropriations

April 22, 2021 - 10:00 a.m., Senate Chamber

Budget hearing - Department of Health

Senate Appropriations

April 22, 2021 - 2:00 p.m., Senate Chamber

Budget Hearing - Budget Secretary/Governor's Executive Office and Dept. of General Services

In the News

- 02-18-2021 **[The \\$1 billion plan to close the gap between growing and shrinking Pa. school districts](#)**
HARRISBURG — When Pennsylvania passed a new formula to distribute money for public schools in 2016, it was hailed as a major step toward equity and away from an arbitrary system built on decades-old enrollment data. “Prior to today, Pennsylvania was one of only three states in the... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[Pa. faces a vaccine shortage that could delay shots for 100,000](#)**
More than 100,000 Pennsylvanians could be forced to wait days or weeks longer for their coronavirus shots after mistakes made by vaccine providers and possible miscommunication from the state led to a massive shortage of doses, officials said Wednesday. State health officials said they discovered only last weekend that some... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[U.S. life expectancy drops by a year during pandemic, as country sees 3 million deaths in 2020](#)**
Life expectancy in the United States dropped a staggering one year during the first half of 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic caused its first wave of deaths, health officials are reporting... - [AP](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[New Pa. COVID-19 vaccine policy favors big players, causes worry for the small, the isolated](#)**
Pennsylvania’s latest approach to COVID-19 vaccine distribution puts volume and speed ahead of convenience. It’s intended to advance the public health goal of protecting the most people in the shortest time, while also addressing Pennsylvania’s poor national ranking for vaccine... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[Bethlehem, Lancaster, State College ZIP codes lead Pa. in new COVID-19 cases this week](#)**
Numbers for new COVID-19 cases across Pennsylvania are continuing to slow compared to previous weeks, as compared to the rapidly rising numbers following the holiday season. But certain hotspots across the state continue to be ranked among the locations with the highest numbers of newly diagnosed cases each week,... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[Rivers Casino goes to court over property assessment — and it could just be the beginning of such cases](#)**
Rivers Casino is taking its pandemic-fueled fight to lower its property assessment to court. Holdings Acquisition Co. LP, the casino’s owner, is appealing to Allegheny County Common Pleas Court after the county’s board of property assessment appeals and review refused to change the venue’s... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[Tentative contract agreement reached, Mars school district and teachers union say](#)**
Tentative contract agreement reached, Mars school district and teachers union say The Mars Area School Board and Mars Area Education Association have reached a tentative agreement, according to a joint statement issued by John L. Kennedy, board president, and Joe Graff, president of the teachers’... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[Poor neighborhoods linked to higher mortality risk from COVID-19, Duquesne U. professor finds](#)**
The link between poverty and disease extends to COVID-19, with residents of low-income neighborhoods more likely to die from the highly contagious virus than those living elsewhere, according to a new study. Published last month in the Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **[Allegheny County plans to administer 2nd covid vaccine doses in timely fashion](#)**
The Allegheny County Health Department is working to ensure people who received first doses of the covid

vaccine will get their second dose, as planned, after state officials announced a likely shortage of more than 50,000 doses next week. State officials on Wednesday described a “perfect storm of... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

- 02-18-2021 **‘Several’ covid-19 cases prompt Central Catholic High to close Oakland campus, go all-virtual**
‘Several’ covid-19 cases prompt Central Catholic High to close Oakland campus, go all-virtual - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Westmoreland County bars and restaurants in line for nearly \$4M in grants**
Westmoreland County bars and restaurants in line for nearly \$4M in grants - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Council member King makes vaccination pitch**
The Rev. Sylvia King, a member of Johnstown City Council, used an inadvertent visual aid Wednesday while participating in a news conference hosted by U.S. Sen. Bob Casey to encourage people in central Pennsylvania to get vaccinated against COVID-19. King appeared on the video conference call with oxygen tubes in her nose,... - [Altoona Mirror](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Fighting COVID-19 a top priority for corrections system**
HARRISBURG — Fighting the COVID-19 pandemic remains the top priority for a state corrections system experiencing the largest one-year drop in inmates in its history, Corrections Secretary John Wetzel told lawmakers Wednesday. During a House Appropriations Committee budget hearing, Wetzel fielded... - [Altoona Mirror](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Snafu delays second shot of vaccine**
The State Department of Health over the weekend discovered a problem that had been building since early January that will require delaying second dose appointments for up to two weeks for as many as 60,000 people and rescheduling first dose appointments for up to 55,000 people.... - [Altoona Mirror](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Lancaster County makes plans to distribute \$6.2M in state recovery funds to hospitality businesses**
More help is on the way for Lancaster County’s battered hospitality industry. On Wednesday, Lancaster County Commissioners approved a plan to distribute nearly \$6.2 million in state money to restaurants and hotels that have suffered losses from the coronavirus pandemic.... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Local hospitals say COVID-19 vaccine delivery delayed in Lancaster County**
Local health care providers say they have not received their weekly allocations of COVID-19 vaccine and will run out by early next week if supplies are not replenished. “We are projecting that we will run out by end of day Tuesday if we do not receive more by then,” Penn State Hershey Medical Center... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 02-18-2021 **‘A perfect storm’: How quarantines, staff shortages and a shrinking substitute teacher pool have complicated in-person learning**
One day in early December, Ephrata High School math teacher Kris Miller took a rather peculiar approach in class. He had his students read an article from a recent edition of Scholastic News. “Could You Clone Your Pet?” the headline read. Miller then went around the room and asked students to share their... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Lancaster County makes plans to distribute \$6.2M in state recovery funds to hospitality businesses**
More help is on the way for Lancaster County’s battered hospitality industry. On Wednesday, Lancaster County Commissioners approved a plan to distribute nearly \$6.2 million in state money to restaurants and hotels that have suffered losses from the coronavirus pandemic.... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Edinboro school nurse Nathan Everhart's death at 57 leaves 'hole within our community'**
EDINBORO — Nathan Everhart, 57, a school nurse – and so much more – at James W. Parker Middle School in the General McLane School District, died Sunday while cross-country skiing with his wife, Sandy Starr Everhart, also 57. The heart attack that killed him was not a complete shock.... - [Erie Times-News](#)

- 02-18-2021 **Lehigh Valley not in 'a great place,' but doing better than much of Pa., when it comes to vaccines, official says**
The region's health experts are grappling with vaccine shortages, people coming to the Lehigh Valley to get vaccinated and general uncertainty as they try to get people vaccinated. In a virtual roundtable discussion Tuesday, experts talked about when people in the 1C vaccination group, which includes government and financial... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Government incompetence: A Pennsylvania blunder delays COVID-19 vaccinations**
There were bound to be bumps in the road of getting Pennsylvanians vaccinated against the coronavirus. Most folks were willing to buckle up for a rough ride as long as we got to our destination. I was. But when a simple mistake compounds to the point where as many as 115,000... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-18-2021 **A COVID-19 baby boom? Some Lehigh Valley health officials see uptick in births, but can't tie it to pandemic.**
When Dr. Stephanie Lum gave birth last month to her little girl, Ava, the only support person she had in the delivery room was her fiance. As an OB-GYN at St. Luke's Riverside Women's Healthcare at the Anderson Campus, it was "refreshing," she said, to have a more... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Carlisle school district working on plan to expand in-person instructional days for some students**
Carlisle Area School District is working on a plan to bring its youngest and neediest students back into the classroom for more in-person instructional days. "Within the next two weeks, we will share a timeline for possible implementation," Superintendent Christina Spielbauer told school board... - [Carlisle Sentinel](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Closer Look: A year into COVID pandemic, York County teachers face exhaustion**
Editor's Note: This is part of a regular series at The York Dispatch. Throughout the year, Dispatch staffers will delve into a new topic that we believe deserves a Closer Look. Experienced educators were left feeling like first-year teachers again with the overwhelming responsibilities they took on while teaching through an... - [York Dispatch](#)
- 02-18-2021 **'People would rather get vaccinated by their doctor': Primary care doctors won't be getting COVID vaccines**
Dr. Tracey Conti has 90-year-old patients who recently snagged vaccine appointments. That's good news in a way, but Conti isn't sure how the elderly patients will make their way to the vaccination sites — some would need to drive well over an hour — and she wishes she could just give the... - [York Daily](#)
- 02-18-2021 **COVID-19 Relief Package Includes Expansion of Health Care Coverage**
Democrats in Congress plan to use the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill to advance President Joe Biden's campaign promises to make affordable health care available to more Americans, reversing the Trump-era decline in the number of people with health insurance.... - [Stateline.org](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Justice hints at relaxing COVID-19 restrictions on businesses, schools on Friday**
Gov. Jim Justice hinted Wednesday that he might announce relaxation of restrictions on businesses and school activities at Friday's West Virginia COVID-19 briefing. "I hope to update you on just this on Friday regarding some ideas to lessen the restrictions on our businesses, and on our schools," Justice... - [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Coronavirus pandemic pushed central Ohio's health care system to its limit in 2020's final weeks**
After a half-year of COVID-related societal stress, late September brought back a feeling of some normalcy in Ohio. The Big Ten reinstated football. Former President Donald Trump held large political rallies in Dayton and Toledo. College students were moving back... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 02-18-2021 **'Chastise, blame and hold hostage': Columbus schools officials call DeWine's reopening reprimand unfair**
Because teachers are out on leave and there aren't enough substitutes to cover absences, four Columbus elementary schools can't bring students back into buildings. The district's team of bus drivers has shrunk by

22% in the past year. Meanwhile, each bus can only transport about half as many kids because of... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)

- 02-18-2021 **'The public deserves an answer.' Did COVID-19 hospital surge cause unnecessary deaths?**
During the worst moments of the the autumn-and-winter coronavirus surge in Southern California, doctors and nurses frantically trying to save patients at overcrowded hospitals made terrifying warnings about what they were seeing. "Everything is such a disaster now," one doctor at an L.A. County... - [Los Angeles Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Asbestos detection to be part of Schuylkill County demolition program**
POTTSVILLE — Schuylkill County has included asbestos detection to its demolition program, as the commissioners approved a contract Wednesday with a Northumberland County company that will assess properties for the dangerous material. "We're looking at every property that's involved in the... - [Pottsville Republican and Evening Herald](#)
- 02-18-2021 **The Ciavarella trial: Where are they now?**
Thursday marks 10 years since former Luzerne County Judge Mark A. Ciavarella Jr. was convicted in federal court for the "kids-for-cash" scandal. Here's an update on the key players in the case. Former Luzerne County Judge Mark A. Ciavarella Jr.: Ciavarella was... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Yudichak wants Department of Health to "step away" from lead on COVID-19 vaccine distribution**
State Sen. John Yudichak issued a statement Wednesday urging the state Department of Health to "step away from its leadership role" on COVID-19 vaccine distribution. The department "failed to develop an effective vaccine distribution plan," and former Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine left the state... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Budding business coming to Scranton**
A store specializing in controversial, but legal, mood-altering hemp products will soon open in downtown Scranton. 3BUDS, a public cannabis dispensary that will not require a medical marijuana card to purchase items, will sell Delta-8 THC vapes, edibles, capsules and tinctures at the shop on Adams Avenue starting later this... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Hotline helps more than 1,000 Lackawanna County seniors schedule COVID-19 vaccines**
Caseworkers manning a 211 hotline have helped more than 1,000 Lackawanna County seniors schedule COVID-19 vaccine appointments — part of an ongoing effort to inoculate the vulnerable. County Area Agency on Aging Director Jason Kavulich updated commissioners Wednesday on the recently launched program. Commissioners unanimously... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **PSP cites Luzerne County establishments for alleged COVID violations**
The latest round of citations issued by the Pennsylvania State Police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement for the month of January lists several Luzerne County establishments alleged to have violated COVID-19 protocol — including a Harveys Lake restaurant that planned a New Year's Eve... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Muddled promises on schools pose political problem for Biden**
WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is in a political firestorm over how and when to get more schools open amid the coronavirus pandemic, with Republicans seizing on confusion surrounding Biden's goal to reopen a majority of schools within his first 100 days to paint the president as... - [AP](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Cuomo Faces Revolt After Handling of Nursing Home Deaths**
The Democratic leaders of the New York State Senate are moving to strip Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of unilateral emergency powers granted during the pandemic, setting up a remarkable rebuke for the governor from members of his own party. The Senate's measures, which could be voted on as soon as next week,... - [New York Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Coronavirus Vaccine Nears Final Tests in Cuba. Tourists May Be Inoculated.**
People wait in line for four hours to buy detergent in Havana. Cuban pharmacies are out of pain medication.

There are national bread shortages. And yet the Cuban government says it is on the brink of an extraordinary scientific achievement: the mass production of a coronavirus vaccine... - [New York Times](#)

02-18-2021

C.D.C. Announces \$200 Million 'Down Payment' to Track Virus Variants

As lawmakers push for billions of dollars to fund the nation's efforts to track coronavirus variants, the Biden administration announced on Wednesday a new effort to ramp up this work, pledging nearly \$200 million to better identify the emerging threats. Calling it a down payment, the White House said that the investment would... - [New York Times](#)

02-18-2021

EMA: Cambria County ready to launch mass vaccine clinics when enough shots are available; Casey urges increased supply

Local emergency services agencies are ready to launch mass vaccine clinics as soon as enough vaccine becomes available, Art Martynuska, Cambria County Emergency Management Agency coordinator, said Wednesday. Working through local school districts, the county's COVID-19 task... - [Johnstown Tribune-Democrat](#)

02-18-2021

Nonprofit groups to receive pandemic assistance grants

Crawford County expects to award more than \$100,000 in COVID-19 pandemic assistant grants to additional nonprofit groups. At their voting meeting next week, county commissioners plan to approve \$105,000 in grants to 12 entities to offset their pandemic-related... - [Meadville Tribune](#)

02-18-2021

Geisinger rescheduling vaccine appointments due to winter storm

DANVILLE — Due to the impending severe weather in the area and continued nationwide weather-related supply chain challenges, Geisinger is rescheduling all first-dose and some second-dose COVID vaccines set for Thursday. Geisinger is reaching out to those individuals whose vaccine appointments... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-18-2021

Midd-West student balancing school and athletics

Midd-West High School senior Stefan Leitzel has been a standout student and athlete for years but he was still relieved when he learned of his acceptance at Messiah University. "I'm committed to playing soccer," said Leitzel who plans to study mechanical engineering in college.... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-18-2021

Webinar to discuss how solar farm will impact property values rescheduled

One of the major objections voiced by homeowners whose property is adjacent to or nearby the proposed Montour Solar One project is the question of how the project will affect the value of their homes. That is the subject of a Zoom webinar, originally scheduled for Thursday,... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-18-2021

Valley hospitals monitor supply of N95 masks amid nationwide stockpiling

Lower rates of COVID-19 hospitalizations have helped Valley medical facilities maintain an adequate supply of personal protective equipment, including medical-grade N95 masks, while parts of the nation struggle with supply. One year into the COVID-19 pandemic, millions N95 face masks are pouring... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-18-2021

Valley churches innovate, turn back time for Ash Wednesday tradition

SHAMOKIN — Individuals received a sprinkling of ashes on their heads while others applied ashes to their own foreheads over an online conference call during an Ash Wednesday unlike any that have come before it. Father Fred Wangwe of Saint Monica's Church, Sunbury, had 91 people between... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-18-2021

Mixup means thousands of COVID vaccine appointments will be delayed

HARRISBURG — As many as 115,000 people will have their COVID-19 vaccine appointments delayed over revelations that over the last month too many doses intended to serve as second shots for residents had been mistakenly used as first doses. As a result, the number of requests for second doses of the Moderna vaccine... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-18-2021

Texas hospitals are running out of water amid power outages. Some are evacuating patients for safety.

When St. David.s South Austin Medical Center ran out of water and lost heat on Wednesday amid a historic cold burst in Texas, the hospital was forced to ask staffers to use trash bags to remove feces from toilets, KVUE reported. That dire scene captured a growing crisis for hospitals in the state. As... - [Washington Post](#)

02-18-2021

Grocery workers say they can't get vaccines, even as they help distribute them

.Once again, grocery workers have been put on the back burner and forgotten about,. said one QFC clerk, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he fears losing his job. .People are frustrated, to say the least. We have a vaccine program, but nobody knows what.s going on..... - [Washington Post](#)

02-18-2021

Andrew Cuomo's nursing home problem is getting worse

There are three parts to the political crisis surrounding New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) at the moment. The most immediate was the report on Wednesday that he had threatened a Democratic state assemblyman, Ron Kim of Queens, after Kim criticized the governor in the New York Post. Kim told the New York Times that Cuomo... - [Washington Post](#)

02-18-2021

Biden team struggles to specify when schools will open, normalcy will return

As the country approaches the one-year mark of the pandemic.s isolation and restrictions, the Biden administration is struggling to give precise, consistent answers to two key questions: When will the pandemic truly be behind us? And, short of that, when can children safely return to school?... - [Washington Post](#)

02-18-2021

County officials blasted DeSantis over vaccine site in an affluent White area. So he threatened to take away the doses.

When Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) unveiled a .pop-up. clinic offering coveted coronavirus vaccines in an affluent, mostly White part of Manatee County, Fla., lawmakers on both sides of the aisle slammed the plan for excluding residents in the rest of the county.... - [Washington Post](#)

02-18-2021

Pa. vaccine providers improperly administered Moderna vaccine doses, leading to shortage

A mistake in administering the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in Pennsylvania has led to a shortage in available second doses, Acting State Health Secretary Alison Beam said Wednesday. Beam said beginning in January, some providers began mistakenly administering Moderna vaccines that were allocated for second doses as... - [The PLS Reporter](#)

02-18-2021

Area businesses urged to participate in economic recovery survey

With businesses across the region still struggling under the weight of the coronavirus pandemic, Rep. Matthew Dowling, R-Uniontown, urged area business owners to offer their feedback on how to restore the state's economy by participating in a new COVID-19 Economic Recovery Business... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)

02-18-2021

WU nursing department to assist in WHS vaccine distribution

Waynesburg University nursing students and the Department of Nursing staff are volunteering to help Washington Health System administer COVID-19 vaccines. WHS is turning to the student nurses and faculty to help staff its vaccination sites in an effort to bolster the demand for qualified health... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)

02-18-2021

Vaccine providers accidentally gave away second doses of vaccines

The Pennsylvania Health Department announced Wednesday that second doses of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine were inadvertently administered to others as first doses. Vaccine providers misused as many as 200,000 vaccines. As a result, between 30,000 and 60,000 people will have to push back their... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)

02-18-2021

Pittsburgh Promise Temporarily Eliminates Minimum GPA Requirement

PITTSBURGH (KDKA) – The Pittsburgh Promise is making changes in an effort to help students during the COVID-19 pandemic. RELATED: Teenager Tries To Drive Across North Park Lake, Partially Submerges Vehicle They have made the decision to temporarily eliminate its GPA minimum and... - [KDKA](#)

- 02-18-2021 **Report: Judge Denies Crack'd Egg Owner's Request To Open During Their Appeal**
PITTSBURGH (KDKA) – The owners of the Crack'd Egg were denied a request to reopen while they appeal their case. According to our news partners at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Judge John McVay denied the owner's request for a stay. Earlier this month, Judge McVay ordered the diner to submit a COVID-19... - [KDKA](#)
- 02-18-2021 **'Cybersickness:' Too Much Screen Time Leading To Illness And Injury**
PITTSBURGH (KDKA) – Have you ever looked at the screens in your life; from the computer, phone, television, gaming system, and begun to feel sick ? That has a name: "Cybersickness." RELATED: Teenager Tries To Drive Across North Park Lake, Partially Submerges Vehicle... - [KDKA](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Report: PIAA To Require All Athletes To Wear Masks During State Championships**
MECHANICSBURG, Pa. (KDKA) – When athletes head to the PIAA state championships this year, masks will be required. According to our news partners at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the PIAA board of directors made the decision on Wednesday during their meeting. Any PIAA postseason tournament team will be required to also submit a... - [KDKA](#)
- 02-18-2021 **PIAA notebook: Board passes motion requiring all participants to wear masks for state playoffs**
The PIAA board of directors addressed a number of topics during Wednesday's Zoom meeting, including one pressing issue that's been on everybody's minds going into the postseason — mask enforcement. For the upcoming PIAA postseason tournaments for all winter sports, teams... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **COVID-19 In Pittsburgh: North Hills School District Testing Portable Lunch Tables**
PITTSBURGH (KDKA) – The North Hills School District is trying out new portable lunch tables. The elementary school and high school students will have them at their disposal this week. They are set up in the cafeteria and there are a few feet between each table.... - [KDKA](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium is holding a 24-hour COVID-19 'vax-a-thon'**
PHILADELPHIA (KYW Newsradio) — The Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium is holding a 24-hour COVID-19 "vax-a-thon." They're testing a new model designed to improve access to the vaccine. "Philly, we're giving you 24 hours of us to be present to vaccinate you whatever time you need it," announced Dr. Ala Stanford, founder of... - [KYW News Radio 1060](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Frustration builds at COVID vaccine delays**
As no new doses of COVID vaccine are expected in Delaware County this week, the level of frustration among county officials and community members is swelling. Peggy Wilson of Drexel Hill criticized the way the vaccine is being distributed. "I'm really angry at the way this thing is progressing," she told members... - [Primos Delaware County Daily and Sunday Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Officials take action to ensure Chester County residents get second dose of vaccine**
The Pennsylvania Department of Health and the newly formed joint task force with the legislature Wednesday reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that Pennsylvanians will have access to second doses of COVID-19 vaccine within the CDC-recommended timeframe of up to 42 days after the first dose.... - [Phoenixville News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Dems, GOP set candidates for Chester County offices, judgeships**
WEST CHESTER — Chester County's two major political parties held their annual endorsement conventions on Tuesday but generated little fireworks, as the vast majority of candidates for county and local offices on both the Democratic and Republican ballots were running unopposed.... - [Phoenixville News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Second Step program sees results in select Montgomery County schools**
NORRISTOWN — A program designed to teach social and emotional learning skills for children in Montgomery County appears to be paying lasting dividends to build a strong foundation to set themselves up for success later in life. After implementing the Second Step into the curriculum of a number of... - [Pottstown Mercury](#)

- 02-18-2021 **Snow is here: Courthouses closed, road speeds limited**
Here we go again. The Cold Miser has certainly taken over this winter as another storm will blow through the region today, bringing snow and sleet. The snow is already falling in much of the region and is expected to continue through Friday morning. Most municipalities have declared snow... - [Pottstown Mercury](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Letter: We can use this crisis to create a better America**
Editor: America is still in a vicious pandemic, and we must adapt to survive. Changes that many leaders predicted would happen over decades are instead taking place in the span of weeks. Many of the universities that had resisted online education for years, moved all classes online in a span of one week. Virtual classes could save... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Superintendents forum: Just one more thing**
This is my last article for this column. On March 31, I am retiring from public education after 35 years of service. Writing for the superintendents' forum has been an enjoyable experience and an opportunity not only for me but for my superintendent colleagues in... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Penn State Health to also expand COVID vaccinations for those eligible in Phase 1A**
Penn State Health is also rolling out a plan to vaccinate its qualifying patients at St. Joseph hospital in Bern Township and the other network locations. Reading Hospital announced such an effort earlier in the week. Both hospital systems had been reaching out to the most at-risk patients... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Reading School District looks to save \$400000 by refinancing bonds**
The Reading School District could save \$400,000 by refinancing two of its bonds. The school board was given a presentation at its meeting Wednesday night on refinancing two bonds worth about \$16.3 million Daryl S. Peck, a principal with Concord Public Finance, said the district... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Moderna vaccine shortage impacts Montgomery County**
NORRISTOWN — Effects of a statewide shortage of the second doses of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine have begun materializing Wednesday in Pennsylvania's third most populous county. As Montgomery County health officials were informed that there wasn't enough to "cover 5,279 people scheduled for second doses next... - [Norristown Times Herald](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Second Step program sees results in select Montgomery County schools**
NORRISTOWN — A program designed to teach social and emotional learning skills for children in Montgomery County appears to be paying lasting dividends to build a strong foundation to set themselves up for success later in life. After implementing the Second Step into the curriculum of a number of... - [Lansdale Reporter](#)
- 02-18-2021 **GNLC presents Winter Restaurant Week**
The Greater Northern Lehigh Chamber, partner of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, presents Winter Restaurant Week, in the areas of Northern Lehigh, Northampton and Schuylkill County, beginning Sunday and continuing through Feb. 27. Participating restaurants will offer "set-price" or "prix... - [Lehigh Valley News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Tamaqua SB puts plans with architect on pause**
The Tamaqua Area School Board has put its plans with AEM Architects on hold temporarily. The decision was made at the board meeting Monday night. AEM presented a full feasibility study to the board in October, which included every square foot of the entire school district.... - [Lehigh Valley News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Palmerton to stay hybrid for now**
Palmerton Area School District is not planning a change to its hybrid educational model, Superintendent Dr. Jodi Frankelli said Tuesday night. "Even though we are on downward slide, we are still in the substantial transmission phase, according to the Department of Health guidelines,"... - [Lehigh Valley News](#)

- 02-18-2021 **What the shortage of Moderna doses means for you**
After the Department of Health released information about the Moderna shortage, Lehigh Valley Health Network and St. Luke's University Health network were quick to reassure people Wednesday that they will get their second dose. "While this does temporarily impact some people scheduled for this... - [Lehigh Valley Times News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **County adds fewest new COVID-19 cases since Jan. 31, 4 new deaths**
Westmoreland County has gone two full weeks without seeing new daily coronavirus (COVID-19) case figures reach triple digits, according to Pennsylvania Department of Health data, and on Wednesday saw its smallest case total increase of the month. With 47 new coronavirus cases reported in Wednesday's update to the... - [Latrobe Bulletin](#)
- 02-18-2021 **The Lehigh Valley's so good at COVID vaccinations that Floridians have flown in to get shots**
When the first COVID-19 vaccination clinics opened in the Lehigh Valley, public health officials knew that some of those signing up for shots would come from outside the region. The vaccines are federally funded so the clinics can't turn away people who don't meet a residency requirement. But the buzz around how... - [Easton Express-Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Is N.J. legal weed effort dead again? Top lawmaker abandons compromise, hopes Murphy will sign bills on his desk.**
A top New Jersey lawmaker has ended a weeks-long effort to compromise with Gov. Phil Murphy on underage penalties for marijuana use, saying again the governor should sign legal marijuana bills that passed late last year. That could mean an end for the current push to launch a legal marijuana... - [Easton Express-Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Mount Nittany launches COVID-19 vaccine waitlist for those trying to schedule an appointment**
To meet community demand, Mount Nittany Health has introduced a new waitlist feature for those trying to secure a COVID-19 vaccine appointment. As part of its online, self-scheduling system, Mount Nittany announced the addition Wednesday. Those eligible in the first phase of the state's... - [State College Centre Daily Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Leous Running for State College Mayor**
Current State College Area School Board member Jim Leous is running for mayor of State College, he announced on Wednesday. Leous said in a statement the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact, as well as "the fraying of our community"... - [State College News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Mount Nittany Introduces Waitlist for COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments**
Mount Nittany Health on Wednesday launched a new waitlist for eligible community members to sign up for a future COVID-19 vaccination appointment. To be added to the waitlist, community members eligible in the state's phase 1A distribution plan can go to mountnittany.org/coronavirus, click on... - [State College News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **'So Thankful That I've Found This Organization': Nick Vicidomini's 15-Year Journey with THON**
To say that THON can shape and impact the lives of thousands of individuals, especially Four Diamonds children and families, would be an understatement. Fifteen years ago, Nick Vicidomini, now a Penn State senior, learned firsthand just how big of an impact THON can have.... - [State College News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **City's accessibility for disabled community gains momentum**
Landmark developments are happening in terms of Williamsport's accessibility to the disabled community. It begins with the first ever Accessibility Commission, which is a body under development, and which will hold an initial meeting at 3 p.m. Feb. 25, a city official involved said.... - [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Snow day**
A local district cancelled school last week due to a snow storm. Some parents were disappointed that the district did not provide virtual instruction on the snow day. Part of the superintendent's rationale for the decision may surprise you. "I think back fondly to when I had a snow day from school and the pure... - [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)

- 02-18-2021 **State budget cannot be constructed on shaky foundation of wishful thinking**
 Much criticism has been heaped upon Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf for a number of his decisions related to the coronavirus pandemic, and much criticism of the state's chief executive will be forthcoming in response to ideas he put forth in his 2021-22 budget address.... - [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Senator hosts vaccine talks**
 U.S. Sen. Bob Casey hosted a virtual roundtable discussion about the importance of learning about and getting the COVID-19 vaccine when eligible Wednesday morning. The discussion started with David Burwell, David Burwell, chief quality officer and chief medical information officer for UPMC Altoona, UPMC... - [Huntingdon Daily News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **NEPA health networks reschedule Moderna COVID-19 vaccinations due to shortages**
 Northeastern Pennsylvania hospitals are canceling and rescheduling Moderna COVID-19 vaccines following an announcement of supply shortages from the Department of Health on Wednesday. On Feb. 17, Department of Health Acting Secretary Alison Beam announced that this week's request for 200,000 doses of the Moderna COVID-19... - [Pocono Record](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Centre gets \$1.8 million for hospitality industry**
 BELLEFONTE — The Centre County commissioners have a tough task ahead. On Wednesday, they met for a work session to discuss distribution of funds for the COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program (CHIRP). Last week, the commissioners approved the application for the county's designated... - [Lock Haven Express](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Guthrie resumes all surgeries, relaxes visitor restrictions**
 SAYRE — One day after announcing the relaxation of visitor restrictions, Guthrie also said it would be resuming all non-emergent surgeries due to a decline in COVID-19 patients at the health care facility. Select non-emergent surgeries had been postponed in order to maintain... - [Sayre Morning](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Penn Medicine implements program to address structural racism in healthcare**
 Penn Medicine officials announced an anti-racism program designed to end structural racism in the Penn healthcare system. The initiative, called the Action for Cultural Transformation, was announced at the 7th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Health Equity Symposium... - [Daily Pennsylvanian](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Penn Medicine's Carl June awarded Dan David Prize for breakthroughs in cancer treatment**
 Perelman School of Medicine professor Carl June won the 2021 Dan David Prize for his work on the first United States Food and Drug Administration-approved personalized cellular therapy for cancer treatment. June, the director of the Center for Cellular Immunotherapies at Penn, will... - [Daily Pennsylvanian](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Students demand fossil fuel divestment, mandatory climate course at University Council forum**
 Students representing climate activism groups took to Wednesday's University Council Open Forum to demand that Penn fully divest from fossil fuels and create more opportunities for climate change education. Eight of the 15 topics at Wednesday's forum covered a wide range of... - [Daily Pennsylvanian](#)
- 02-18-2021 **PHH continues administering COVID-19 vaccine through weekly clinics**
 DuBOIS — Mary Ann Trzyna of Reynoldsville said she was excited when she received the call last week that she was one of the next eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine at Penn Highlands DuBois' clinic at the DuBois Alliance Church. "I've been waiting," said Trzyna, while getting the vaccine... - [DuBois Courier-Express](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Letter to the editor: ACHD must do more in Clairton**
 At the recent Allegheny County Health Department hearing on new regulations for the Clairton Coke Works, I was touched and shocked by the testimony from the people of Clairton and Glassport. What these folks have had to put up with is unbelievable. The Clairton Coke Works produces more air pollution than all the cars and... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

- 02-18-2021 **State university program would offer free education in exchange for staying in the state**
When Edinboro University senior Sam Bohlen graduates in May, he'll bring a wealth of knowledge, lifelong friendships and \$40,000 in student debt. "Many students are working our way through college by spending our days in class and our nights on the job so that we can afford rent and... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **U.S. life expectancy drops by a year during pandemic, as country sees 3 million deaths in 2020**
Life expectancy in the United States dropped a staggering one year during the first half of 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic caused its first wave of deaths, health officials are reporting... - [AP](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium will host Philadelphia's first 24-hour, walk-up vaccination site**
The Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium will host the city's first 24-hour, walk-up vaccination site Friday through Saturday afternoon at Temple University's Liacouras Center. On a first-come, first-serve basis, Philadelphians who qualify under the city's 1B vaccination category, and who live in zip codes identified by... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Most Catholic schools in Tri-State see slight drop in enrollment**
Private Catholic schools in the Tri-State area, for the most part, have seen a slight drop in enrollment this school year, school representatives said. But at least one school in the region says it has seen an increase in enrollment, and most others say the future looks bright for next year's... - [Waynesboro Record Herald](#)
- 02-18-2021 **PAGO There will be things to do this summer**
CLARION - "There seems to be a light at the end of COVID-tunnel," Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Executive Director John Straitiff said recently. "There will be things to do this summer. The late winter and early spring will be a little slow. "We are seeing things pick up as we roll into the traditional travel... - [Clarion News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Borough may transition wastewater testing to IUP**
A change soon could be coming in COVID-19 virus testing in sewage Indiana Borough takes into its wastewater treatment plant. Since last spring, Indiana Borough has been partnering with BioBot Analytics, a company formed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology... - [Indiana Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Republican reps call for investigation of PA DOH COVID-19 long-term care facility guidance**
Pennsylvania lawmakers are pushing for an investigation of the Commonwealth's Department of Health following one that led to the discovery of a large number of unreported COVID-19-related deaths of nursing home residents in New York State earlier this month.... - [Towanda Daily Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Local school districts challenged with 2021 senior trips amid pandemic**
Local school districts are facing the decision of whether or not it's safe to have the usual senior class trips for the 2021 graduating class amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Center for Disease Control advises against school field trips and outings for the time being and recommends virtual activities, celebrations... - [Towanda Daily Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Towanda Area School District in favor of in-person education over cyber charter schools**
TOWANDA BOROUGH – Officials at the Towanda Area School District are frustrated that the district funds local cyber charter schools out from its allotted budget for the 2020-2021 school year. The district has a budget of \$500,000 for this school year and the cyber... - [Towanda Daily Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Local post office personnel shed light on COVID-related issues**
Local post office personnel say they aren't currently experiencing staffing issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while many area residents have complained about missing mail and packages for several days or weeks. Other local postal employees have resigned from their posts due to reported... - [Shippensburg News-Chronicle](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Give blood in honor of Black History Month in February**
BUCKS COUNTY >> In honor of Black History Month, the American Red Cross encourages eligible donors, and especially those who have recovered from COVID-19, to give blood to honor the legacies of African

Americans like Dr. Charles Drew and Dr. Jerome Holland. Their passion for helping improve the... - [Bucks Local News](#)

- 02-18-2021 **Want to earn \$23 an hour? Lehigh Valley's Uline seeks more workers**
Uline hired 195 Lehigh Valley employees in 2020 and has approximately 900 workers overall. The Wisconsin company, which operates a distribution and fulfillment center in Upper Macungie Township, says it wants to hire 200 more warehouse workers this year. It is hosting a hiring event 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at its facility, 700... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-18-2021 **PIAA will use a form to enhance mask-wearing enforcement during basketball playoffs**
The PIAA is hoping a form that all participating teams must fill out before taking the court will promote appropriate wearing of masks during next month's state basketball tournament. Players and coaches are supposed to be wearing masks to cover their mouths... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Renaissance Allentown Hotel, closed since March amid the pandemic, has a reopening date**
The Renaissance Allentown Hotel, which has remained closed since March at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, finally has a reopening date — and a new management company to run the 170-room full-service hotel attached to the PPL Center. Renaissance owner City Center Investment Corp. on Thursday announced the... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-18-2021 **How some Maryland residents successfully got the COVID vaccine**
For some, it's like winning the lottery. Getting an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine in Maryland can feel like the 2021 equivalent of striking gold, and it often requires patience, persistence, and a bit of luck. That's especially true for the newly eligible — those who aren't getting vaccinated through their... - [Baltimore Sun](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Smaller L.A. nursing homes struggle to get COVID-19 vaccine**
California's effort to vaccinate people in residential care homes appears to have failed to reach many small facilities that are encountering problems making appointments for their residents. The facilities, known as board and care homes, house a maximum of six... - [Los Angeles Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Low-income Californians to receive new COVID stimulus checks**
Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders announced Wednesday that they have agreed to provide low-income Californians a \$600 state stimulus payment to help them weather financial hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic, part of a \$9.6-billion economic recovery package that also... - [Los Angeles Times](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium will host Philadelphia's first 24-hour, walk-up vaccination site**
The Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium will host the city's first 24-hour, walk-up vaccination site Friday through Saturday afternoon at Temple University's Liacouras Center. On a first-come, first-serve basis, Philadelphians who qualify under the city's 1B vaccination category, and who live in zip codes identified by the... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Health department shuts three businesses for lack of permit and pandemic violations**
The Allegheny County Health Department ordered two night clubs and a social club to shut down over the weekend for operating without a permit and COVID-19-related violations. The Alley at 1826 Brownsville Road in Carrick was cited for operating after pandemic-restricted hours, exceeding occupancy limits and operating without... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **COVID-19 Update: Appointment delays likely after weather holds up vaccine shipments**
Fierce winter weather in the U.S. has held up shipments of COVID-19 vaccine, triggering a substantial backlog of orders for the shots, a Pennsylvania health official warned Thursday. The conditions kept a Moderna vaccine distributor from shipping Monday through Wednesday, while the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine shipped in only... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Coronavirus cases, hospitalizations continue dropping in Pa.**
Coronavirus cases and hospitalizations continue dropping in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Department of

Health reported 3,345 new positive cases of COVID-19 Thursday, raising the statewide total to 905,995. The department reported 2,124 COVID-19 patients are being treated in hospitals.... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)

- 02-18-2021 **One-third of military service members have declined the COVID-19 vaccine, defense officials say**
Defense officials announced Monday that of the number of U.S. military service members eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, one-third have opted not to, while the Department of Defense says nearly 1 million vaccinations have been delivered, CNN reported.... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Pennsylvania coronavirus update: Death rate one-third of January peak**
The state's coronavirus death rate has fallen by about two-thirds in one month, numbers released by the state Health Department show. That's twice as fast as the overall case rate has fallen since it peaked in mid-December. The department reported 94 deaths Thursday compared with 193 on Wednesday.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Severe weather delays covid vaccine shipments to Pennsylvania**
Weather dealt another blow to vaccine supply in Pennsylvania this week, with state health officials saying Thursday that no Moderna vaccine was shipped Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, and very little Pfizer vaccine was shipped during that time. There will be a significant backlog of orders for distribution as a result... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Commissioners dash calls for Westmoreland health department, trumpet broadband upgrade**
With covid-19 still a constant threat and source of concern, county leaders on Thursday said they see a brighter future born from lessons learned during the ongoing pandemic. Commissioners speaking at the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce's virtual State of the County conference outlined coronavirus-related... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Three Western Pa. public universities plan for campus reopening this fall**
A trio of Western Pennsylvania public universities that shuttered their campuses last fall and only recently began offering more classes on campus say they are making plans for a full fledged return to campus for fall 2021. Officials at California, Clarion and Edinboro universities say they are... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-18-2021 **Pennsylvania covid cases down over 50% in past month**
Pennsylvania's covid numbers continue to decline, as the state Department of Health's latest report shows cases on average have dropped more than 50% since last month. The state reported 3,345 new cases Thursday, with 2,250 of those confirmed through 12,240 new PCR tests. Officials said 1,095 cases were listed as... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Child stricken with mystery COVID-related syndrome: 'People just don't know about it'**
It began Christmas night with a pain in Tyler Ruf's right side. "Inside your body, it felt kind of like you were burning," the 9-year-old remembers. "Like a stomach bug." The next day, he came down with a fever and lost his appetite. An Advil helped but as soon as it wore off, the symptoms returned. His mother... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Newly built farmhouse on half-acre in Dauphin County for \$875K: Cool Spaces**
To get any closer to the Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center campus, this new home would have to be located on the campus itself. This traditional farmhouse-style home is built on a half-acre corner lot across the street from the walking and biking trails that provide... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Main Line-based former Warp Speed chief rolls up 10 gene therapy start-ups into one ambitious firm**
Main Line-based former Warp Speed chief rolls up 10 gene therapy start-ups into one ambitious firm - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Ross OKs using community center gym for covid vaccination clinic; no opening date announced**
Ross OKs using community center gym for covid vaccination clinic; no opening date announced - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

- 02-17-2021 **Taxpayers want to know how COVID-19 will affect their bill**
 Many people created workspaces — at their own cost — in their homes last year if they were no longer going to an office to work, and some may be wondering if they'll get a tax break on setting up their home office. "Unfortunately, no," said Alex Kindler, a partner at Green... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Child care providers say Pa. policy shifts are causing financial strain**
 Nearly a year after the pandemic cleared out child care centers, several care providers warned they're still facing dire straits and called on Pennsylvania policymakers to help them stay viable. The state's changing rules for child care subsidies — and shifting... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-17-2021 **State approves Blair grant request for \$1.38M**
 HOLLIDAYSBURG — The state has notified Blair County that it will receive a \$1.38 million grant to help local hotels, restaurants and bars offset financial losses linked to COVID-19. Six days ago, commissioners authorized submission of an application for the state COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program grant that lawmakers... - [Altoona Mirror](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Nestle selling North American water business, which includes 2 Lehigh Valley plants, for \$4.3 billion**
 Swiss food and beverage giant Nestle S.A. is unloading its North American water business, a deal that includes two bottling plants in the Lehigh Valley and hundreds of local employees. The company announced late Tuesday (early Wednesday in Switzerland) that it... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Northampton County will offer seniors free LANTA trips to COVID-19 vaccination appointments**
 Northampton County seniors will be offered free trips to their coronavirus vaccination appointments under a program announced Tuesday afternoon. Many Pennsylvanians have struggled to schedule their vaccinations with local health networks and health bureaus as demand outpaces supply. But for... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Pottsville Area parents favor more days in school as district gets ready**
 Pottsville Area parents favor more days in school as district gets ready - [Pottsville Republican and Evening Herald](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Argall holds town hall to answer COVID-19 vaccine questions**
 State Sen. David G. Argall held a town hall with local health experts from Schuylkill and Berks counties to answer questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. Argall, R-29, Rush Township, said the state government is working to improve the rollout of the vaccine. Gov. Tom Wolf approved the formation of... - [Pottsville Republican and Evening Herald](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Drums businessman running for Luzerne County Council as Democrat**
 Jimmy Sabatino, a businessman from Drums, announced he will seek seat on Luzerne County Council as a Democratic primary election candidate. Sabatino, 40, was born in Hazleton, where his family has run a popular restaurant since 1975. Sabatino and his siblings, Donald and Jenna, own and... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Budding business coming to Scranton**
 A store specializing in controversial, but legal, mood-altering hemp products will soon open in downtown Scranton. 3BUDS, a public cannabis dispensary that will not require a medical marijuana card to purchase items, will sell Delta-8 THC vapes, edibles, capsules and tinctures in the shop at 150 Adams Ave. starting later this... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Pandemic curbed Scranton's parking revenues**
 Scranton's parking system took a \$1.1 million hit in the budget from the pandemic downturn last year, the outside operators told city council on Tuesday. Revenue from parking garages and on-street kiosks came in \$1.6 million lower than expected, but was offset by a \$500,000 reduction in expenses.... - [Scranton Times](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Six Ohio lawmakers could override all Gov. Mike DeWine's health orders in latest draft**
 A handful of Ohio lawmakers would be the only people with the power to reject mask mandates, business

closures or statewide curfews under a new version of a bill working its way through the Ohio Senate. SB22, introduced last month, originally let all lawmakers vote to... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)

- 02-17-2021 **Union County approves COVID grant funding requests**
LEWISBURG — Union County Commissioners approved coronavirus grant funding requests Tuesday totaling \$216,862 from municipalities and community service agencies. The Mifflinburg School District received \$97,552 to purchase iPads for students to aid with remote learning. The Union-Snyder Community Action... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Town hall to focus on 'disproportionate impact'**
A group of 13 news stations across three states and the District of Columbia, including WTAJ-TV, will take a look at the COVID-19 virus' disproportionate impact on communities of color Wednesday. The Altoona/Johnstown-based station is one of a group of Nexstar TV... - [Johnstown Tribune-Democrat](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Panel: Kids resilient, but quarantine can bring stress for families**
Tracy Tredennick urges the young people she counsels to exercise, watch their diets and meditate among options for handling the stress that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. But she offered a twist on the notion of that now common phrase: social distancing.... - [Johnstown Tribune-Democrat](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Winter storm disrupts vaccinations**
A paralyzing winter storm wrought havoc with COVID-19 vaccination efforts around the country on Tuesday, forcing the cancellation of appointments and delaying vaccine deliveries just as the federal government rolled out new mass vaccination sites aimed at reaching hard-hit communities.... - [Sharon Herald](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Lebanon health nonprofit, providers fight virus vaccine disinformation**
Lebanon health nonprofit, providers fight virus vaccine disinformation - [Lebanon Daily News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Coronavirus cases are falling in Pa., but experts say it's not from the COVID-19 vaccine yet**
Coronavirus cases are falling in Pa., but experts say it's not from the COVID-19 vaccine yet - [Lebanon Daily News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Dirt racing official fights the toughest race of his life: Cancer**
For 30 years, Mike Yeaple felt the gravitational pull of the Central Pa. dirt-track racing community that embraced him as one of their own. For the first 10 years, Yeaple, a driver, loved the chaos of the track and the elation caused by a gust of wind that hit his face like a shot of... - [Chambersburg Public Opinion](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Broomall Rotary helps CASA children get yoga**
Broomall Rotary is partnering with PositivYogis Inc. in Havertown to create a special experience for 15 children. Craig Galante, president of the 40-member Broomall Rotary, explained how his organization and the yoga studio will be providing 10 free sessions,... - [Primos Delaware County Daily and Sunday Times](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Boyertown pharmacy ensuring COVID vaccine goes to patients most in need**
While many retailers distribute COVID vaccines on a first-come, first-served basis, at least one local pharmacy is going out of its way to prioritize seniors and at-risk populations. As soon as The Medicine Shoppe of Boyertown got the vaccine in stock, it began setting up clinics at assisted living facilities and, most recently,... - [Pottstown Mercury](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Trend of declining COVID cases continues in Chester County**
WEST CHESTER — Vaccines along with mitigation efforts appear to be making an impact in Chester County as the trend of declining COVID cases continues. The number of people testing positive for coronavirus last week has nearly been cut in half from the number of people testing positive four weeks ago,... - [Phoenixville News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Nationwide winter weather delays COVID vaccine shipments, forces appointment changes at Geisinger**

DANVILLE, PA – Due to the severe winter weather that has impacted much of the country, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has notified several states, including Pennsylvania, that expected COVID vaccine shipments for this week will be delayed.... - [Lock Haven Record](#)

02-17-2021

Sentry helps people with disabilities succeed at gainful employment

With the impending closure of Flo's, a doughnut shop in Mount Carmel, a dozen or so employees will be looking for a new job at the end of the month. Several of them may have a more difficult time than most in finding employment, though to no fault of their own.... - [Shamokin News-Item](#)

02-17-2021

Sue Paterno Takes 'Polar Pop' Challenge for Special Olympics

Sue Paterno takes part in the Polar Pop challenge benefiting Special Olympics Pennsylvania. Screenshot via YouTube/Special Olympics Pennsylvania Sue Paterno, a longtime Special Olympics Pennsylvania supporter and board member, joined more than 1,600 people in taking part in a virtual... - [State College News](#)

02-17-2021

Lycoming County commissioners table action on contract related to \$440K radio tower project

Lycoming County commissioners are seeking answers on a contract involving the emergency radio communications system. In 2018, the county signed a \$440,000 agreement with MCM Consulting Group, Inc., St. Mary's, to evaluate the system and consider a company for the... - [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)

02-17-2021

More funding set for county

Huntingdon County Commisisoners approved allowing the county to receive COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program funds in the amount of \$511,317. This is part of the first stimulus funds, the federal CARES Act that has not been spent. "We just learned about this Feb. 10, and the application for it needed to... - [Huntingdon Daily News](#)

02-17-2021

Local counties near 6K vaccinations

As vaccination numbers slowly climb, the number of new cases of COVID-19 appear to be leveling off locally. The five-county area is closing in on a total of 6,000 people who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, meaning they have received both required... - [Lewistown Sentinel](#)

02-17-2021

PIAA needs to ensure safety of athletes, fair play with unified mask-wearing rule

Admittedly, given the spike of COVID-19 cases and deaths locally in December and January, we weren't sure we'd get this far, but we have arrived at the time of year when the winter sports postseason begins for the area's high school athletes. That means instead of just playing local teams or those within a... - [Lewistown Sentinel](#)

02-17-2021

State health department reports no new COVID-19 deaths Monday in Westmoreland County

Westmoreland County's coronavirus (COVID-19) death total remained steady on Monday — the third day in the last four without an increase — while new daily cases remained in double-digits for an 12th straight day, according to Pennsylvania Department of Health data.... - [Latrobe Bulletin](#)

02-17-2021

Lehigh Valley real estate agents warned of harassing messages, client's 'unsettling' comments

Lehigh Valley real estate agents are being warned of a series of concerning contacts over the past few weeks. Several female agents reported receiving harassing calls and messages, according to a memo sent last week to members of the Greater Lehigh Valley Realtors. The group represents about 2,500 real estate professionals in the... - [Easton Express-Times](#)

02-17-2021

Pa. county officials: Already challenging vaccine distribution gets more complicated as people share registration links

PHILADELPHIA (KYW Newsradio) — The number of people who want the COVID-19 vaccine far outpaces the number of available doses. As people scramble to find appointments, some are sharing registration links, which is creating headaches for county officials. Chester County Health Director Jeanne Franklin said they canceled... - [KYW News Radio 1060](#)

- 02-17-2021 **Black churches in Montco join forces to increase COVID-19 vaccine access, lessen hesitancy**
ABINGTON, Pa. (KYW Newsradio) — Black church pastors in Montgomery County are taking the lead in an effort to combat COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, and they're encouraging hospitals to use their spaces. "It's good to have everybody back in church. This is the most... - [KYW News Radio 1060](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Grappling with budget deficit from COVID-19, Philly asks residents: What do you need most?**
PHILADELPHIA (KYW Newsradio) -- Philadelphia officials say the city is facing a budget deficit of nearly half a billion dollars. They are warning that cuts to city services may be necessary. Finance director Rob Dubow says the city hasn't decided on any specific... - [KYW News Radio 1060](#)
- 02-17-2021 **City tops 3,000 coronavirus deaths**
The city, at press time, reported 110,836 confirmed coronavirus cases. An interactive map of cases broken down by ZIP code can be found at phila.gov. There have been a total of 3,001 deaths in the city. Of those deaths, 1,124 have been in nursing homes. Mayor Jim Kenney. TIMES FILE PHOTO... - [Philadelphia Northeast Times](#)
- 02-17-2021 **The other pandemic -**
Everyone has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic that put the country on lockdown nearly 11 months ago, but not everyone has been affected by the "other pandemic," said the owners of Retrofit Careers LLC. They're referring to an increase of drug and alcohol use, overdose and... - [Philadelphia Northeast Times](#)
- 02-17-2021 **County recycling center turns 20**
The Wyoming County Recycling Center is marking its 20th anniversary of providing a place for people to drop off their recyclables. Wyoming County Recycling Coordinator/Waste Director Mike Rogers said that although not much has changed at the center itself, some ways that... - [Tunkhannock The New Age Examiner](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Opioid problem hasn't gone away**
Overshadowed by the the COVID-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis continues in the U.S and Southwestern Pennsylvania. Stress, isolation, limited access to resources, and job losses are all factors that could be attributing to the rising rates of substance abuse and overdoses during the coronavirus epidemic, local experts said.... - [Washington Observer-Reporter](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Washington, Fayette counties lowered to moderate COVID-19 risk areas**
Washington and Fayette counties were lowered from substantial to moderate risk areas for contracting COVID-19, Gov. Tom Wolf's administration said Tuesday. Greene County remained in the substantial risk category as progress appeared to be made in slowing the spread of the virus.... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 02-17-2021 **3,600 COVID-19 vaccines delivered in first week of Fayette County clinic**
Fayette County's COVID-19 vaccination task force is moving full steam ahead with 3,600 residents getting the shot in the first week the county's clinic was open. The commissioners said Tuesday that the effort to get the clinic up and running at Uniontown Mall has reached across many agencies, officials and... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Some Teens Volunteer for Covid Vaccine Trials to Get Their Lives Back**
To get out of ninth-grade science period one recent Friday, the King twins had an excuse that is so very 2021. Alexandra and Isabelle, 14, had to miss class . including a test . because they were participating in an actual science experiment: a clinical trial... - [New York Times](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Oregon Is Vaccinating Teachers. It Might Not Be Enough to Reopen Schools.**
Shortly before Christmas, as Oregon schools faced their 10th month under some of the nation.s sternest coronavirus restrictions, Gov. Kate Brown began a major push to reopen classrooms. She relaxed certain standards for restarting in-person teaching. She offered to help districts pay for masks, testing and tracing, and improved... - [New York Times](#)

- 02-17-2021 **On the frontline: Zomcik nursing patients back to health in fight against COVID-19**
Among the army of nurses fighting the battle against COVID-19 is Shelby Zomcik, formerly of Kersey, and a travel nurse currently based in California. The 2011 St. Marys Area High School graduate has gone from the Keystone State to the Golden State where she is now on her third nursing assignment,... - [Saint Marys Daily Press](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Internal report cites HUD for lead poisoning in East Chicago, Ind., children. More could be at risk.**
The Department of Housing and Urban Development has for years neglected to enforce its own environmental regulations, resulting in lead poisoning of children in at least one public housing development and potentially jeopardizing residents. health in thousands of other federally subsidized... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-17-2021 **The coronavirus pandemic doesn't neatly adhere to the lines of political rhetoric**
There is good news in the fight against the coronavirus, which emerged in the United States more than a year ago: Things have improved dramatically over the past few weeks. Since Jan. 13, the seven-day average of new infections has declined every day. As of Monday, the country was seeing about 88,000 new cases per day on... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Biden says vaccines will be available for all Americans by end of July**
The trip follows a week when Washington was consumed by the historic second impeachment trial of former president Donald Trump, who was acquitted Saturday of a charge of inciting the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. .For four years, all that.s been in the news is Trump. The next four years,... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-17-2021 **The White House keeps giving non-answers on reopening schools before teachers are vaccinated**
President Biden has set repeatedly a rigid standard for his coronavirus response: It will be driven by the science, period. .Our national strategy is comprehensive; it.s based on science, not politics; it.s based on truth, not denial; and it.s detailed,. Biden said... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Live updates: Rate of new coronavirus cases declining around the world, WHO says**
Europe and the Americas, including the United States, in particular, have seen the greatest drops in new infections. The number of new U.S. cases has fallen by 23.7 percent in the past week; nearly 28 million cases and 486,000 deaths have been reported in the past year.... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Weather Discovery Center programs continue with pandemic restrictions**
PUNXSUTAWNEY — Groundhog Day is over, and Punxsutawney Phil has done his due diligence and returned to his burrow to hibernate after his prediction of six more weeks of winter weather after seeing his shadow earlier this month. So now it's time to turn the weather duties back over to the... - [Punxsutawney Spirit](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Mo Valley board joins request for charter school funding reform**
HOUTZDALE — Moshannon Valley School Board is joining with fellow school boards in Clearfield, Centre and Clinton counties to request charter school funding reform. At Monday's directors' meeting, district Superintendent Dr. John Zesiger said, "The districts are coming together to present a unified... - [Clearfield Progress](#)
- 02-17-2021 **PA lawmakers must act to help doctors provide the medical care people deserve | Opinion**
By Dr. Suzette Song Here's a quick civics lesson. Each session of Pennsylvania's General Assembly is two years long. It begins in January of an odd-numbered year and ends in November of the subsequent even-numbered year. January of 2021 marks the third legislative session in which... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Let's work for – not against – women's health in 2021-22 | Opinion**
By Rep. Mary Jo Daley, State Rep. Morgan Cephas, State Sen. Amanda Cappelletti and State Sen. Judy Schwank As we begin the 2021-22 legislative session with myriad tasks ahead of us, innumerable struggling people and businesses demanding answers and assistance, and an ongoing worldwide pandemic we so badly want to put... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)

- 02-17-2021 **Mandatory COVID vaccines: Why bosses shouldn't require them**
If you're tired of being told what to do during the pandemic — wear a mask, stand back, stay home — you're really going to hate what could be coming next. As vaccines become easier to get, your boss could require you to get one if you want to keep your job. You may think that violates your freedoms, but it's legal, with some... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Lancaster County commissioners approve plan to open COVID-19 vaccination center at Park City Mall**
The former Bon-Ton department store in the Park City Mall has been approved for use as a massive coronavirus vaccination site, Lancaster County officials announced Wednesday. The Lancaster County commissioners signed off on a final agreement Wednesday that could allow a vaccination center to open in the mall as... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Queen Elizabeth's husband, Prince Philip, 99, admitted to hospital**
LONDON (AP) — Britain's 99-year-old Prince Philip has been admitted to a London hospital after feeling unwell, Buckingham Palace said Wednesday... - [AP](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Six-building affordable housing community to be completed in the fall**
An affordable living apartment community that is currently under construction is expected to be completed in the fall. The Beach Run Apartments are being built at 250 North Center St. in Bethel Township, Lebanon County near Fredericksburg. Lancaster County-based... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **'Face diapers not required': Florida restaurant's mask policy goes viral**
A Florida restaurant's face mask policy is going viral. On Facebook, BeckyJack's Food Shack in Weeki Wachee, Fla., reminded its customers that it does not require face masks to be worn inside during the COVID-19 pandemic. The post on Valentine's Day has received more than 2,500 comments and... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Pennsylvania joint task force on COVID-19 vaccine focuses on Moderna second-shot shortages**
HARRISBURG — The allowable time gap between first and second shots of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has been a focus of Pennsylvania's new joint vaccine task force involving the Wolf administration and members of the state General Assembly, officials said Wednesday.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Grand View Health plans new patient pavilion to halt a decline in patients**
Grand View Hospital plans to build a new hospital on its Upper Bucks County campus, a move that will allow the nonprofit to convert to 100% private rooms. Grand View will still have 169 licensed beds. - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Bill Ludwig, patient who helped pioneer cancer immunotherapy at Penn, dies at 75 of COVID-19**
Bill Ludwig was losing his decade-long battle with an insidious type of leukemia when he became the inaugural recipient of an experimental immune therapy being developed at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. "I didn't hesitate, because I had no options left," Mr. Ludwig... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Philly's school reopening was pushed back again**
The Philadelphia School District has pushed back its reopening date for a third time. Superintendent William R. Hite Jr. said Wednesday 9,000 prekindergarten through second grade students won't return on Feb. 22 as planned but will instead go back March 1 amid an ongoing building safety dispute... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Philly schools should not reopen until all staff can be guaranteed a COVID vaccine | Expert Opinion**
As a physician and a parent of elementary-aged children, I was eager to read the recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on strategies schools can use to lower risk of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The CDC guidance is an important step towards... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-17-2021 **Majority of Excelsior staff immunized against coronavirus, limited appointments periodically being opened to public**

About 70% of Excelsa Health's staff are immunized against the coronavirus and a limited number of appointments are periodically being opened to community members who meet the state's guidelines. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Carol Fox said the health system late last week... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-17-2021

[Allegheny County reports 26 new coronavirus deaths](#)

Allegheny County reports 26 new coronavirus deaths - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-17-2021

[Letter to the editor: Westmoreland needs better vaccine plan](#)

Saw on TV that Dr. Anthony Fauci indicated by April anyone who wants a vaccine can get one. Obvious concern: If there is not an unlimited supply of vaccine by then, then opening up to everyone would be beyond chaotic for registering using the wild system Westmoreland has now.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-17-2021

[Lancaster County Office of Aging and Pa. health officials unfortunately are playing catch-up on COVID-19 vaccine efforts \[editorial\]](#)

THE ISSUE According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, more than 1.28 million Pennsylvanians had been at least partially vaccinated against COVID-19 as of Tuesday afternoon. In Lancaster County, 48,939 people had been at least partially vaccinated. That's just 9% of the county's total... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)

02-17-2021

[The Politics Behind Reopening Pittsburgh Public Schools](#)

An increasing amount of scientific evidence suggests that in-person learning, especially for younger students, presents a low risk for spreading the coronavirus. But last month, Pittsburgh Public Schools delayed reopening at least until April, a move that frustrated many working... - [WESA 90.5](#)

02-17-2021

[Medically vulnerable immigrants in Pa. face possible re-detention, advocates say](#)

(Philadelphia) — Eighteen medically vulnerable immigrants, some of whom have spent most of their lives in the United States, could be re-arrested and sent to Pennsylvania jails while the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage, according to their attorneys. Last spring, a federal judge ordered U.S. Immigration and Customs... - [WITF](#)

02-17-2021

[Grand View Health plans new patient pavilion to halt a decline in patients](#)

Grand View Health is tapping the bond market to pay for a \$184 million patient pavilion that will allow the nonprofit in Upper Bucks County to convert to 100% private rooms. The decision to construct the six-story, 190,156 square-foot building . expected to open in July 2023 . is part of a years-long effort to halt a... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

02-17-2021

[Federal agents seize roughly 10 million phony N95 masks in COVID-19 probe](#)

Federal agents have seized roughly 10 million fake 3M brand N95 masks in recent weeks, the result of an ongoing investigation into counterfeits sold in at least five states to hospitals, medical facilities and government agencies... - [AP](#)

02-17-2021

[A Pa. lawmaker helped hundreds of seniors get COVID-19 vaccines, but not everyone says that's fair](#)

As hundreds of thousands of their peers scrambled to be vaccinated against COVID-19, about 700 seniors at the Village of Neshaminy Falls this month found themselves with enviable access to doses. They received help registering and on Feb. 5 and 11, their North Wales... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

02-17-2021

[Vaccine doses may be delayed for more than 100,000 in Pa. due to shortage](#)

Federal agents have seized roughly 10 million fake 3M brand N95 masks in recent weeks, the result of an ongoing investigation into counterfeits sold in at least five states to hospitals, medical facilities and government agencies. The most recent seizures occurred Wednesday when Homeland Security agents... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

02-17-2021

[COVID-19 Update: Vaccine misstep forces more than 100,000 Pennsylvanians to reschedule shots](#)

COVID-19 vaccinations for up to 115,000 Pennsylvanians will have to be rescheduled starting this week as the state department of health untangles miscommunications with vaccine providers that began in

January. Acting secretary of health Alison Beam said Wednesday that providers had... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

02-17-2021

[South Carolina House passes bill banning most abortions](#)

The South Carolina House on Wednesday overwhelmingly passed a bill banning nearly all abortions, following the lead of other states with similar measures that would go into effect if the U.S. Supreme Court were to overturn Roe v. Wade... - [AP](#)

02-17-2021

[Problems in Pennsylvania COVID-19 vaccine rollout could affect shots for 100,000-plus people](#)

A structural issue in Pennsylvania's rollout of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has led to shortages of second doses of the two-dose vaccine, prompting a shake-up in shot scheduling that could affect more than 100,000 people, a top state official said Wednesday.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)

02-17-2021

[St. Luke's and Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley to give free COVID vaccines](#)

St. Luke's University Health Network and the Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley are partnering to offer free COVID-19 vaccines to South Side Bethlehem and nearby residents ages 65 and older on Friday. The event is being held as part of a nationwide initiative to increase the... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)

02-17-2021

[Another coronavirus variant with a potentially worrying set of mutations detected in the UK](#)

The appearance of coronavirus variants are cause for concern among researchers, in terms of their impact on immunity from vaccines or prior infections, experts say. The Guardian reported that yet another variant, with a potentially worrying set of mutations, has been detected in the U.K., which experts... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)

02-17-2021

[Pa. discovers big COVID-19 vaccine glitch - thousands of second doses given out by mistake](#)

For weeks, state officials have been blaming much of Pennsylvania's slow COVID-19 vaccine rollout on providers unnecessarily holding back doses to make sure people got second doses when needed. In fact, they forcefully urged providers not to hold back doses, assuring... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)

02-17-2021

[Vaccine mix-up prompts rescheduling shuffle in Pennsylvania](#)

Vaccine providers in Pennsylvania could be short 55,000 first doses of Moderna's covid-19 vaccine in the coming weeks after a perfect storm of circumstances. meant some providers spent weeks giving out dedicated second-dose shots as first doses, health department leaders said Wednesday.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-17-2021

[Judge rules against Crack.d Egg restaurant: 'They've largely chosen their fate here'](#)

An Allegheny County judge said that the owners of the Crack.d Egg have largely chosen their fate, by remaining closed rather than comply with a covid-19 masking order. Common Pleas Judge John McVay on Wednesday denied the Brentwood restaurant's request to stay an order he issued earlier this month... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-17-2021

[Allegheny County reports 26 new coronavirus deaths](#)

Allegheny County on Wednesday reported 26 new coronavirus deaths and 215 additional coronavirus cases. The newly reported deaths is a spike in the county data, but most days in February have reported a low number of deaths. Eight or fewer deaths have been recorded on 12 days this month. That balances the five other days that... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-17-2021

[Westmoreland County sees 4 additional covid deaths, cases steady](#)

Westmoreland County on Wednesday added four new covid deaths, after two days with none, according to data from the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The total number of covid deaths in the county now stands at 652 since the pandemic started last March. There have been 47 reported deaths in... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-17-2021

[Pennsylvania reports 193 covid deaths, while cases remain steady, hospitalizations drop](#)

Pennsylvania on Wednesday added 193 coronavirus deaths, the highest number of deaths reported on a

single day this month. The total number of covid-related deaths in the state stands at 23,319. The newly reported deaths come after only seven were added Tuesday and 23... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-16-2021

COVID-19 forum will focus on toll on families

Children and teens have been far less likely to be hospitalized by COVID-19, but the pandemic has had a “profound” affect on their lives regardless – and this week’s COVID Questions forum will gather a group of panelists offering help, organizer said. The virtual forum Tuesday will feature three area professionals who will... - [Johnstown Tribune-Democrat](#)

02-16-2021

Biden faces questions about commitment to minimum wage hike

WASHINGTON (AP) — Union activist Terrence Wise recalls being laughed at when he began pushing for a national \$15 per hour minimum wage almost a decade ago. Nearly a year into the pandemic, the idea isn't so funny... - [AP](#)

02-16-2021

COVID pandemic is fueling resurgence of opioid crisis, experts warn

HARRISBURG — The surge in drug use and the challenges in responding to the opioid epidemic during the COVID-19 pandemic have translated into a resurgence of overdose deaths that will rival if not surpass the death toll in 2017 when the opioid epidemic had previously been at its worst.... - [Meadville Tribune](#)

02-16-2021

Edinboro University plans to fully reopen in the fall

EDINBORO — Edinboro University plans to open its campus in fall 2021, assuming the COVID-19 situation improves and health officials do not advise against it. University officials said some mitigation efforts are likely to linger, based on Erie County Department of Health and Pennsylvania Department of... - [Meadville Tribune](#)

02-16-2021

Senate confirmations could be contentious for Wolf cabinet appointees

The heads of some of the most high-profile agencies in state government face what could be contentious confirmation battles. The state departments of Health, Labor and Industry, Education and State all have acting secretaries leading them. With the COVID pandemic still raging, concerns over aspects of the 2020... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-16-2021

Penn Valley Airport awarded \$300K CARES grant

SELINGSGROVE — Penn Valley Airport has received a \$300,000 federal grant to update maintenance equipment. The matching grant requires the airport to kick in \$75,000 toward the upgrades, board Chairman Bruce Witkop said. The funds will be used for the purchase of several pieces of equipment,... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-16-2021

United Way: More than 430K people sought help in last year

The number of people seeking help from their local clearinghouse for human and social services jumped by about 50 percent last year in Pennsylvania as people struggled to pay rent, stay current on utility bills and afford food as a result of the pandemic, the United Way said.... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-16-2021

UPDATE 18 Sunshine Corners residents relocated; State official confirms 12 positive for COVID

SUNBURY — Eighteen residents of Sunbury Sunshine Corners — including 12 that were COVID-19 positive — have been relocated to other facilities after the state Department of Human Services assisted with the emergency removal of the residents on Saturday, state officials said.... - [Sunbury Daily Item](#)

02-16-2021

Harrisburg education leader battles cancer while continuing to empower youth

Editor's note: During Black History month, PennLive is paying tribute to the people who are helping shape what will some day be the history of the Black community in Central Pennsylvania. These are people who are examples of excellence, who inspire those around... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)

02-16-2021

Delay in census data could put transparency in Pa.'s redistricting process at risk

HARRISBURG — The data needed to redraw Pennsylvania’s political districts is more than five months behind schedule, raising concerns among advocates for fair maps that state lawmakers could use the delay to fast-track the redistricting process and make it less transparent.... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)

- 02-16-2021 **New covid cases continue to decline in Allegheny County**
Allegheny County continues to see a decline in the number of new cases, hospitalizations and deaths associated with covid-19. The county added 394 new cases of coronavirus over the past two days, according to county's Health Department. That's more than 12% fewer... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Monroeville doctor accused of writing illegal painkiller prescriptions**
Monroeville doctor accused of writing illegal painkiller prescriptions - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Pitt, NCAA knew about dangers of football concussions, lawsuits claim**
Two former University of Pittsburgh football players filed separate federal lawsuits against the university and the NCAA, as well as the Big East and Atlantic Coast conferences, alleging the organizations were aware of the potential health ramifications caused by concussions and repeated blows to... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Ready for takeoff: Portersville man finally gets required COVID test to visit wife in Germany**
It took a special delivery, but David Kern finally got the coveted COVID-19 test he needed for his trip to Frankfurt, Germany, to be reunited with his wife. The Portersville man had been trapped in a Catch-22 for several weeks. He couldn't get a boarding pass from United Airlines for the first leg of... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Penn immunotherapy pioneer Carl June shares prize from Israeli foundation that also honors Fauci**
In the 1980s, Israeli immunologist Zelig Eshhar took a giant step toward finding the Holy Grail of cancer treatment: a way to make the immune system attack when its own bodily tissue turns malignant. But it wasn't until almost two decades later that his American colleagues, Carl June and Steven... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Bucks County delays some COVID vaccine appointments due to registration error**
Some Bucks County residents who were set to be among the first to receive vaccines at the county's clinics today were notified in an email Monday night that they will not be able to get the shot as scheduled. The county notified an unknown number of residents that their appointments,... - [Levittown Bucks County Courier Times](#)
- 02-16-2021 **New operations director helping ACT keep moving forward**
Calling it her "dream job," Tara E. Eney took over as the new director of operations of the Altoona Community Theatre in November and is earning rave reviews despite a COVID-19-induced pause in performances. A Hollidaysburg resident, Eney brings a diverse skill set, organizational... - [Altoona Mirror](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Lehigh University professor's remarks about race and poverty draw criticism from students, faculty**
A Lehigh University professor's video about poverty has students and faculty discussing academic freedom and whether an institution that calls itself anti-racist can support a professor who proclaims that it's a myth that poverty is about race. Lehigh University's College of Business posted a video Jan. 28... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Lehigh Valley real estate webinar to focus on coronavirus and indoor air quality**
The crew at CREW, for Commercial Real Estate Women of the Lehigh Valley, has a videoconference on "Indoor Air Quality in the Workplace – What You Need to Know," on tap noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday. It's timely based on the coronavirus and its impact on commercial real... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Allied Universal hiring 200 people in and around Lehigh Valley as demand jumps for security services**
A security guard's job is a little different during a pandemic. Gone, temporarily, are the large festivals and events. Idled, too, is the buzz of many office buildings, with workers stuck at home rather than filtering in and out, quickly greeting guards as they come and go.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)

- 02-16-2021 **[Penn State Health expands visitation guidelines for emergency departments, clinics](#)**
 Adult patients for emergency departments and clinics at Penn State Health Medical Group locations and at three central Pennsylvania medical centers can now have a visitor during their stay, Penn State Health announced Friday. The changes, which also affect Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, St. Joseph... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Covid-Linked Syndrome in Children Is Growing and Cases Are More Severe](#)**
 Fifteen-year-old Braden Wilson was frightened of Covid-19. He was careful to wear masks and only left his house, in Simi Valley, Calif., for things like orthodontist checkups and visits with his grandparents nearby. But somehow, the virus found Braden. It wreaked ruthless damage in the form... - [New York Times](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Cuomo stops short of apology over delay in data for nursing home coronavirus deaths](#)**
 Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo for the first time Monday acknowledged a lack of transparency in his administration's initial reporting of coronavirus deaths in New York nursing homes, admitting that the void of information furthered disinformation and induced anxiety amid a deadly pandemic.... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Eroding trust, spreading fear: The historical ties between pandemics and extremism](#)**
 .The pandemic has made more people want to blame someone else because they've lost their jobs or they're lonely,. Crigler said. Ian Bayne, for years a campaign professional, had sworn off politics and launched a career in real estate. Then covid hit, and he helped launch No... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Hospitality workers hardest hit by COVID pandemic](#)**
 Laurel A. Fryberger never thought she would have to ask her parents for help paying bills. At 34, Fryberger of West Reading had been on her own and self-supporting for several years. Then COVID-19 struck. "It's crazy," she said. "This is stuff you never think will happen. I never... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Were not stopping any time soon: Skippack Pharmacy holds coronavirus vaccination clinics](#)**
 SKIPPACK — Skippack Pharmacy's very own Superman has soared to new heights in recent weeks, helping to get nearly 2,500 people inoculated so far this month during several COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Montgomery County. Since cases of COVID-19 were first reported locally, pharmacist and... - [Norristown Times Herald](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Fair funding would level field for NEPA schools](#)**
 Fair funding in Hazleton Area School District could mean a larger career center, smaller classes, a special education program for local students who now travel beyond the district for instruction and a field house for indoor sports and the prom. Scranton School District with fair funding could update its curriculum,... - [Hazleton Standard-Speaker](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Some Luzerne County residents traveling far and wide for COVID-19 vaccinations](#)**
 Kelly Conway drove two hours from her job near Philadelphia to Plains Twp., picked up her mom and drove another hour and 20 minutes to Susquehanna County for a COVID-19 vaccination last month. Explaining why she scoured the internet for weeks to secure the earliest... - [Hazleton Standard-Speaker](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Schuylkill County bakeries busy for Fasnacht Day](#)**
 The coronavirus pandemic hasn't lessened the demand for fasnachts at two Schuylkill County bakeries. Steven Yurkonis, co-owner of Spring Street Bakery in Frackville with his father, Joe, and brother, Joseph, said his family operation has thus far made hundreds of the doughnuts from scratch and they'll be available... - [Pottsville Republican and Evening Herald](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Local students in health care help during pandemic](#)**
 Local students studying for careers in health care are finding themselves on the front lines of the pandemic before they even have a degree. University of Scranton and Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine students are joining their peers around the region to help with the... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Blue Shield to call shots under California vaccine contract](#)**
 Blue Shield of California will create an algorithm to determine where to allocate COVID-19 vaccines

statewide with the goal of being able to administer 3 million shots a week by March 1, according to a contract made public Monday that grants the insurance giant far-reaching powers in... - [Los Angeles Times](#)

02-16-2021

[Dodger Stadium COVID vaccine site to reopen for 2nd doses](#)

Dodger Stadium and several other COVID-19 vaccination sites that were shuttered last week due to shortages are set to reopen Tuesday, though continuing supply problems mean the vast majority of shots administered will be second doses, Los Angeles officials said.... - [Los Angeles Times](#)

02-16-2021

[Who gets checks, tax breaks — and when — from Maryland’s coronavirus pandemic RELIEF Act package?](#)

Who gets checks, tax breaks — and when — from Maryland’s coronavirus pandemic RELIEF Act package? - [Baltimore Sun](#)

02-16-2021

[Maryland sees little flu this season as researchers wonder if flu vaccine staves off COVID-19](#)

Maryland sees little flu this season as researchers wonder if flu vaccine staves off COVID-19 - [Baltimore Sun](#)

02-16-2021

[WV seeks increase in COVID-19 vaccination registrations in six rural counties](#)

West Virginia officials are reaching out to residents in six rural counties that are lagging in signing up for COVID-19 vaccinations, state COVID-19 interagency task force director James Hoyer said Monday. He said the government is working with several groups, including the state... - [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#)

02-16-2021

[Opioid Deaths Spark Push to Ease Buprenorphine Rules](#)

With drug overdose deaths soaring during the pandemic to the highest levels ever recorded, a growing chorus of medical experts is calling on the federal government to deregulate the addiction treatment medication buprenorphine. They argue that a requirement that doctors take an 8-hour course and submit... - [Stateline.org](#)

02-16-2021

[Voice of Westmoreland advocating for equitable vaccine distribution](#)

Voice of Westmoreland, a local nonpartisan grassroots organization, is advocating for equitable distribution of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine to all eligible county residents. The organization hosted a community town hall Feb. 2, which brought together representatives from Service Employees International Union,... - [Latrobe Bulletin](#)

02-16-2021

[Over 3,000 county residents receive vaccine](#)

HARRISBURG — As COVID-19 vaccination efforts continue, a total of 3,337 Clinton County residents have received the first dose of the vaccine, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Of those, only 855 have received both doses, the department reported on... - [Lock Haven Express](#)

02-16-2021

[As Students Return to Campus, Penn State Expands COVID-19 Testing, Plans for Increased Activities](#)

The main gymnasium in Penn State's White Building has been reconfigured and adapted as a center for COVID-19 testing of all students returning to University Park for the spring semester. Photo by Patrick Mansell | Penn State After a month of remote instruction to start the spring semester, Penn... - [State College News](#)

02-16-2021

[State agencies navigate heroin/opioid crisis during the pandemic](#)

HARRISBURG — Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic while battling the opioid epidemic and the rise of stimulant usage across the state is a monumental task, according to Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Jennifer Smith. “Nothing about the circumstances or decisions surrounding COVID-19 has... - [DuBois Courier-Express](#)

02-16-2021

[Despite interim deal, South Allegheny School District ends relationship with transportation provider](#)

The South Allegheny School District has severed ties with its transportation provider, the district said in a letter to parents on Monday. Following a judge’s order, Sun Coach Lines LLC will no longer be authorized to

transport the district's students. The district's termination of services with the company comes after the... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

- 02-16-2021 **[Anti-litter groups managed nearly 12,000 old tires and more than 119,000 appliances in pandemic year](#)**
Affiliates of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, the statewide anti-litter and illegal dumping organization collected more than 1,119,573 pounds of electronics, 11,851 tires, 119,041 appliances and 56,341 pounds of household hazardous waste during the coronavirus pandemic year of 2020.... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[CAT, rabbitransit offer free transportation to COVID-19 vaccination appointments](#)**
Capital Area Transit and rabbitransit said today they will offer free shared ride transportation to anyone who needs it for a scheduled COVID-19 vaccination appointment. "As the COVID vaccine continues to become more available, CAT and rabbitransit are dedicated to ensuring that transportation is not a... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Lehigh Valley real estate webinar to focus on coronavirus and indoor air quality](#)**
The crew at CREW, for Commercial Real Estate Women of the Lehigh Valley, has a videoconference on "Indoor Air Quality in the Workplace – What You Need to Know," on tap noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday. It's timely based on the coronavirus and its impact on commercial real... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[This Pa. state university now says it will reopen for fall in-person classes](#)**
Edinboro University plans to open for in-person classes this fall, with officials saying they will follow the science surrounding COVID-19 but .are very hopeful. the situation will allow them to resume activities put on hold since March. Edinboro is one of 14 state-owned universities belonging to the State... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Hospitals still ration medical N95 masks as stockpiles swell](#)**
Mike Bowen.s warehouse outside Fort Worth, Texas, was piled high with cases of medical-grade N95 face masks... - [AP](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Doctors push back against new Pa. Health Department COVID-19 vaccine policy](#)**
Pushback among doctors and pharmacists is mounting to a state Department of Health pivot in vaccine strategy that aims to boost the number of COVID-19 inoculations by favoring bigger hospitals over smaller physician practices and clinics. Within hours of the Health Department.s announcement Friday that it will... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[A call for accuracy and safety](#)**
Imagine it: A family member or friend is confined to a building where people have died of COVID-19, other residents and staff have been sickened, there.s no reliably accurate data about the virus spread, and the landlord is insisting that the number of building occupants must be thinned.... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Vaccine delays leave grocery workers feeling expendable](#)**
As panicked Americans cleared supermarkets of toilet paper and food last spring, grocery employees gained recognition as among the most indispensable of the pandemic.s front-line workers... - [AP](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[COVID-19 Update: Pennsylvania approaches 900,000 cases](#)**
Pennsylvania on Tuesday was on the cusp of 900,000 cases of COVID-19, reporting 899,237 total cases in the state to date. After a holiday weekend pushed back the state Department of Health.s usual daily update, a three-day total of 6,893 new cases was added. There have... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[51 Pa. counties have substantial spread of COVID-19, positive test rate drops for 9th week](#)**
Pennsylvania.s positive test rate for the coronavirus continues to decline, Gov. Tom Wolf.s office said Tuesday. And while most of Pennsylvania.s counties are still showing a substantial spread of the virus, the number of counties with high transmission is dropping.... - [Penn Live](#), [Patriot-News](#)

- 02-16-2021 **[3 ways teachers can address their students' trauma when school is virtual | Opinion](#)**
 In classrooms across the U.S. . virtual or in-person . teachers are faced with an enormous challenge: foster the academic learning process while also addressing social-emotional needs of students during a highly traumatic period in history. With the continued pandemic and racial tensions,... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[If you're vaccinated and exposed to COVID-19, you don.t need to quarantine, as long as you meet these 3 criter](#)**
 The great news is that the current COVID-19 vaccines have shown to be highly effective at preventing the virus. But there.s currently limited information on whether you could still be a carrier of the virus and transmit it to others, and also how long protection lasts. This leaves the... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Allegheny County reports 1 new covid death; trend continues of low deaths reported](#)**
 Allegheny County reported one additional covid-related death Tuesday, according to the county Health Department. The individual was in their 80s and died Sunday. That continues a trend in recent days where no or few covid-19 deaths have been reported. In the past four days, four deaths have been reported, with... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Covid deaths reported in Westmoreland County rival October numbers](#)**
 Westmoreland County on Tuesday reported no additional covid-related deaths, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Health. With no new deaths reported, the seven-day death total in the county is six, which is the lowest it has been since October. In the last seven days,... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Where are Pa. coronavirus cases rising? Here are the key numbers to watch](#)**
 All of Pennsylvania is in the least-restrictive, green phase of the state.s reopening plan. Schools and universities, businesses, governments and organizations are struggling to balance the need to continue their operations with the possibility of forfeiting the hard-won suppression of... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[MAP: Where coronavirus is in Pennsylvania](#)**
 The maps show the breakdown of coronavirus in Pennsylvania by county, with the latest numbers released by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. This map shows the total number of cases recorded in each county, and compares them to the state totals. Tap or hover over a county to see its numbers.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Nursing home group cites evidence COVID-19 vaccine is already working for their residents](#)**
 An organization that represents long-term care providers has released preliminary, but hopeful, data on the impact of vaccination in facilities that received top priority for COVID-19 vaccines because their residents have proved so vulnerable to the new virus.... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[For just 2nd time in 2021, Pa. reports new covid deaths in single digits](#)**
 Pennsylvania reported seven additional covid-19 deaths Tuesday, per the state Department of Health. The deaths reported Tuesday increase the state.s death total to 23,126, with 1,465 deaths reported in February. Only once before this year have health officials reported such a low number... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Lehigh Valley family doctors say COVID-19 vaccine plan wrongly pushes them aside: 'We know our patients'](#)**
 Patients hit Dr. Mary Stock-Keister with the personal opinion question . .Hey doc, what do you think?. . all the time, but they won.t be asking it about COVID-19 vaccine anytime soon. That.s because Stock-Keister and other family physicians were moved to the... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-16-2021 **[Northampton County will offer seniors free LANTA trips to COVID-19 vaccination appointments](#)**
 Northampton County seniors will be offered free trips to their coronavirus vaccination appointments under a new program announced Tuesday afternoon. Many Pennsylvanians have struggled to schedule their vaccinations with local health networks and health bureaus as demand outpaces supply. But for... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)

- 02-16-2021 **Where can I find Pa.'s COVID-19 vaccine providers?**
A map released by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Health shows hospitals, urgent care centers, doctor.s offices and pharmacies that are or will be providing the COVID-19 vaccine. Those currently eligible to receive the vaccine include those over age 65... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 02-16-2021 **Editorial: Opening schools safely means everyone pitching in**
When can schools open up? That has been the question on everyone.s minds for months. The coronavirus pandemic shut all Pennsylvania schools in March 2020. Some reopened in the fall, but it was a very different experience than kids . or educators . usually handle while studying math or learning parts of speech.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Wolf Administration orders faster distribution of COVID vaccines**
Amid frustration with the state.s COVID-19 vaccine rollout, Gov. Tom Wolf.s administration will be applying pressure to vaccine providers in order to increase the speed and efficiency of the state.s vaccine distribution. Acting Health Secretary Alison Beam announced Friday that she signed an... - [The PLS Reporter](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Education associations urge educator vaccine prioritization amidst return to in-person learning**
Leaders of some of Pennsylvania.s largest education advocacy organizations published a letter Thursday urging the state to prioritize vaccination for teachers and school staff, as many districts across the state return to some form of in-person learning for the spring semester.... - [The PLS Reporter](#)
- 02-14-2021 **While scant on details, Wolf says 'we need to be better' with vaccine rollout**
At a press conference on COVID-19 vaccinations among Pennsylvania.s older residents, Gov. Tom Wolf reiterated that he knows the state can do better when it comes to the currently slow vaccination distribution, though failed to offer specifics about the state.s plan to improve rollout at the current... - [The PLS Reporter](#)
- 02-14-2021 **How a federal program built to reward anti-COVID-19 efforts doled out millions of dollars to some of the deadliest nursing homes in Pennsylvania**
With nursing home residents dying from COVID-19 and the pandemic hurtling toward a devastating winter spike, federal officials last year launched a special program to reward facilities that could stave off the virus and keep their residents alive. Since September, the government has awarded nearly \$2 billion to nursing... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Penguins adapting to NHL's new COVID-19 protocols**
With five teams on pause due to COVID-19 outbreaks, the NHL is ramping up its protocols. The enhanced safety measures, which were announced on Thursday, include more rapid testing on game days, additional restrictions for team personnel away from rink and more social distancing measures within dressing rooms.... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **U.K. virus variant is probably deadlier, scientists say**
British government scientists are increasingly finding the coronavirus variant first detected in Britain to be deadlier than the original virus, a devastating trend that highlights the serious risks of this new phase of the pandemic... - [AP](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Lauded early in pandemic, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo now panned on nursing homes**
New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo wrote a book on managing the COVID-19 crisis. Now he faces intensifying accusations that he covered up the true death toll of the pandemic on nursing home residents, attacks that challenge his reputation for straight-shooting competency and could cloud his political... - [AP](#)
- 02-14-2021 **CDC offers new guidance for schools to reopen safely**
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday published updated recommendations for opening schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic that focus on virus mitigation and detection strategies and say vaccinating teachers is not required to reopen schools. The CDC said evidence suggests that many K-12 schools that .strictly.... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

- 02-14-2021 **WHO chief: As virus slows, world must remain vigilant**
The head of the World Health Organization said Friday that the drop in confirmed COVID-19 infections around the world was encouraging, but he cautioned against relaxing restrictions that have helped curb the spread of the coronavirus... - [AP](#)
- 02-14-2021 **County opens second community vaccination site in Castle Shannon**
The Allegheny County Health Department is opening a coronavirus vaccination clinic in Castle Shannon next week to vaccinate people who are 65 and older. In a news release on Friday, Health Department officials said that the clinic will open in the Castle Shannon Fire Department Banquet Hall on... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Feds won't require tests for flights**
Federal health officials said they will not require domestic travelers to show proof that they have tested negative for the coronavirus before boarding flights, a measure that had drawn vocal opposition from representatives of the airline industry... - [AP](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Cuomo administration 'froze' over virus data**
New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's top aide told Democratic lawmakers that the administration took months to release data revealing how many people living at nursing homes died of COVID-19 because officials .froze. over worries the information was .going to be used against us.... - [AP](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Pennsylvania prepares to shrink number of places that administer COVID-19 vaccine**
Volume is the new buzzword at the Pennsylvania Department of Health as it struggles to boost the number of people getting the COVID-19 vaccines amid scarce supplies. The health department is cutting the number of places where COVID-19 vaccines are given, favoring instead hospitals, clinics and pharmacies that... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Ruth Ann Dailey: Peduto speaks up for students**
One of the most daunting challenges we face in fighting the coronavirus pandemic is to weigh short-term loss against long-term loss. Our leaders have mostly failed at this. They don't often speak about the longer-lasting consequences of COVID-19 that they, as politicians, won't be... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Other Voices: Vaccine distribution should not hold up school reopening**
Of the many difficult decisions elected officials have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic perhaps none is more fraught than whether to open schools for in-person instruction. In most of the United States, the choice of fully in-person, hybrid, or fully remote instruction has been made by local... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **The next health crisis**
Within the arena of public health battles, all eyes are peeled on COVID-19. But another health crisis looms: a war against drug-resistant infections. And we may not have the weapons to wage the fight. U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Forest Hills, has taken notice. He introduced a... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Business group's report claims region's air is getting cleaner, faster**
A new report says air quality in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area has improved significantly, but the region doesn't get the credit it deserves for reducing pollution levels. Issued Thursday by Pittsburgh Works Together, the report draws on previously released, local, state and national pollution data to conclude... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Tight supply creates reluctance over federal vaccine sites**
The Biden administration's plan to open 100 vaccination sites by the end of the month was initially embraced by governors and health officials, who considered it a much needed lifeline to get more Americans inoculated against the coronavirus... - [AP](#)
- 02-14-2021 **For a bleak Valentine's Day, lovers find hope in roses, vaccines**
The notecards poking from bouquets rushing out of a Chicago florist all carry similar messages: .looking forward to celebrating in person.... - [AP](#)

- 02-14-2021 **People with mental health conditions should get vaccine priority | Opinion**
A few years ago, when I was a senior in high school, I sent a text to my mother that read, .I don.t want to live anymore.. Even riding the highs of my acceptance to Temple University and graduation season, the feelings of anxiety and depression in addition to the obsessive... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Amid criticism and questions, Pa. outlines steps for improving vaccine rollout: 'We will do better'**
The Pennsylvania Department of Health on Friday outlined several steps to improve the state.s coronavirus vaccine rollout, including ordering providers to administer at least 80% of their first doses within seven days of receiving them and sharply cutting the number of providers to get more... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-14-2021 **CDC gives new road map for schools without requiring schools to reopen**
President Biden.s administration on Friday weighed in for the first time with guidelines for reopening schools amid the pandemic, providing a road map for local officials navigating the fraught debate on how to return students to classrooms safely. Citing a growing body of science on the virus and data from schools in the... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-14-2021 **The most frequently asked questions about Pa.'s frustrating vaccine rollout**
Pennsylvania is in the midst of a frustrating vaccine rollout, and that might put it lightly. This has primarily been driven by a short supply of the vaccine overall. Making matters worse, however, has been the state.s patchwork system for finding and getting shots, which has been a major source of public... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Type 2 diabetes drug shows promise against obesity, study suggests. But it's expensive.**
A new drug has been found to be so effective against obesity that it may help patients avoid consequences such as diabetes and hypertension, according to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine this week. Semaglutide is currently marketed as a treatment for Type 2 diabetes by its... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-14-2021 **With covid cases dropping, more Westmoreland school districts opt to reopen classrooms**
As new covid cases continue to drop in Westmoreland County and it appears a post-holiday coronavirus spike has been dodged, several area school districts have brought students back to classrooms . with more planning such a return. Students at Greater Latrobe, Jeannette and Yough have returned to school... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Appointments for covid vaccine at new Allegheny County site filled within minutes**
Those who were looking to book an appointment to receive part of the state.s limited supply of the covid-19 vaccination at Allegheny County.s second dispensary will have to wait. Online registration for the new site began at 9 a.m. Saturday, and appointments were filled within 10 minutes, according to county spokeswoman... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Pennsylvania is limiting who administers the COVID-19 vaccine. Doctors. groups say that's a bad move.**
Physician groups say they are .deeply troubled. that the Pennsylvania Department of Health plans to remove primary care providers from the list of those permitted to administer the COVID-19 vaccine. .This is a time when we need all hands on deck so we can get the majority... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Allegheny County to open 2nd covid vaccine dispensary**
Castle Shannon will be the site of the Allegheny County Health Department.s second covid-19 vaccine dispensary. It will be staffed by members of Allegheny County Emergency Services who have been trained in storage, handling and administration of the vaccine,... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Allegheny County adds 306 new coronavirus cases, 3 deaths**
Allegheny County on Saturday recorded 306 new coronavirus cases, a relative bump up as cases had been on the decline in recent weeks. Reports haven.t reached 500 cases in nearly four weeks and the

county hasn't reported any 1,000-case days in the past six weeks, according to... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-14-2021

Appointments for covid vaccine at new Allegheny County site filled within minutes

Those who were looking to book an appointment to receive part of the state's limited supply of the covid-19 vaccination at Allegheny County's second dispensary will have to wait. Online registration for the new site began at 9 a.m. Saturday, and appointments were filled within 10 minutes, according to county spokeswoman... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-14-2021

Pennsylvania logs 4,000 more covid cases, 113 deaths

Pennsylvania health officials on Saturday reported 4,088 new coronavirus cases, a slight increase, as hospitalizations continue to decrease in the Keystone State. The new data bring the total cases to 892,344. That's a jump of almost 27,000 additional cases from this time last week.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-14-2021

Health department orders aim to speed up, streamline Pa. vaccination process

New orders from state health officials will try to speed up and streamline Pennsylvania's vaccination process, requiring vaccine providers to administer the bulk of their allotted first doses within one week of receiving them. Effective Feb. 22, vaccine providers will have to administer 80% of the... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-14-2021

Luzerne, Lackawanna counties account for most new daily COVID-19 cases in NEPA region

A seven-county region of Northeast Pennsylvania saw a sizable rise in new COVID-19 cases but fewer new deaths compared to the prior day. Among the NEPA counties, Luzerne and Lackawanna accounted for most of the spike in new cases, with each having triple-digit rises, according to the... - [Scranton Times](#)

02-14-2021

State reduces vaccination sites to push out vaccines more quickly

Pennsylvania will drastically reduce the number of COVID-19 vaccine providers and require them to have staff available to schedule appointments for people seeking vaccinations, state Department of Health officials said Friday. Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam said reducing the number should... - [Scranton Times](#)

02-14-2021

Hundreds flood 211 line for vaccine appointment; many got one, Lackawanna County officials say

Caseworkers brought onto a hotline to help connect Lackawanna County seniors with a COVID-19 vaccine began taking calls this week. Lots of calls. During its soft launch Monday, caseworkers on a 211 line that contracted with the county took 536 calls from seniors seeking help with getting an... - [Scranton Times](#)

02-14-2021

123 new cases of COVID-19 confirmed in county on Saturday; 3 more deaths

The Pennsylvania Department of Health on Saturday reported 123 new cases of COVID-19 in Luzerne County and three more deaths. The death count is now at 693. The new report brings the county's total cases to 24,005 since the pandemic began last year. Neighboring Lackawanna County has 13,196 cases and 399 deaths; Monroe... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)

02-14-2021

Capitol Roundup: Community-based solutions helping Pennsylvanians 65-plus to access vaccine

As the state continues to get vaccine to Phase 1A eligible Pennsylvanians, Gov. Tom Wolf and Secretary of Aging Robert Torres this week highlighted some of the community-based solutions that are working to help Pennsylvanians 65-plus access the COVID-19 vaccine.... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)

02-14-2021

Some distributors on 'honor system' for vaccine distribution, while others have more strict requirements

What's stopping you from lying about your health in order to get vaccinated? In some cases, nothing, with some providers preferring to use the .honor system,. while others require some amount of proof in order to schedule a vaccine appointment. Currently, Pennsylvania is still in Phase 1A of vaccine distribution, the... - [Wilkes-Barre Times Leader](#)

- 02-14-2021 **Campaigning in a pandemic: A signature problem**
The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will pose challenges for candidates in the May 18 primary election. Gathering the needed signatures on nominating petitions could prove difficult, especially for candidates in countywide races who need to collect 250 petition signatures to appear on the primary ballot.... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Cheers and Jeers**
Cheers to the idea for an ATV park on Earth Conservancy land in Newport and Conyngham townships. If developed correctly, a park would offer a safe, legal course for riders and an economic boost. Jeers to the state Department of Health for expanding eligibility for COVID... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)
- 02-14-2021 **DOH: Cumberland County records 5,000 full vaccines administered; 83 new cases of COVID-19 Saturday**
Cumberland County saw a bit of a day-over-day uptick in new COVID-19 case totals with Saturday's data release from the state Department of Health. The county reported 83 new cases of COVID-19 and no deaths in the Health Department's daily data update. Saturday's data report for Cumberland County included 414 test results,... - [Carlisle Sentinel](#)
- 02-14-2021 **CDC issues recommendations for mask wearing**
A new study by the Centers for Disease Control showed doubling up on masks greatly reduces a person's chances of contracting and spreading the virus. The study . which reinforced the importance of wearing a mask correctly and consistently . also concluded that well-fitting face masks can help curb... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 02-14-2021 **CDC releases new school guidelines**
The Centers for Disease Control on Friday released new guidance to safely get students back into classrooms amid the pandemic. The CDC.s .road map. included five mitigation strategies, and prioritized the first two . mandatory and proper mask wearing by students, teachers and... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Gov. Wolf orders COVID-19 vaccine providers to move quickly**
Gov. Tom Wolf ordered COVID-19 vaccine providers Friday to provide first doses within seven days of receiving them and to schedule the required second doses at the initial appointment. Acting Health Secretary Alison Beam also ordered a narrowing of the number... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Figures show COVID rates among Allentown, Bethlehem 1st responders have remained low**
As they move into the vaccination stage of the coronavirus pandemic, public safety personnel in Bethlehem and Allentown have protected themselves well against COVID-19, figures show. .From the very beginning the city emphasized to first responders and all employees that masking, hand washing, and hand sanitizing were important to... - [Easton Express-Times](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Word of no COVID vaccine this week for Lehigh Valley Health Network was in error, state says**
A message to Lehigh Valley Health Network that it would not receive its anticipated COVID-19 vaccine shipment for this coming week was sent in error, the Pennsylvania Department of Health says. LVHN as of Thursday said it had been told its shipment would be coming and... - [Easton Express-Times](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Some Pennsylvania providers won't be getting their promised first-dose vaccine this week**
Not all vaccine shipments are arriving as promised this week. A handful of pharmacies across the state aren't receiving the doses they were promised. Pennsylvania Department of Health officials wouldn't detail which pharmacies and providers are affected, but said that this is an... - [Beaver County Times](#)
- 02-14-2021 **PA's Dept of Health on vaccines: 'We have heard you, and we are taking bold, decisive action'**
Pennsylvania.s Department of Health is taking .bold, decisive action. to get more vaccines into the shoulders of state residents quickly, leading off with an order that will likely cut significantly the number of facilities administering the vaccine. "We understand how frustrating it has been for many to get vaccinated,.... - [Beaver County Times](#)

- 02-14-2021 **[Penn State's in-person classes resume Monday. What's different this semester with COVID-19?](#)**
After nearly a three-month break, Penn State's in-person classes will finally resume Monday . and with those classes will come plenty of change. Following a fall semester with more than 5,000 student cases of COVID-19, Penn State is stepping up its testing capabilities while also making tweaks... - [State College Centre Daily Times](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Free COVID-19 testing site opens in Wyomissing](#)**
Parked in her car under the portico at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom, Maureen Wallin, waited for a nurse to stick a cotton swab up her nose to collect the necessary data to see if she has COVID-19. Wallin was not feeling ill on Saturday morning and she did not think she... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Weekly Pa. COVID report shows Berks County steady; state admits vaccines are by honor system](#)**
The latest weekly report from the state Department of Health on the status of the 11-month COVID pandemic shows that new Berks County cases have flattened at a much level lower than the peak of the pandemic a month or so ago, and the state explains that a data dump two weeks ago didn't apply to... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Pa. orders providers to speed up distribution of COVID vaccine](#)**
Pennsylvania's acting secretary of health issued an order Friday to expedite the administration of the coronavirus vaccine and to improve accessibility. "We understand how frustrating it has been for many to get vaccinated," Alison Beam said during a media briefing. "I want Pennsylvanians to know... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Vaccination levels rise amid falling hospitalizations and deaths in Berks County](#)**
COVID vaccinations of Berks County residents pushed forward Friday, and the state released the locations that received the two-course Pfizer or Moderna vaccines this week. The Department of Health reported that 11,154 Berks residents have received both doses and 21,336 have received one for a total of 32,490 people.... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[State health department reports 82 new cases of COVID-19 for Erie County](#)**
The Pennsylvania Department of Health on Saturday reported 82 new COVID-19 cases for Erie County and an additional 4,088 new COVID-19 cases statewide. Erie County has 16,466 total cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic started. The 4,088 new COVID-19 cases reported statewide increased Pennsylvania.s... - [Erie Times-News](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Average US virus cases dip below 100K for 1st time in months](#)**
Average daily new coronavirus cases in the United States dipped below 100,000 in recent days for the first time in months, but experts cautioned Sunday that infections remain high and precautions to slow the pandemic must remain in place... - [AP](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Allentown School District prepares to offer hybrid learning in April](#)**
The Allentown School District, the last district in the Lehigh Valley to offer remote-only classes, is buying new computers and hiring a California consulting company to prepare to offer hybrid learning in mid-April. During a special meeting Thursday, the school board agreed to buy 1,210... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Spanish Flu and COVID: Family suffers deaths in 2 pandemics](#)**
In 2020, another pandemic has flooded the world. In America, 475,000 people have died, 22,000 of them in Pennsylvania. In my family, there were deaths in both pandemics. Here are their stories: On Nov. 5, 1918, a woman died in Western Pennsylvania. My great-aunt,... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-14-2021 **[Pennsylvania coronavirus update: Death toll passes 23,000, cases hit 892,344](#)**
The state Department of Health reported 4,088 additional coronavirus cases on Saturday, with 133 deaths bringing the pandemic toll to 23,072. The seven-day moving average of newly reported cases was 3,820, up 1% from 3,766 a week ago. To date, there have been 892,344 infections statewide since the start of... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)

- 02-14-2021 **COVID vaccine questions in Pa. answered**
 What are your questions and concerns about the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley? Ask us by using the form at the bottom of this story. We will look into them and try to get answers as part of Your Call, which answers reader questions. (Don't see the form? Ask... - [Allentown Morning Call](#))
- 02-14-2021 **Downtown Allentown loses two more restaurants amid the coronavirus pandemic**
 Downtown Allentown's dining scene recently took two more hits . a permanent restaurant closure and the temporary closure of another restaurant that plans to relocate . as the coronavirus pandemic continues to present challenges for restaurateurs and other small business owners.... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-14-2021 **When deadly disease struck 1790s Harrisburg, residents took matters into their own hands | Column**
 They had suffered three years of disease and death. They would not tolerate a fourth year. They simply had to do something about it. A fever spread through Harrisburg in the fall of 1792. It struck again the following year, more severe and deadly. Alexander Graydon, Dauphin County's prothonotary at the time, described the... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Here's how Maryland jurisdictions are handling the academic school year amid the coronavirus pandemic**
 Here's what we know, jurisdiction by jurisdiction, about plans to return students to the classroom: Anne Arundel County Public Schools told teachers and school staff Feb. 2 that they must return to school buildings Feb. 17, and work from there four days a week, with Wednesday at home and online so schools can be cleaned.... - [Baltimore Sun](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Maryland reports 847 newly confirmed coronavirus cases, 18 new deaths**
 Maryland health officials reported 847 new cases of the coronavirus and 18 more deaths Sunday as the state continues to see a declining rate of cases reported daily. State officials have now reported a total of 370,983 cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus, since roughly mid-March. In addition, 7,374... - [Baltimore Sun](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Franklin County Coroner: 2020 overdose deaths through September up 45% over year before**
 Franklin County Coroner Dr. Anahi Ortiz said overdose deaths through the first three quarters of 2020 outpaced the previous year by 45%. The data, released Friday, shows that the number of overdose deaths through Sept. 30, 2020, 614 people died in Franklin County from a drug overdose.... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Shot stories: Ohioans frustrated by rollout of COVID vaccine but grateful to get one**
 While some Ohioans wake up with a cup of coffee or a hot shower every morning, many are now getting up early to hop on their computers and phones to find a COVID-19 vaccine. As the vaccines have rolled out across Ohio, readers told The Dispatch they have found the search and sign-up for a shot to be difficult,... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Ohio reports 2,799 COVID-19 cases, 1,204 deaths on Saturday as state reconciles death reporting backlog**
 Here is the latest on the coronavirus pandemic in Ohio. This list will be updated after 2 p.m. each day. As many as 4,000 previously unreported COVID-19 deaths will be added to the state's tally in the next week after state officials learned an employee had not been properly reviewing death certificate data.... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Why have some Ohio school districts received COVID-19 vaccinations while others wait?**
 While some school districts have started receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, teachers and staff members in 59 of Ohio's 88 counties are still waiting their turn. And if the vaccine schedule for school districts looks random, that's because it is in a way. The state didn't use set criteria for making the vaccine schedule for... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 02-14-2021 **California adds millions to COVID-19 vaccine eligibility list**
 California is adding 4 million to 6 million more people to the eligibility list to get the COVID-19 vaccine, but

officials warn that actually getting inoculated will remain a frustrating process as long as chronic shortages in supply remain. Starting March 15, people ages 16 to 64 who are disabled or at high risk... - [Los Angeles Times](#)

02-14-2021

Supermarket workers feel alone and unrecognized over COVID-19

A year ago this month, during the early days of the pandemic, Susan Hernandez, a cashier at Food 4 Less in North Hollywood, found herself in a sea of panic-buying shoppers. The coronavirus hadn't claimed any lives yet in Southern California, but the scenes in stores gave a certain dawn-of-the-apocalypse movie,... - [Los Angeles Times](#)

02-14-2021

Data issues plague California's COVID-19 vaccine efforts

Omitted doses, uploading errors, lag times and software mishaps. California's vaccine rollout has been plagued by data issues, leaving the state unable to keep track of how many doses of the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccine are available at any one time. The implications are far-reaching: Gov. Gavin Newsom has pushed to speed up... - [Los Angeles Times](#)

02-14-2021

What if COVID-19 never goes away? Virus could become a mild annoyance.

Experts say the coronavirus will linger for years. But what it will look like in the future is less clear... - [AP](#)

02-14-2021

Hispanic, Latinx residents of N.J. say they need more COVID vaccine info - especially in Spanish

When Judith Sanchez learned she and her family members could soon be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, she asked them if they'd be interested in signing up. Not yet, they said, and neither is she. Usually that's the response that I get: that they want to wait a little... - [Trenton Times](#)

02-14-2021

On W.H.O. Trip, China Refused to Hand Over Important Data

Chinese scientists refused to share raw data that might bring the world closer to understanding the origins of the coronavirus pandemic, independent investigators for the W.H.O. said on Friday. The investigators, who recently returned from a fact-finding trip to the... - [New York Times](#)

02-14-2021

New Allegations of Cover-Up by Cuomo Over Nursing Home Virus Toll

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and his administration faced new allegations on Friday that they had covered up the scope of the coronavirus death toll in New York's nursing homes, after a top aide to the governor admitted that the state had withheld data because it feared an investigation by the Trump... - [New York Times](#)

02-14-2021

CDC Draws Up a Blueprint for Reopening Schools

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday urged that K-12 schools be reopened as soon as possible, and it offered a step-by-step plan to get students back in classrooms and to resolve a debate dividing communities across the nation. The guidelines highlight growing evidence that schools can open safely if... - [New York Times](#)

02-14-2021

New York Was the 1st Big School District to Reopen. Here's What Happened.

For Julie Zuckerman, an elementary school principal in Manhattan, last summer felt like one never-ending day filled with fear and confusion about New York City's plan to resume in-person teaching. But in the months since classrooms opened in September, something has shifted.... - [New York Times](#)

02-14-2021

Primary Care Doctors Feel Left Out of Vaccine Rollout

Primary care doctors have grown increasingly frustrated with their exclusion from the nation's vaccine rollout, unable to find reliable supplies for even their eldest patients and lacking basic information about distribution planning for the shots. The centerpiece should be primary care, said Dr. Wayne Altman, the... - [New York Times](#)

02-14-2021

U.K. Virus Variant Is Probably Deadlier, Scientists Say

British government scientists are increasingly finding the coronavirus variant first detected in Britain to be linked to a higher risk of death than other versions of the virus, a devastating trend that highlights the serious risks and considerable uncertainties of this new phase of the... - [New York Times](#)

- 02-14-2021 **Massachusetts offered vaccine to seniors' caregivers. Some are offering cash to the elderly to get in on the deal.**
The suspicious posts began appearing on Craigslist on Thursday afternoon, a few hours after health officials in Massachusetts announced a key expansion of who could receive the coronavirus vaccine. .Companions. to those older than 75 were now eligible, the state said, but only if these caregivers... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-14-2021 **New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo draws bipartisan ire for withholding data on nursing home deaths**
Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) faces a mounting political firestorm over allegations his office hid the coronavirus's true toll in the state's nursing homes, with new disclosures this week triggering demands for a criminal probe and bipartisan calls for him to be stripped of his emergency... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-14-2021 **CDC offers new school reopening guidance; Germany to close borders with neighbors**
Outside the United States, the pandemic has forced new restrictions in the Australian territory of Melbourne and border closures in Germany. Officials announced Friday the German border would close to the Czech Republic and at least one region in Austria where authorities say infection rates involving... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Drug companies seek billion-dollar tax deductions from opioid settlement**
Four companies that agreed to pay a combined \$26 billion to settle claims about their roles in the opioid crisis plan to deduct some of those costs from their taxes and recoup around \$1 billion apiece. In recent months, as details of the blockbuster settlement were still being... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-14-2021 **Biden's vaccine push runs into distrust in the Black community**
Ford, whose wife nearly died of the virus this winter, is frustrated that so many African Americans are still resisting the vaccine. .For those folks who want to stand around and debate, let them debate,. Ford said. .I.m sorry for them and regret that they want to do that. But if they don.t want... - [Washington Post](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Weight loss center moves to new facility**
A weight loss center on Jonestown Road has a new home nearby. BeBalanced Harrisburg East has moved from the Olde Liberty Square office center on Jonestown Road in Lower Paxton Township to a new location at 5201 Jonestown Road in Lower Paxton Township. The company's 14-week plan includes all-natural supplements and... - [Penn Live, Patriot-News](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Cathedral offers to host vaccine clinic**
The Scottish Rite Cathedral is offering to raise the curtain on a community event. The problem, state Rep. Chris Sainato said, is that no one can say when it will be showtime. James McKim, president of the Cathedral Foundation, said this week the board is hoping to help with the effort to get the COVID-19 vaccine into... - [New Castle News](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Commissioner: State a 'failure' at vaccine rollout**
A lack of communication and coordination between state and county governments is undercutting local vaccination efforts for COVID-19, local officials say. Some Lawrence County residents remain on long waiting lists, or they can't get on lists at all. Some who are in lower phases of the vaccine distribution list issued by the... - [New Castle News](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Wolf: State and county staff working to help connect seniors with vaccine**
HARRISBURG — The state and some Area Agencies on Aging staff are working to help better connect seniors to COVID-19 vaccine appointments, Gov. Tom Wolf said Thursday. Wolf acknowledged that the state's widely-criticized vaccine locator website, along with jammed phone lines and reservation systems for local... - [Meadville Tribune](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Pa. education groups urge state to prioritize school staff vaccinations**
Calls continue to grow for the state to prioritize school employees in its COVID-19 vaccine rollout plans. Nine statewide education groups on Thursday sent a letter to Gov. Tom Wolf and other state officials urging them to vaccinate teachers, support staff and school administrators more urgently.... - [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

- 02-12-2021 **How COVID-19 could kill Philly's wage tax and take down the city's finances**
It is the start of the public sector budget season. This one may be unlike any we have seen. For the City of Philadelphia, the economic and tax revenue problems created by the pandemic could develop into a full-blown financial crisis, as the city's massive dependence on the wage tax may no longer be feasible.... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-12-2021 **A debate in the Philly suburbs on bringing more students back to classrooms is 'as political as the presidenti**
One night in late January, parent Monica Zeitz stood before the Wallingford-Swarthmore School Board and read a petition signed by 331 people asking to fully reopen the district's schools. "We will definitely begin that conversation," responded David Grande, the board's president, who announced earlier in the meeting... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Mass COVID vaccination site tested by LECOM, county officials at Erie Bayfront Convention Center**
Cindy Rodgers expected to receive her first dose of COVID-19 vaccine Thursday morning at the LECOM Center for Health and Aging. Instead, the 71-year-old retired North East School District teacher was among 375 people to be vaccinated at the Erie Bayfront Convention Center.... - [Erie Times-News](#)
- 02-12-2021 **'Axe-citing' times ahead: BYOB axe-throwing facility, opening soon in Allentown, to chop through pandemic blues**
A new business is bringing cutting-edge fun to downtown Allentown. Split Pine Axe Throwing, a forest-themed axe-throwing facility and lounge, is expected to open within a few weeks at 627 Hamilton St., across from Zion's "Liberty Bell" Reformed United Church of Christ,... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-12-2021 **'It's not going to change:' Residents upset about lack of COVID-19 vaccine in Lancaster County**
For Kenneth Hartenstine, the past three weeks of trying to schedule COVID-19 vaccine appointments for himself and his wife has gone from frustrating to disheartening. Hartenstine, 65, has called Lancaster County providers, Gov. Tom Wolf's office and the state Department of Health. He's also tried scheduling... - [Lancaster Intelligencer Journal](#)
- 02-12-2021 **COVID-19 vaccine registration software causes issues for Lehigh Valley health bureaus**
One month after the Allentown Health Bureau adopted state-supplied software used to make vaccine appointments, it dumped and replaced the program, citing bugs that, among other issues, allowed ineligible people to sign up for shots. Other health bureaus in Pennsylvania and elsewhere have encountered... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Gov. Wolf recognizes aging services in Washington County on COVID-19 vaccines**
Gov. Tom Wolf recognized a Charleroi-based aging services provider Thursday for its efforts to help senior citizens wade through the process of registering for a COVID-19 vaccination. Wolf said Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Agency on Aging, which serves Washington, Fayette and Greene counties, is helping to provide... - [Uniontown Herald-Standard](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Some Pennsylvania providers won't be getting their promised first-dose vaccine this week**
Not all vaccine shipments are arriving as promised this week. A handful of pharmacies across the state aren't receiving the doses they were promised. Pennsylvania Department of Health officials wouldn't detail which pharmacies and providers are affected, but said that this is an... - [Beaver County Times](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Pa. unemployment: State hiring more workers, launching texting system to help with claims**
The state Department of Labor and Industry is hiring more workers and launching a texting system to help with the ongoing high volume of unemployment claims. The hope is to potentially provide relief for Pennsylvanians who've experienced the agony of waiting days, weeks and months for payments to... - [Beaver County Times](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Employee claims Kadima workers were sent threatening text**
An employee of Kadima Rehabilitation and Nursing in Drums said workers have been threatened with

prosecution if they speak to media about conditions at the facility. “We know they can’t do much because what we stated was honestly what was on those reports from the state,” the employee said, referring... - [Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice](#)

- 02-12-2021 **[Teachers union demands Chester Delaware county schools maintain 6-feet of social distance](#)**
PSEA President Rich Askey Thursday urged Chester County’s commissioners and Department of Health director and members of the Delaware County Council to refuse any requests by county schools to waive current social distancing rules and overcrowd classrooms during a pandemic.... - [Primos Delaware County Daily and Sunday Times](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Chester County restaurants taverns, getting financial relief](#)**
WEST CHESTER — Restaurants, taverns, and other businesses in the hospitality industry that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic can soon apply for up to \$50,000 state pandemic relief funding. Under Pennsylvania’s COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program... - [Pottstown Mercury](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Montgomery County launches coronavirus hotline](#)**
NORRISTOWN — Montgomery County residents seeking general information about COVID-19 and vaccines now have a place to turn to for answers. County health officials this week launched a COVID-19 phone hotline which residents can call to receive updates about vaccine supply and... - [Norristown Times Herald](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Tower Health executives to take pay cuts](#)**
Tower Health expects to save \$11.6 million by cutting pay of about 400 executives as the financially troubled nonprofit health care system tries to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Directors, senior directors and associate vice presidents will see a 10%... - [Reading Eagle](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Commissioners hope to coordinate creation of local COVID-19 vaccine registry](#)**
Responding to public comments pushing the county to help alleviate the frustrations of those who have been unable to receive coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines, the Westmoreland County Commissioners on Thursday said they plan to coordinate a county registry to aid in vaccine distribution.... - [Latrobe Bulletin](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Penn State among the nation’s first to offer a COVID-19 class. Here’s how it’s trying to make an impact](#)**
As the seriousness of COVID-19 started coming into focus last February, Penn State Professor Frank Ritter remembered driving back from New England thinking to himself how that would be his last trip for a while. He also had one other thought. “What can we do to help?” Ritter remembered asking himself.... - [State College Centre Daily Times](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Proposed charter schools continue uphill battle with Pocono Mountain School District](#)**
Of the 179 charter schools in Pennsylvania, only one is located in Monroe County. Two proposed charter schools in the Poconos are set on changing that, but it’s been anything but easy thanks to a multi-year battle with one school district in particular. The ongoing saga has been between Pocono Mountain School District and two... - [Pocono Record](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Penn State Wrestling ‘Staying Ready’ Amid COVID-19 Postponements](#)**
Penn State wrestling 141-pounder Nick Lee. Photo by Matt Sniegowski | Onward State As the Big Ten wrestling season rolls on, Penn State had yet another dual postponed due to COVID-19. The Nittany Lions’ home-opening dual with No. 1 Iowa scheduled Friday night was postponed due to positive COVID-19 results within the... - [State College News](#)
- 02-12-2021 **[Hopeful for the Year Ahead, Adventure Bureau Awards New Round of Tourism Grants](#)**
COVID-19 dealt a “devastating blow” to Centre County’s tourism and hospitality industry in 2020, with hotels seeing a nearly \$50 million drop in revenue from a year earlier and the resulting local hotel occupancy tax falling by \$2.7 million, Happy Valley Adventure Bureau President and... - [State College News](#)

- 02-12-2021 **Schools adapt holiday traditions to comply with pandemic safety**
Love in the time of COVID is complicated, even at the elementary school level. Forget searching in the store for those cute little Valentines and placing candy in the envelopes to surprise classmates. Bringing anything in from outside the school to hand out is forbidden. Even passing a Valentine made... - [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Center for Rural Pennsylvania hearing focuses on heroin/opioid crisis**
HARRISBURG — The Center for Rural Pennsylvania Board of Directors, chaired by Sen. Gene Yaw, held a virtual public hearing Thursday to learn more about COVID-19's influence on the heroin/opioid crisis in Pennsylvania. Preliminary data indicate that reported overdoses increased... - [DuBois Courier-Express](#)
- 02-12-2021 **North Clarion in line for \$866,000 ESSER grant**
FRILLS CORNERS - It has been a challenge for school districts in regard to dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic but there is some additional financial help on the way which was a topic of discussion at the special North Clarion school board meeting Feb. 1. According to North Clarion Superintendent Steve Young, the district is... - [Clarion News](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Dun & Bradstreet latest Lehigh Valley company to cut back on office space amid COVID-19 pandemic**
When this all ends, how much office space do we really need? Many companies in the Lehigh Valley, and beyond, are asking themselves the same thing. At least one major area employer appears to have reached a verdict. Commercial data provider Dun & Bradstreet has put the third floor of its... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-12-2021 **COVID-19 vaccine registration software causes issues for Lehigh Valley health bureaus**
One month after the Allentown Health Bureau adopted state-supplied software used to make vaccine appointments, it dumped and replaced the program, citing bugs that, among other issues, allowed ineligible people to sign up for shots. Other health bureaus in Pennsylvania and elsewhere have encountered... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Central Ohio hospitals to allow limited visitors again as pandemic recedes**
Following what appears to be a sustained decline in new coronavirus cases and hospitalizations, local health care providers will now accept visitors again. OhioHealth, Mount Carmel and Ohio State's Wexner Medical Center are all easing their restrictions on visitors allowed into hospitals during the... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Ohio COVID-19 death error: State epidemiologist reassigned, employee involved in count resigns**
COLUMBUS – An Ohio Department of Health employee involved in an error that withheld one-third of the state's COVID-19 cases from the public count has resigned. Ohio Department of Health Director Stephanie McCloud said Thursday that one employee had been responsible for reviewing death certificate data and... - [Columbus Dispatch](#)
- 02-12-2021 **10% of Marylanders have received 1 COVID vaccine dose; positivity rate drops beneath 5% for 1st time since November**
One-tenth of Maryland's population has received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine, state health officials reported Friday. Meanwhile, the state's seven-day testing positivity rate, which measures the percentage of tests that return positive results, was at 4.87%... - [Baltimore Sun](#)
- 02-12-2021 **Task force addresses frustrations with the COVID-19 vaccine rollout**
Pennsylvania residents have been frustrated by the slow rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine as area healthcare providers and pharmacies work to distribute the shots to the most vulnerable populations, and legislators work to increase distribution rates in the state.... - [Shippensburg News-Chronicle](#)
- 02-12-2021 **The other pandemic**
Everyone has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic that put the country on lockdown nearly 11 months ago, but not everyone has been affected by the "other pandemic," said the owners of Retrofit

Careers LLC. They're referring to an increase of drug and alcohol use, overdose and... - [Philadelphia Northeast Times](#)

02-12-2021

[Are public schools safe to reopen?](#)

The School District of Philadelphia hasn't had any in-person learning since last March, though that is scheduled to end in two weeks. The school district plans to open schools on Feb. 22 for some 9,000 pupils in pre-kindergarten through second grade whose parents previously said they... - [Philadelphia Northeast Times](#)

02-12-2021

[Additional vaccination clinics to open next week in Bucks County; commissioners express frustration over vaccine supply](#)

DOYLESTOWN >> The Bucks County Commissioners announced on Feb. 11 that COVID vaccination clinics will be operating at all three Bucks County Community College campuses next week. The clinics collectively will administer 600 initial doses of Moderna vaccine per day by appointment to people eligible for the 1A phase of... - [Bucks Local News](#)

02-12-2021

[Biden says governors and mayors need \\$350 billion to fight COVID-19](#)

President Joe Biden met with a bipartisan group of governors and mayors at the White House on Friday as part of his push to give financial relief from the coronavirus pandemic to state and local governments . a clear source of division with Republican lawmakers who view the spending as wasteful... - [AP](#)

02-12-2021

[A debate in the Philly suburbs on bringing more students back to classrooms is 'as political as the presidential election'](#)

One night in late January, parent Monica Zeitz stood before the Wallingford-Swarthmore School Board and read a petition signed by 331 people asking to fully reopen the district.s schools. .We will definitely begin that conversation,. responded David Grande, the... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

02-12-2021

[As Pennsylvania drug crisis worsens, state government and Lehigh Valley-area coroners disagree on number of deaths](#)

She was a licensed practical nurse with red hair and a bubbly personality who lost her license because of addiction, and she had come home to live with her parents in a small Schuylkill County town... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)

02-12-2021

[Pennsylvania adds 3,987 covid cases, 99 deaths](#)

Pennsylvania on Friday reported 3,987 additional cases of covid-19, keeping the seven-day average below 4,000 for the eighth consecutive day. The state.s seven-day case average has been trending mostly downward since peaking above 10,000 in mid-December. It currently sits at 3,797.... - [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

02-12-2021

[CDC: Strong evidence in-person schooling can be done safely](#)

The nation.s top public health agency on Friday provided a roadmap for reopening schools in the middle of a pandemic, emphasizing mask wearing and social distancing and saying vaccination of teachers is important but not a prerequisite for reopening... - [AP](#)

02-12-2021

[The most frequently asked questions about Pa.'s frustrating vaccine rollout](#)

Pennsylvania is in the midst of a frustrating vaccine rollout, and that might put it lightly. This has primarily been driven by a short supply of the vaccine overall. Making matters worse, however, has been the state.s patchwork system for finding and getting shots, which has been a major source of public... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

02-12-2021

[Philly is in talks with FEMA for a mass vaccination site at the Pennsylvania Convention Center](#)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is in talks with Philadelphia to run a mass vaccination clinic at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, a City Council member said Friday. City Health Commissioner Thomas Farley briefed city, state, and federal elected officials from Philadelphia on the tentative FEMA plan Friday... - [Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

02-12-2021

[Pennsylvania orders COVID-19 vaccine providers to give 80% of first doses within week of receiving them](#)

In an attempt to boost Pennsylvania's struggling COVID-19 vaccine rollout, Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam on Friday said she ordered vaccine providers to administer all first doses to people within seven days of receiving the doses... - [Allentown Morning Call](#)

02-12-2021

[Two officers who helped fight the Capitol mob died by suicide. Many more are hurting.](#)

The text confirmed the frightening images Erin Smith was watching on live stream from the couple's home in Virginia: The Capitol had been overrun. Smith, also inside the Capitol, didn't hear the gunshot, but he did hear the frantic .shots fired. call over his police radio. He later told Erin he... - [Washington Post](#)

Health Care Recap is a comprehensive daily report on legislative and executive actions in the Pennsylvania capitol and is compiled and edited by PLS.

For subscription information, questions or more information contact PLS at mypls@mypls.com or 717-236-6984. Thank you, Jeff, Matt Hess, Matt Hykes, Deborah, Cheryl, Aaron, Becky, Amyra, Nick, Robert, Emily, Shaun, Justin, Sheri, Harrison, Julie, and Hattie.

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