

# Vax Matters



May 28, 2021



## News

### NJDOH's Dr. Bresnitz Steps Down

Dr. Eddy Bresnitz, Medical Advisor to the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) for the past 14 months and chair of the department's COVID-19 Professional Advisory Committee (PAC), is stepping down.



Dr. Bresnitz had previously served as a former NJDOH Deputy Commissioner and State Epidemiologist, before retiring and then returning to the department during the pandemic. In between, he spent nearly 12 years at Merck in Global Health and Medical Affairs working on adult vaccine issues.

"I did not imagine at the time I returned that it would take this long for the country and New Jersey to get to where we are today," he said. "Although I am leaving at a time of improved disease metrics and unprecedented vaccination rates in the U.S. and New Jersey, I recognize that until the vaccination rates in our vulnerable communities and in the world rise to the overall benchmark levels we have achieved, we must remain on guard and expect that the ever-mutating SARS CoV-2 virus may not be finished with us, even as the population reaches community protection levels."

"It has been my privilege and honor to be part of the state's COVID-19 response team and work with so many dedicated, smart, capable and hard-working cross-disciplinary professionals, both within and outside DOH, who have done so much to protect the public's health and mitigate the scourge of this virus," he said.

Dr. Bresnitz also was a familiar face during Governor Murphy's press briefings. Future plans include visiting family, outdoor activities (tennis, biking, hiking), travel, and continued consulting.

## Major COVID-19 Restrictions Lifted as N.J. Continues Reopening

As of Friday, the indoor mask mandate in public spaces was lifted as well as the six-foot social distancing requirement in indoor and outdoor spaces under Executive Order No. 242 signed by Governor Murphy.

The order also lifted the prohibition on dance floors at bars and restaurants, and on ordering and eating/drinking while standing at bars and restaurants.

Businesses and entities overseeing indoor spaces continue to have the ability to require masking for employees, customers and/or guests and can choose to continue to require social distancing.

Further restrictions are scheduled to be eased June 4 when indoor gathering and capacity limits will be lifted.

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged to follow federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and wear a face mask in any indoor public settings.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, my administration has been guided by science, data and facts to put New Jersey on the road to recovery with the public health and safety of all New Jerseyans as our highest priority," said Governor Murphy. "Together, we have made tremendous progress in crushing this virus, and the last two weeks have shown significant decreases in key areas of our data, including new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, spot positivity rates, and rates of transmission."

In addition to indoor masks, **the following changes took effect Friday, May 28:**

The six foot-social distancing requirement is lifted in businesses, including retail stores, personal care services, gyms, recreational and entertainment businesses, casinos, and indoor gatherings, including religious services, political activities, weddings, funerals, memorial services, commercial gatherings, catered events, sports competitions, and performances. [Read more on the updates.](#)

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Governor Murphy and Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli during a vaccination site visit at the Early Childhood Learning Center in Phillipsburg last week.

### Vaccination Progress

- ◆ 8.5M+ vaccine doses administered in N.J.
- ◆ 4.1M+ fully vaccinated people



**Check out all of NJDOH's vaccine public awareness videos on our [YouTube channel](#).**

## Students Lead Local Effort to Protect Trenton Community from COVID-19

Trenton officials, community leaders and local students unveiled billboards throughout the city that are designed by the students to help educate young residents about COVID-19 vaccines and dispel myths.

NJDOH is proud to support this project with federal funding through a partnership of Trenton Health Team, the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton.

“We have administered over 8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine in our state and more than 4 million New Jersey residents are fully vaccinated,” said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli. “But we still have work to do. We need every voice to help us promote vaccination in our state and the voice of our youth is a vital one in the fight against the virus.”

Trenton Health Team has been working closely with Stacy Heading, founder of Heal the City and director of the Isles Youth Institute, to raise awareness about COVID-19 vaccines among young Trenton residents.

To gather information, students hosted Saturday webinars featuring Dr. Adela Ames-Lopez, City of Trenton Director of Health & Human Services, Dr. Kemi Alli, CEO of Henry J. Austin Health Center, and Micah Freeman, Nurse Supervisor for Trenton Public Schools.

Students then designed a billboard campaign in English and in Spanish to bust myths about vaccines and urge the public to protect themselves and their community.

The four billboards are located in each city ward:

- 400 block of North Clinton Avenue

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The Governor issued [Executive Order No. 243](#) later in the week which [updates guidance](#) for indoor worksites effective June 4.

This order further permits employers in indoor worksites that are closed to the public to allow employees who can verify that they are vaccinated to forego wearing a mask and social distancing.

Employers retain the ability to issue more restrictive policies on masking and social distancing, and shall not restrict individuals from wearing masks and shall not penalize or retaliate against those who choose to wear a mask.

Also, beginning June 4, the general indoor gathering limit, currently at 50 people, will be removed, as well as the indoor gathering limit for political gatherings, weddings, fu-

nerals, memorial services, performances, and other catered and commercial events, currently at 250 people.

The capacity limitation for indoor large venues with a fixed-seating capacity over 1,000 will also be removed.

Executive Order No. 243 also rescinds an earlier requirement that businesses and non-profits accommodate telework arrangements for their staff to the maximum extent practicable and reduce on-site staff to the minimal number necessary for their operations.

Employers that bring staff back to the physical worksite must continue to follow all applicable portions of [Executive Order No. 192](#), including notifying employees of on-site exposure and performing health screenings of employees entering the worksite.



*From left, Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora and Commissioner Persichilli join student billboard creators, and local school and health officials in front of one of the billboards.*

- 500 block of Perry Street
- Stuyvesant Avenue and Prospect Street
- Lalor and Center streets (Spanish language version)

Students participating include Kyle Anderson, a Trenton Central High School (TCHS) Class of 2020 graduate attending Clark Atlanta University; TCHS seniors Noelia Martinez (Barnard College of Columbia University), Eric Vasquez (Harvard University), Fredy Alvarado Retana (Colgate University), Omar Morales (Rochester Institute of Technology), and Lilia Perez (The College of New Jersey), and Isles Youth Institute senior Madison Vasquez (Mercer County Community College); and TCHS juniors Edson Garcia, Elizabeth Menchu, Christian Pierre and Karen Lorenzo-Interiano.

### Resources

- ◆ NJ Vaccine Call Center: 855-568-0545
- ◆ COVID-19 Vaccine Finder
- ◆ [NJ Transit VAXRIDE](#)
- ◆ COVID-19: 5 Reasons to Get Vaccinated [[English](#)] [[Spanish](#)]
- ◆ COVID-19 Vaccine: Addressing Concerns about Johnson & Johnson [[English](#)] [[Spanish](#)]

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