

Clinician Update

March 11, 2021

ESPN's Stephen A. Smith Receives COVID-19 Vaccine at Burlington County Mega-Site

Sports journalist **Stephen A. Smith** is making headlines and earning praise on social media over his public and impassioned decision to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The former [Here for Good](#) podcast guest [addressed the topic on ESPN](#) yesterday, saying:

"The data shows that the virus has been especially brutal to my community... and that Black Americans are far more likely to be infected, get hospitalized, and even die from COVID-19. And now, the data shows that Black Americans are not getting the vaccine, at least not at the same rate as other communities."

On Tuesday, Smith, who previously worked at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, joined CEO **Dennis Pullin** at the Burlington County Mega-Site and received his first dose of the vaccine. Smith said [Dennis' op-ed about building trust through candid vaccine conversations](#) helped inform his decision. He also mentioned Dennis and Virtua during an interview with [Don Lemon on CNN](#), and a video of his vaccine appointment played as Smith spoke with Dr. Anthony Fauci this morning on [ESPN's First Take](#).

Smith's [tweet about his visit to Virtua](#) has received more than 15,000 likes so far, and is helping to advance conversation nationwide about the importance of vaccination.



Stephen A Smith ✓
@stephenasmith



Out of office today @VirtuaHealth



Virtua Partners with Tabernacle Baptist Church on Vaccine Outreach

Virtua is dedicated to helping our community be well, get well, and stay well, and this mission is especially important when serving individuals who struggle with access to health care. To better meet

the public need, especially during the pandemic, Virtua visited Tabernacle Baptist Church in Burlington on Sunday to schedule vaccine appointments.

By the end of the day, Virtua Access Center colleagues had registered about 1,000 members of the community.

According to **Malik Bahar**, Virtua Access Center director, "This event demonstrated that there is an incredible demand and an outpouring of support for vaccines in this community. People have said to me, 'This is truly a miracle,' and were grateful and thankful for our service. It has been an honor to meet and connect with our neighbors and provide them with access to the vaccine. It's simply the right thing to do."

The team will head back this Sunday to schedule more people at Tabernacle Baptist Church. They will administer vaccines at the same location later this month as Virtua's first community-based clinic.

NJ Expands COVID-19 Vaccine Program Eligibility

From Vax Matters, a New Jersey Department of Health Newsletter

Eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine is expanding for more frontline essential workers and high-risk groups, NJ Gov. Phil Murphy's administration announced this week.

"As vaccine supply increases, this phased expansion of new eligibility groups keeps New Jersey moving forward toward our goal of vaccinating 70% of the eligible adult population," said **Commissioner of Health Judy Persichilli**.

Pre-K to grade 12 educators and childcare workers in licensed and registered settings are now eligible. On **March 15**, eligibility will again expand to include public and local transportation workers, including NJ Transit workers, bus, taxi, rideshare, and airport employees, and Motor Vehicle Commission staff; individuals experiencing homelessness; and those living in shelters.

On **March 29**, additional frontline essential workers will be added, including those in food production, agriculture, and food distribution; eldercare; warehousing and logistics; social services; hospitality; and postal and shipping services.

Further, the eligibility list will indicate that all individuals ages 16 to 64 with certain medical conditions, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that increase the risk or might increase the risk of severe illness from the virus, are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

More information on vaccine eligibility can be [found here](#).

When You've Been Fully Vaccinated

On Monday, the CDC issued its first set of [recommendations](#) on activities that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can safely resume. If you've been fully vaccinated, the CDC states that you can:

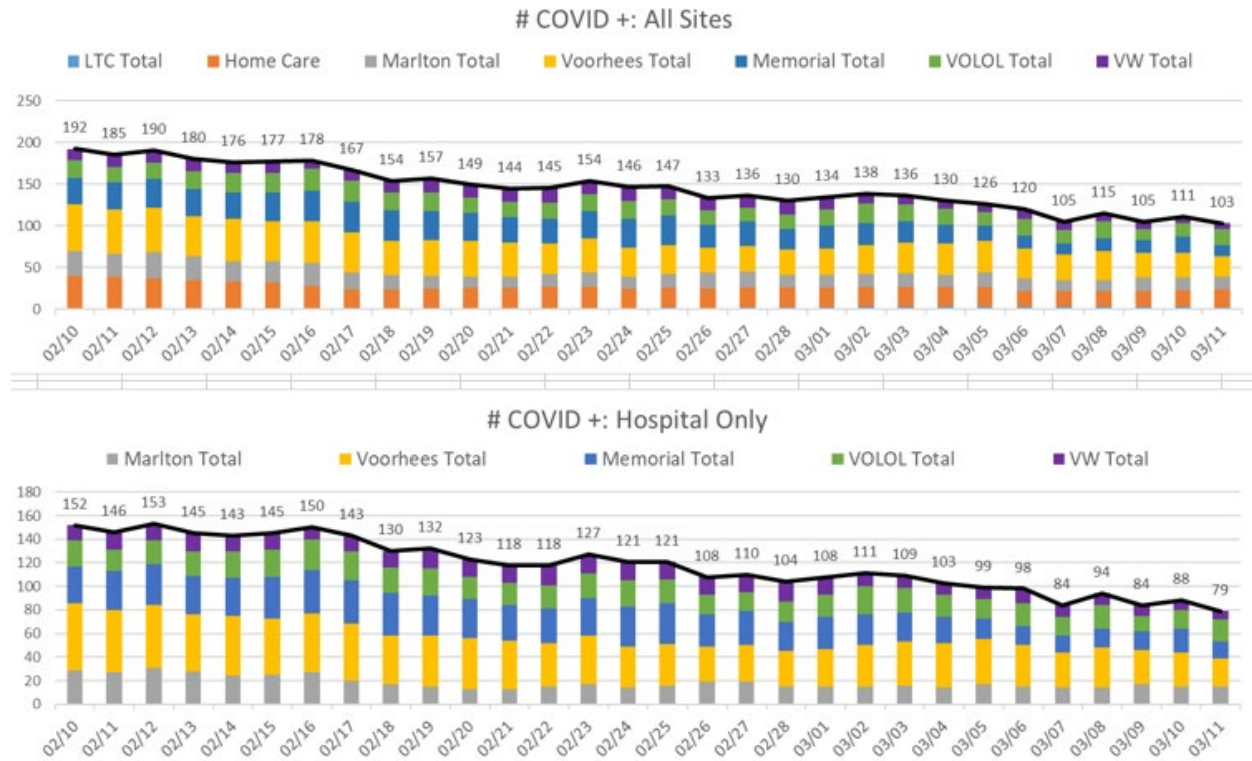
- Gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask

- Gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with is at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19

“The recommendations allow somewhat more flexible interactions with other people who have been vaccinated and meeting in small, familiar groups,” says **Dr. Martin Topiel**, Virtua’s head of infectious diseases. “Caution is still key, however. The next two to three weeks will tell us if the variants are creating challenges or whether we are vaccinating at a fast enough pace to curtail infection in the community. Everyone should continue to social distance and wear masks in public places. We also recommend avoiding medium- or large-sized gatherings and poorly ventilated spaces.”

We encourage you to visit the [CDC’s website](#) for specific details and additional recommendations.

Virtua COVID-19 Census



Fast Facts

- The rate of transmission in New Jersey is currently at 1.03, up once again from previous weeks.
- Locally, in the tri-county area, there have been a total of 2,343 confirmed deaths, as of 1 p.m. today. The state also reports “probable” deaths from COVID-19, with figures shared separately on the [state dashboard](#). For the three counties, probable deaths would account for an additional 183 fatalities.
- The total number of cases are as follows:
 - Burlington County 31,975
 - Camden County 40,538
 - Gloucester County 21,777

Virtua Recognizes the One-Year Anniversary of the COVID-19 Command Center

One year ago, Virtua Health established its command center in response to the spread of COVID-19 — the same day **Gov. Phil Murphy** declared a state of emergency. At that time, there were a total of 10 COVID-19 cases in New Jersey. We asked three Virtua leaders to look back on that day one year later.

"The Command Center was a mechanism that allowed us to address the daily needs and issues throughout the pandemic and facilitate communication to all of Virtua," says **Paul Sarnese**, AVP of Safety and Security. "Our organization as a whole really joined together to meet the challenges we were facing. Every leader and colleague had to be nimble and work differently to respond to the pandemic. It was an incredible effort for everyone."

"In a year that presented unexpected and unforeseen challenges, I could always count on Virtua colleagues going the extra mile to support each other and the community. I am continually impressed by how deeply they care," says **Dr. John Matsinger**, EVP and chief operating officer.

"No matter the obstacle, Virtua colleagues band together to find solutions," says **Dr. Reg Blaber**, EVP and chief clinical officer. "That was true in March 2020 when we created new ways to work and deliver care, and it's true in March 2021 as we distribute vaccines at a pace that exceeds expectations and continues to grow."

Online COVID-19 Emotional Support Group Available

Virtua offers a virtual support group for South Jersey residents who have recovered from or are currently experiencing COVID-19.

Date: Monday, March 22

Time: 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

If you or a loved one is facing ongoing physical and emotional challenges caused by COVID-19 and would be interested in group support, please register by emailing ACSupport@virtua.org.

A Zoom link will be sent upon registration.

Virtua Integrated Network (VIN) Offers Care Coordination Services to Eligible Colleagues and Family Members

Virtua Integrated Network (VIN) has launched care coordination services. On March 1, VIN initiated a campaign designed to raise awareness about free services available to high-risk Virtua colleagues or family members who are currently enrolled in Virtua's benefits program. Population health nurses have begun outreach to discuss the program and services with eligible colleagues, and the response thus far has been a positive one.

VIN Care Coordination services include:

- **General Care Coordination:** In conjunction with recommendations made by participants' clinicians, a registered nurse will guide them through the complexities of health care. They can also provide insights into clinical programs and services to help reach individual wellness goals.

- **Social Work Services:** Through a licensed social worker, the team connects participants to community services such as transportation, food, pharmacies, therapy, and much more, at the lowest possible cost.
- **Digital Monitoring:** Access to the latest technology to use at home, such as a tablet, blood pressure cuff, pulse oximeter, and other devices designed to connect to care between doctor visits.
- **Clinical Pharmacists:** Trained professionals devoted to helping participants reach health goals. This includes identifying the most affordable and effective medication while establishing an efficient plan that makes sense for the individual.
- **Advance Care Planning:** Have meaningful conversations around long-term goals should the participant ever be diagnosed with certain conditions or become dependent on others.

If you, a family member or patient are eligible and interested in learning more about the program, we encourage you to give us a call at **856-355-0192**.

We look forward to helping you and your patients be well, get well, and stay well.

The Latest COVID-19 Vaccine News

Virtua and the Burlington County Mega-Site made headlines recently for the various ways we ensure all vaccine recipients have a simple, organized, and even enjoyable experience. CNN Business posted an [online article](#) about the benefits of vaccine selfies that includes thoughts from **Daniel Moise**, Virtua's director of communications and engagement.

Buzzfeed also featured an [image of the Mega-Site's selfie station](#) in a photo gallery of vaccination stickers from around the country.

The Mega-Site is also earning praise for creating "sensory rooms" inside the clinic to better serve guests with autism, dementia, PTSD, and other special needs.

"Just as we have wheelchairs available for those with physical limitations, we felt it important to create a welcoming environment that considers the needs of individuals who are easily overstimulated by bright, busy spaces," Virtua emergency preparedness coordinator **Phyllis Worrell** says.

News 12 New Jersey has a [video report](#) on this unique offering. Watch and read this CBS 3 story [here](#). You can also read about it on [Patch.com](#).

And in related stories:

- **NJ Doctor Says COVID-19 Vaccine Boost Is Only Way to 'Get Back to Normal'** - As Virtua surpassed its 100,000th vaccine dose given, KYW Newsradio spoke with **Dr. Reg Blaber**, Virtua's executive vice president and chief clinical officer, about this encouraging milestone and the new Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Listen or read [here](#).
- **Reflecting Back on One Year of COVID-19 in New Jersey** - Story includes interview with **Erin Tyson**, a psychiatric social worker with Virtua, who says the past year has also taken a mental and emotional toll. Watch [here](#).

Your Opportunity to Rank the Best Hospitals

The influential *U.S. News & World Report* Best Hospitals survey is now underway, soliciting clinicians' opinions on which hospitals are among the best at providing care for complex or challenging conditions.

The survey utilizes Doximity, the professional network for physicians, to complete the questioning electronically. Survey-eligible physicians who were Doximity users as of Nov. 1, 2020, can take the survey online.

How to vote: Go to [Doximity.com](https://www.doximity.com) or [the survey page on Doximity.com](#). You may need to click on the *U.S. News* graphic or button, and then simply follow the instructions.

The survey is expected to continue through **March 26**.

If you were not registered on Doximity by Nov. 1, 2020, you can register now at [doximity.com](https://www.doximity.com) to ensure eligibility to complete next year's survey.

In Case You Missed It — Musicians On Call Performance

Musicians on Call, an organization that delivers the healing power of music to hospital patients, hosted its most recent virtual performance yesterday. Local artist Harris Snyder played a session exclusively for hospitals in the Philadelphia region, including Virtua. We invite our hospital colleagues to share the link to the 30-minute show, which can be found [on YouTube here](#).