

SUMMARY OF STATE-SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE US 2020/2021

NORTH DAKOTA

March 2023

Zainab Apalara* and Helene Jow*; Kaitlyn Green, Sandhya Laping.

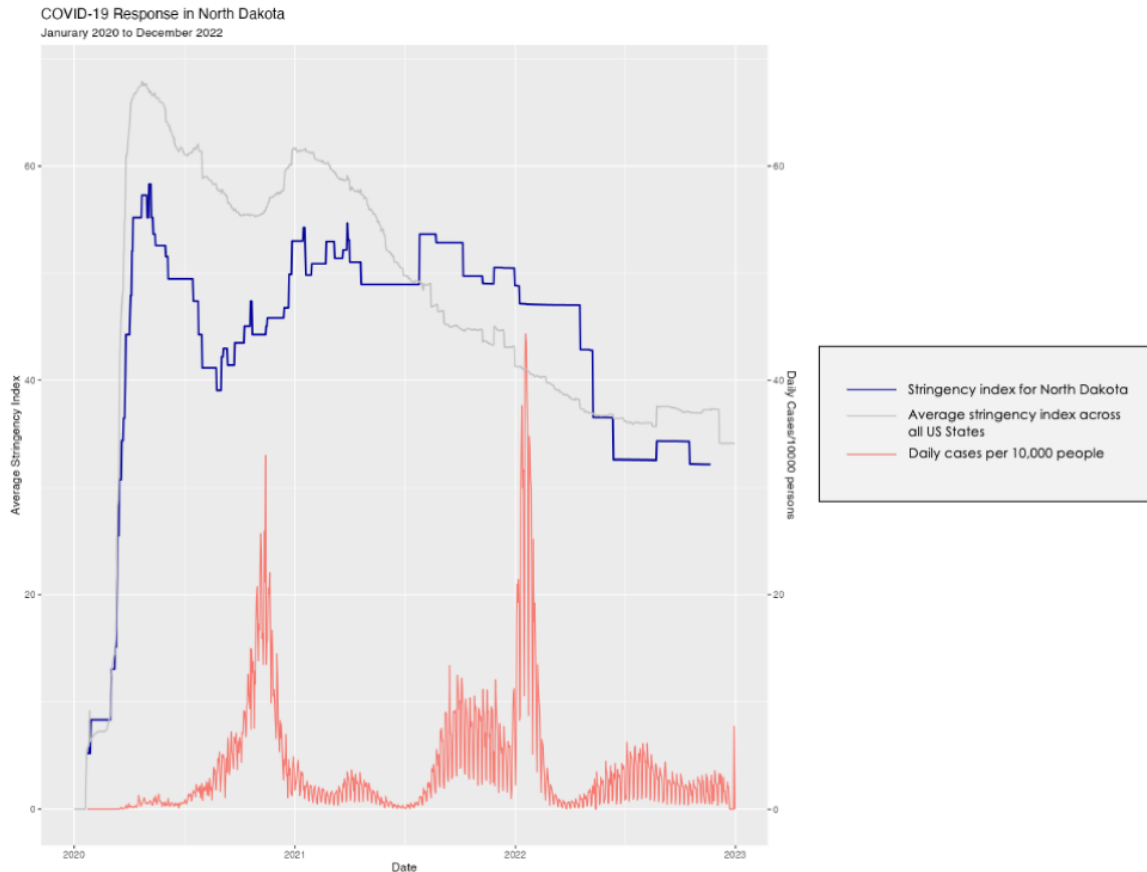
** Authored equal contributions*

Table of Contents

North Dakota Summary and Graphic.....	3
Closure and Containment	4
Economic Response	8
Public Health Response.....	9
Vaccine Policies.....	13

North Dakota

Summary of Government Response to COVID-19



COVID-19 Response in North Dakota: Using the OxCGRT Stringency Index for North Dakota (blue) and the average OxCGRT Stringency Index across all US states, the above shows the overall government response to COVID-19 in North Dakota in comparison to the average US state response from January 2020 to December 2022. This also displays the number of daily cases per 10,000 people in North Dakota (red).

Summary

North Dakota first responded on January 29, 2020, preceding its first case on March 12, 2020, and death on March 27, 2020. The first policy enacted was represented as a response in the Public Information Campaigns indicator (H1 in OxCGRT data), urging caution and providing recommendations regarding Covid-19.

Closure and Containment

The indicators for closure and containment are measured on an ordinal scale and encompass government responses that required or recommended temporary closures of institutions, limitations on travel, and restrictions of gatherings or events. The measurement of these indicators included a binary flag that indicated the geographic scope of the government responses coded. Differentiated policies, or policies that were specifically directed at those vaccinated or unvaccinated, are indicated when flagged as 'Vaccinated' or 'Non-Vaccinated'.

C1: School closures

C1 records closings of schools and universities and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend closing or all schools open with alterations resulting in significant differences compared to non-Covid-19 operations), 2 (require closing only some levels or categories, e.g., just high school, or just public schools), or 3 (require closing all levels).

First school closure policies became active on March 16, 2020, in the form of a state-wide closure of all schools K-12, public and non-public, from March 16, 2020, to March 20, 2020. The governor extended the school closure on March 19, 2020. School closures escalated on March 23, 2020, as major state universities closed and implemented remote learning. During the summer months in 2020, North Dakota schools were allowed to host activities such as summer school and college admissions testing, though this was not a requirement, and distance learning was approved for summer school.

For the 2020-2021 school year, most schools were open for hybrid learning until January 19, 2021. Universities were open for hybrid learning as well starting in August 2020. On January 19, 2021, most K-12 schools switched from hybrid instruction to fully in-person instruction. For the 2021-2022 school year, a few schools mandated masks, including the University of North Dakota (UND) on August 23, 2021, and Fargo Public Schools on August 30, 2021. This remained an active policy until January 17, 2022, for Fargo Public Schools and until May 1, 2022, for UND.

C2: Workplace closures

C2 records closings of workplaces and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend closing or recommend work from home or all businesses open with alterations resulting in significant differences compared to non-Covid-19 operations), 2 (require closing or work from home for some sectors or categories of workers), or 3 (require closing or work from home for all-but-essential workplaces, e.g., grocery stores, doctors).

First business closure policies were active on March 20, 2020, in the form of Executive Order 2020-06 from Governor Doug Burgum. Businesses including

restaurants, bars, recreational facilities, and entertainment venues were directed to close or close to on-site patrons.

This continued until Executive Order 2020-06.4 effective on May 1, 2020, when businesses were allowed to open if they adhered to North Dakota Smart Restart standards.

Effective September 4, 2020, Governor Burgum announced changes to the COVID-19 risk levels for 21 of North Dakota's 53 counties under the North Dakota Smart Restart plan. In the low-risk level, employers are encouraged to allow flexible working arrangements, pre-screening and monitoring for symptoms, social distancing guidelines, face coverings, and testing. In the new normal level, employers are encouraged to operate under heightened hygiene and cleaning standards as well as monitoring employees for symptoms.

Restrictions were mandated when Governor Burgum signed Executive Order 2020-43, effective November 16, 2020, limiting food service establishments to 50% seating capacity and event venues to 25% maximum occupancy. This policy remained in place until Executive Order 2020-43.5, effective January 18, 2021, when the governor of North Dakota rescinded orders on capacity limitations and stated that all businesses are recommended to follow the Restart North Dakota Guidelines, which did not include recommendations for workplace closures.

C3: Cancel public events

C3 records cancelling public events and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend cancelling), or 2 (require cancelling).

First public event cancellation policies were active on March 12, 2020, in the form of recommendations from the North Dakota Department of Health. This continued until May 15, 2020, when Governor Doug Burgum announced updated guidelines for large gatherings, banquets, ballrooms, and event venues. They recommended that large gatherings can be up to 50% of the venue's capacity, up to 250 people. Gatherings of any size were not recommended if proper social distancing could not be maintained.

Recommendations for large gatherings continued until Governor Burgum signed Executive Order 2020-43, effective November 16, 2020, limiting event venues to 25% maximum occupancy and suspending all high school winter sports and other extracurricular K-12 school activities until December 14, 2020.

Effective January 18, 2021, Governor Burgum rescinded orders and previous capacity limits through Executive Order 2020-43.5. Businesses and event venues were strongly recommended to follow the North Dakota Smart Restart guidelines, which set forth occupancy limits, social distancing requirements, face-covering mandates, and other large gathering protocols based on risk level by county.

C4: Restrictions on gatherings

C4 records limits on gathering and is measured as 0 (no restrictions), 1 (restrictions on very large gatherings where the limit is above 1000 people), 2 (restrictions on gatherings between 101-1000 people), 3 (restrictions on gatherings between 11-100 people), or 4 (restrictions on gatherings of 10 people or less).

First restriction on gathering was active on September 4, 2020, which placed capacity restrictions on bars and restaurants and limited large gatherings at event venues to 75% of the maximum occupancy of up to 500 attendees or 50% of the maximum occupancy of up to 250 attendees depending on the risk level of the county.

This continued until it was replaced on November 16, 2020, by Executive Order 2020-43, limiting all event venues to 25% of maximum occupancy.

On January 18, 2021, Executive Order 2020-43.5 went into effect, rescinding previous orders and removing all capacity restrictions. Businesses and event venues were strongly recommended to follow the North Dakota Smart Restart guidelines, which set forth occupancy limits, social distancing requirements, face-covering mandates, and other large gathering protocols based on risk level by county.

C5: Public transport closures

C5 records the closing of public transport and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend closing or significantly reduce volume/route/means of transport available), or 2 (require closing or prohibit most citizens from using it).

First public transport closure policies were active on March 23, 2020, when Bis-Man Transit in Bismarck suspended most of its services. This continued until May 11, 2020, when Bis-Man Transit in Bismarck resumed all CAT Bus and paratransit services following the implementation of Governor Doug Burgum's North Dakota Smart Restart plan, which went into effect May 1, 2020. Public transport operated with protections in place such as pre-screening staff, disinfecting surfaces, and social distancing. Riders are asked to not utilise public transport if they are symptomatic or have been exposed to Covid-19. They are also recommended to wear face masks.

C6: Stay-at-home requirements

C6 records orders to "shelter-in-place" and otherwise confine to the home and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend not leaving house), 2 (require not leaving

house with exceptions for daily exercise, grocery shopping, and 'essential' trips), or 3 (require not leaving house with minimal exceptions, e.g., allowed to leave once a week, or only one person can leave at a time, etc).

No stay-at-home orders have been active in North Dakota.

However, according to the North Dakota Smart Restart plan effective May 1, 2020, residents of counties at high risk are recommended to stay-at-home. Residents of counties at moderate risk are recommended to work from home and reconsider unnecessary travel. Residents of low-risk counties are recommended to limit time in the community if they are over the age of 60, have underlying conditions, or are otherwise at higher risk from Covid-19. Even at the safest risk level, the "new normal" level, residents are asked to self-isolate if ill and those who have been in contact with Covid-19 are asked to stay-at-home.

By January 30, 2021, all counties in North Dakota were categorised as low risk.

C7: Restrictions on internal movement

C7 records restrictions on internal movement between states and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend not to travel between states), or 2 (internal movement restrictions in place).

Domestic travel restrictions began on April 8, 2020, when the North Dakota Department of Health announced that anyone travelling from another state, who is not merely passing through the state, must quarantine immediately upon entry to North Dakota for a period of 14 days or for the duration of the person's presence in North Dakota, whichever period is shorter. This policy continued until May 8, 2020, when the state health department lifted the quarantine for out-of-state arrivals.

As of May 26, 2020, the North Dakota Department of Health recommended that individuals delay travel until fully vaccinated. After travel, citizens are also asked to self-monitor, isolate, and get tested if they develop Covid-19 symptoms. Individuals do not need to get tested or self-quarantine if they are fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 in the past three months.

As of July 13, 2021, unvaccinated individuals are asked to get tested with a viral test 3-5 days after travel and stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel in accordance with CDC guidelines. Fully vaccinated individuals are recommended to wear face coverings and social distancing while travelling as well as to self-monitor for Covid-19 symptoms after travelling. By September 2022, North Dakota stopped asking unvaccinated individuals to test and self-quarantine.

C8: International travel controls

C8 records restrictions on international travel for foreign travellers (not citizens) and is measured as 0 (no restrictions), 1 (screening arrivals), 2 (quarantine arrivals from some or all regions), 3 (ban arrivals from some regions), or 4 (ban on all regions or total border closure).

Effective April 8, 2020, a policy announced by the North Dakota Department of Health stated that anyone travelling from another country, who is not merely passing through the state, must quarantine immediately upon entry to North Dakota for a period of 14 days or for the duration of the person's presence in North Dakota, whichever period is shorter. This policy continued until September 21, 2020, when the Interim State Health Officer, Dr. Paul Mariani, lifted the 14-day quarantine order for those returning from international travel.

Economic Response

The indicators for economic policies measured the policies that provided economic support from the state government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic indicators recorded at the subnational level in the US were E1 and E2, which are measured on an ordinal scale without a flag indicating the geographic scope.

E1: Income support

E1 records if the government is providing direct cash payments to people who lose their jobs or cannot work and is measured as 0 (no income support), 1 (government is replacing less than 50% of lost salary or if a flat sum, that is less than 50% median salary), or 2 (government is replacing 50% or more of lost salary or if a flat sum, that is greater than 50% median salary).

On March 20, 2020, Governor Doug Burgum signed Executive Order 2020-08, expanding eligibility for unemployment insurance, and removing barriers to maximum assistance, effective March 13, 2020. Work registration and search requirements were suspended.

On April 1, 2020, Governor Doug Burgum signed Executive Order 2020-18, waiving the one-week waiting period for unemployment benefits, effective immediately.

Effective July 26, 2020, Governor Doug Burgum signed Executive Order 2020-08.2, restoring the work registration and search requirements that had been lifted on March 13, 2020. North Dakota terminated its participation in the federal government's pandemic-related unemployment assistance programs on June 19, 2021.

E2: Debt/contract relief

E2 records if the government is freezing financial obligations for households (e.g., stopping loan repayments, preventing services like water from stopping, or banning evictions) and is measured as 0 (no debt/contract relief), 1 (narrow relief, specific to one kind of contract), or 2 (broad debt/contract relief).

On March 26, 2020, the North Dakota Supreme Court ordered all residential evictions to be suspended. This policy ended on April 23, 2020, when the North Dakota Supreme Court allowed eviction hearings to resume.

In May 2020, the Emergency Rent Bridge program began providing financial assistance to struggling renters. On October 6, 2020, the North Dakota Department of Human Services announced a temporary Pandemic Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (P-LIHEAP) that would provide one-time help with the cost of electric utility bills for qualifying households. To qualify for the one-time \$460 payment, a household must have participated in the state's regular heating assistance program through the 2019-2020 heating season, which ended Sept. 30, 2020.

On June 1, 2021, the more comprehensive ND Rent Help program replaced the Emergency Rent Bridge program. It provided rent assistance, access to application counsellors, and other financial help. The program aided 1,684 qualifying renters from 38 of North Dakota's 53 counties between January 1 and July 19, 2021, providing \$4.4 million in payments to participating housing providers. Qualifying renters are defined as households with incomes up to 80% of the area median income (AMI), which equals an annual income of up to \$80,000 for a family of four depending on the county in which they live. Starting August 18, 2021, the ND Rent Help program also provided financial aid to pay for past-due utility bills. The program is still in place.

Public Health Responses

The public health response indicators recorded health system responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The indicators recorded at the subnational level in the US were H1, H2, H3, H6, H7, and H8. The geographic scope of these policies was marked by an ordinal flag for indicators H1, H6, and H8. Differentiated policies, or policies that were specifically directed at those vaccinated or unvaccinated, are indicated when flagged as 'Vaccinated' or 'Non-Vaccinated' for indicators H6 and H8.

H1: Public information campaigns

H1 records the presence of public info campaigns and is measured as 0 (no Covid-19 public information campaign), 1 (public officials urging caution about Covid-19), or 2 (coordinated public information campaign, e.g., across traditional and social media).

The first public information came on January 29, 2020, through the state's health website. By March 13, 2020, when the state had declared a state of emergency in response to COVID-19, the state health department developed web pages and social media accounts.

After April 30, 2021, when the COVID-19 state of emergency ended in North Dakota, the number of entities involved in the public information campaign was reduced to one. This was the North Dakota Department of Health. Despite this transition, information was still communicated through the web and social media pages, and various campaigns were developed to spread awareness.

H2: Testing policy

H2 records government policy on who has access to testing and is measured as 0 (no testing policy), 1 (only those who both have symptoms AND meet specific criteria, e.g., key workers, admitted to hospital, encountered a known case, returned from overseas), 2 (testing of anyone showing Covid-19 symptoms), or 3 (open public testing, e.g., "drive through" testing available to asymptomatic people).

On March 3, 2020, the North Dakota Department of Health announced that the Division of Microbiology could provide tests for COVID-19. Only individuals with certain international travel history, in contact with a known positive case, or hospitalised with unexplainable respiratory conditions were recommended to be tested. If people were concerned that they had contracted the virus, they were encouraged to reach out to their healthcare providers before visiting clinics or hospitals.

With the addition of nine labs to expand testing efforts, on April 22, 2020, anyone with symptoms was encouraged to get tested. By February 22, 2021, the North Dakota state government website announced that public testing was available to anyone who would like to test for COVID-19. At that time, regular testing events were happening across the state.

H3: Contact tracing

H3 records government policy on contact tracing after a positive diagnosis and is measured as 0 (no contact tracing), 1 (limited contact tracing; not done for all cases), or 2 (comprehensive contact tracing; done for all identified cases).

On April 3, 2020, a pilot project began that aimed to expand COVID-19 contact tracing. However, there was no evidence of contact tracing taking

place aside from the Care19 app. By May 4, 2020, North Dakota became the only state to meet the estimated need for 30 contact tracers per 100,000 people.

On October 22, 2020, the North Dakota Department of Health announced new policies. Close contacts would no longer be contacted by public health officials and instead were encouraged to self-notify possible contacts. Schools and universities were an exception to this policy. By December 22, 2020, the North Dakota Department of Health reinstated the contact tracing program, and contact tracers notified close contacts.

By May 10, 2022, North Dakota no longer used manual contact tracing for each new case. The Care19 app webpage was a dead link. The Department of Health website, on June 20, 2022, encouraged residents to self-isolate and notify close contacts, should they test positive.

H6: Facial Coverings

H6 records policies on the use of facial coverings outside the home and is measured as 0 (no policy), 1 (recommended mask wearing), 2 (required in some specified shared/public spaces outside the home with other people present, or some situations when social distancing not possible), 3 (required in all shared/public spaces outside the home with other people present or all situations when social distancing not possible), or 4 (required outside the home at all times regardless of location or presence of other people).

On August 10, 2020, Governor Burgum announced the “Mask Up ND” awareness campaign which encouraged North Dakotans to wear masks, use the hashtag #MaskUpND, and add a Facebook frame to their profile picture. By October 19, 2020, the Fargo city Mayor required residents to wear face coverings when exposed to non-household members and where social distancing could not be done. On November 1, 2020, the Bismarck City Commission passed a mask mandate. Eventually, on November 14, 2020, the North Dakota Interim State Health Officer executed the order that required masks to be worn in indoor businesses and outdoor settings where physical distancing was not possible. On December 14, 2020, masks were only required in certain public spaces, especially when social distancing could not be assured.

When the state-wide mask mandate expired on January 18, 2021, many cities including, but not limited to Fargo, West Fargo, Valley City, Jamestown, Minot, and Williston, enforced facial coverings in all public spaces in their jurisdiction. By March 8, 2021, several counties rescinded their mask mandate and only required masks in certain public spaces. Fargo city's mask mandate was still active. Eventually, Fargo's mask mandate expired on March 22, 2021. Masks continued to be recommended in public places across the state.

The University of North Dakota began enforcing mask usage in indoor public settings on August 23, 2021. By August 30, 2021, the Fargo Public

Schools also required face coverings for staff, students, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status or community transmission.

On April 19, 2022, it was announced that masks were no longer required in North Dakota, but were still required in certain settings, such as classrooms, health facilities, educational spaces, etc. By June 13, 2022, North Dakota's state legislature passed a bill that prevented government officials from mandating mask usage. Therefore, the North Dakota Health Department recommended residents wear masks to prevent the spread of the virus.

H7: Vaccination policy

H7 records policies for vaccine delivery for different groups 0 (no availability), 1 (availability for ONE of following: key workers/clinically vulnerable groups that are non elderly/ elderly groups), 2 (availability for TWO of following: key workers/clinically vulnerable groups that are non elderly/elderly groups), 3 (availability for ALL of following: key workers/clinically vulnerable groups that are non-elderly/elderly groups), 4 (availability for all three plus partial additional availability for select broad groups/ages), or 5 (universal availability).

On December 14, 2020, the first doses of the Pfizer vaccine were administered and only provided to healthcare providers and residents in care facilities. By January 15, 2021, the Department of Health moved to Phase 1B of the vaccination plan. Key workers, clinically vulnerable people, and the elderly were also prioritised to access the Pfizer vaccine. Eventually, Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines were available as the state moved to Phase 2 of its vaccination plan. After March 29, 2021, all North Dakotans had access to the vaccines. All vaccines were government-funded.

H8: Protection of elderly people

H8 records policies for protecting elderly people (as defined locally) in Long Term Care Facilities and/or the community and home setting. This is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommended isolation, hygiene, and visitor restriction measures in LTCFs and/or elderly people to stay-at-home), 2 (narrow restrictions for isolation, hygiene in LTCFs, some limitations on external visitors and/or restrictions protecting elderly people at home), or 3 (extensive restrictions for isolation and hygiene in LTCFs, all non-essential external visitors prohibited, and/or all elderly people required to stay-at-home and not leave the home with minimal exceptions, and receive no external visitors).

The first policy to protect elderly people was announced on March 9, 2020. The governor recommended precautions and adherence to safety measures. By April 6, 2020, the governor temporarily banned visits to long-term care facilities. Eventually, Governor Burgum modified the restrictions and enacted a "Vulnerable Population Protection Plan" which strongly

encouraged outdoor visitation by appointment with physical distancing and personal protective equipment. Fourteen facilities began Phase 1 under the plan and reinstated group dining and activities. After 2 weeks passed with no outbreaks, the facilities could proceed to allow indoor visitations.

On July 16, 2020, the Department of Health announced that senior nutrition programs can determine when to reopen congregate meal sites. However, prior to reopening, providers must submit a reopening plan to the Aging Services Division.

By September 23, 2020, the Department of Health of North Dakota planned to increase tracing and testing efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus. On March 25, 2021, the North Dakota Long-term Care Guidance announced the principles for COVID-19 prevention. Screening for symptoms, wearing masks and other personal protective equipment, practising social distancing, and increasing hand hygiene were among the safety measures mentioned.

Vaccine Policies

The vaccine indicators record vaccination policies regarding the distribution of vaccines and vaccine mandates. This is recorded as V1-V4 and includes a state's prioritisation list, eligible groups, cost of vaccination to the individual, and the presence of a vaccine mandate. These indicators do not include a flag for geographic scope.

V1: Vaccine Prioritisation

V1 records the ranked position for different groups within a state's prioritisation plan when vaccines resources were too scarce for universal availability. Groups are ranked on an ordinal scale, the number represents the rank of prioritisation, and equal-ranked categories share the same number.

The groups initially prioritised were health care workers and residents and staff of elderly care homes in the plan first published on October 16, 2020. This plan was further specified on December 11, 2020, to include more essential workers in Phase 1B and to add Phase 1C, which would prioritise people at high risk, people over the age of 65, and people in congregate settings such as correctional facilities and shelters.

On December 30, 2020, the vaccination plan was again altered to include more specifications. Frontline health workers were included in Phase 1A. Further requirements in terms of age and risk factors were specified for Phases 1B and 1C. Phase 1B now prioritised people aged 75 and older or people aged 65 and older with underlying health conditions. Phase 1B included childcare workers and teachers, while Phase 1C included the North Dakota National Guard, grocery store workers, public transit employees, and

people aged 16 to 64 with more than one underlying condition, among others. On January 15, 2021, the North Dakota Department of Health asked health care providers and pharmacies to move to Phase 1B when they were ready. Vaccine availability shifted from prioritised to universal on March 29, 2021, with the shift to Phase 2, making vaccines available to anyone aged 18 or older.

V2: Vaccine Availability

V2 records when categories of people – regardless of their position in a prioritised rollout plan – receive vaccines. This is measured as 0 (vaccines are not being made available to this category) or 1 (vaccines are being made available to this category).

Vaccine administration began on December 14, 2020, with healthcare workers and residents, and staff of long-term care facilities. On January 15, 2021, the North Dakota Department of Health asked healthcare providers and pharmacies to move to Phase 1B when they were ready. The expansion of availability then included (in order of priority) people aged 75 and older, people aged 65 to 74 with two or more high-risk medical conditions, staff and people living in congregate settings, people aged 65 and older with one or more high-risk medical conditions, people aged 65 and older without high-risk medical conditions, people with two or more high-risk medical conditions regardless of age, child care workers, employees of K-12 schools, teachers, and so on.

As of February 10, 2021, vaccination of people with two or more high-risk medical conditions regardless of age had begun. As of March 12, 2021, vaccines were offered to everyone included in Phase 1B. On March 9, 2021, vaccine availability expanded to priority groups in Phase 1C, which included the North Dakota National Guard, grocery store workers, public safety answering points such as 911 responders, people working on the manufacturing of Covid-19 vaccines, other healthcare and public health workers not included in Phase 1A, public transit workers, people aged 16 to 64 with one or more high-risk medical condition, and so on.

On March 29, 2021, Phase 2 of vaccinations began, making vaccines available to anyone aged 18 or older. On May 13, 2021, vaccine availability expanded to ages 12 and older. On August 23, 2021, vaccine availability expanded to ages 5 and older. On July 8, 2022, vaccine availability expanded to ages 6 months and older.

V3: Vaccine Financial Support

All vaccines were government-funded at the federal-level across the US.

V4: Mandatory Vaccination

V4 measures the existence of a requirement to be vaccinated and is measured as 0 (no requirement to be vaccinated) or 1 (requirement to be vaccinated).

There have been no vaccine mandates in North Dakota besides the requirement by the federal government to have all employees of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursed facilities be vaccinated if they are to be reimbursed.