



## **North Country Healthcare Announces Additional COVID-19 Protective Measure**

The events of the past 18 months have confirmed what we already were aware of – that we are stronger together. We’ve now been engaged in this public health crisis long enough to know that new variants continue to emerge, and surges can develop anytime and anywhere. Since North Country Healthcare (NCH) delivered its first COVID-19 vaccination many months ago, the organization has consistently advocated for vaccination as the best method to protect our providers, employees, volunteers, and community members from the spread of this devastating virus. The data continues to reinforce the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines, including the mitigation of new and emerging threats such as the Delta variant. To that end, we confidently know more than ever that vaccination is the best way to end this public health crisis.

The North Country Healthcare (NCH) Mission is to assure consistent, high quality, accessible, and integrated healthcare to the communities it serves. It is the organization’s obligation to protect the health of our communities and other NCH stakeholders. As the dominant provider of healthcare services in the North Country, NCH is charged with leading by example, including setting the standard for public health. It is with that as our focus that NCH will require our providers, staff, vendors, and volunteers to have received, within 60 days following the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of at least one of the current emergency-use approved vaccines, complete COVID-19 vaccination. Employees may be vaccinated through the respective NCH affiliate’s Employee Health Department or via a third-party provider of the employee’s choice.

Legitimate medical or religious exemption/accommodations will be granted to providers and employees. Those individuals will be required to complete regular COVID-19 screenings and wear face masks (as all NCH providers, employees, and volunteers currently are).

COVID-19 vaccinations, which are free and available to all NCH and affiliate employees, are highly effective at decreasing the likelihood of contracting COVID-19, preventing serious illness in vaccinated individuals who contract COVID-19, and mitigating spread of the disease.

“The COVID-19 vaccine provides a key component, as do masking, social distancing, and proper hand hygiene, to significantly reduce the spread of the Coronavirus,” commented Tom Mee, RN, BSN, MBA, Chief Executive Officer, North Country Healthcare. “We recognize the impact of this measure and remain committed to the health and wellbeing of our patients, employees, providers, and volunteers.”

Continuing COVID-19 education will be offered to all NCH and affiliate employees, to ensure the communication of the most recent, accurate information.

NCH will continue to work collaboratively with the New Hampshire Hospital Association, and adhere to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines for healthcare organizations. As such, the wearing of face masks, maintaining social distancing and utilizing proper hand hygiene will continue.

“We look forward to continuing to serve as the North Country’s healthcare leader,” commented Mee.