

Weekly COVID-19 Update From EKA. April 14, 2021

The COVID-19 death toll in California has exceeded 60,000. The state's toll represents 10.7% of COVID-19 deaths nationwide.

VACCINATION

US Recommends 'Pause' For J&J Vaccine Over Clot Reports

The U.S. is recommending a "pause" in using the single-dose Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine to investigate reports of potentially dangerous blood clots. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration said Tuesday they were investigating unusual clots that occurred 6 to 13 days after vaccination. The clots occurred in veins that drain blood from the brain and occurred together with low platelets. All six cases were in women between the ages of 18 and 48; there was one death and all remained under investigation. The reports appear similar to a rare, unusual type of clotting disorder that European authorities say is possibly linked to another COVID-19 vaccine not yet cleared in the U.S., from AstraZeneca. More than 6.8 million doses of the J&J vaccine have been administered in the U.S., the vast majority with no or mild side effects.

Which COVID-19 Vaccine?

All COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in the United States are safe and effective. The best COVID-19 vaccine is the first one that is available to you. C.D.C. does not recommend one vaccine brand over another.

Learn more about the three vaccines that are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19:

- [Pfizer-BioNTech](#)
- [Moderna](#)
- [Johnson & Johnson's Janssen](#)

You can find answers to your questions, including information on side effects, what activities you can start doing after vaccination, and more [here](#).

California Expecting Nearly 90% Drop In J&J Vaccines Leading To Fewer First-Shot Appointments

California is expecting about 90% fewer Johnson & Johnson vaccine doses this week, marking a significant decrease in the total number of doses that will lead to fewer first-time appointments, even as the state expands eligibility to any resident over age 16 on April 15.

Vaccine Update

Starting tomorrow, vaccines will become available to any resident in Los Angeles County who is 16 or older. View additional information on the [State's Vaccine Plan webpage](#), register on the [MyTurn website](#) to be notified when you're eligible to receive your vaccination, and [visit the L.A. County COVID-19 Vaccine website for more information](#). Registration is required for a vaccine appointment. Eligible LA County residents with internet access and a computer are urged to use the [Vaccinate LA County website](#) to reserve an appointment. For those without access to the internet, or with disabilities, a call center is open daily from 8 AM to 8:30 PM to help schedule appointments; dial (833) 540-0473 if you are in need of assistance. Please note that this phone line is reserved for people with disabilities or for those who don't have internet access.

Homebound Californians Still Lack Options To Get COVID-19 Vaccine

There are an estimated 2 million homebound seniors. Experts say they'll be among the hardest to reach with vaccine distribution, and health departments and nonprofits are looking for creative solutions. In most counties, people in need of in-home care have been near the top of the eligibility list since early in the vaccine rollout. But there are likely still thousands of them trying to figure out how to access the shot. California's vaccine distribution contract with insurance company Blue Shield includes language about bringing vaccines to the homebound, but the state hasn't unveiled any formal plans for this group yet. Representatives from Blue Shield say they've "diligently explored opportunities for this work" with home health care agencies and are continuing to make a plan, which they expect to unveil in mid-April.

REOPENING

Superintendent Says LAUSD Schools Reopening With Strong COVID-19 Safety Protocols

Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Austin Beutner said the LAUSD will offer COVID-19 vaccines to families of students in the district. Beutner said LAUSD is planning a nearly \$2-billion Marshall Plan to made up academic loss, including COVID safety, expanded summer programs, additional math and English teachers, smaller class sizes and more support for students with learning disabilities.

California Announces June 15 as Targeted Reopening Date

Los Angeles County recently moved to the Orange Tier in the [State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#) that allowed the County to expand permitted activities in several key sectors including bars, breweries, wineries, and distilleries, family entertainment centers, gyms, movie theatres, restaurants, retail establishments, grocery stores, and outdoor live events with required safety measures in place including masking and

distancing requirements. View the Health Officer Order and Reopening Protocols on the [L.A. County Department of Public Health website](#). Now that 4 million people have been vaccinated who are living in communities across the state in the Healthy Places Index quartile 1, L.A. County's daily case rate must be at or below 5.9 new cases per 100,000 people and the County's test positivity rate must be at or below 4.9% to remain in the Orange Tier.

To move to the less restrictive Yellow Tier, the County's case rate must be less than 2 new cases per 100,000 people and test positivity must be less than 2%. The [state announced yesterday, that on June 15, California will fully reopen](#) if there is enough vaccine supply for Californians 16 years and older to be vaccinated and hospitalizations rates remain stable and low, especially among fully vaccinated Californians. The goal is for industries across the state to return to usual operations with commonsense risk reduction measures in place, such as masking and vaccinations. [View the State's Beyond the Blueprint for a Safer Economy Plan for details](#).

Orange County announces test run for COVID-19 vaccine passports

As public health leaders across the country weigh the pros and cons of so-called "vaccine passports" – a record meant to show a person has been inoculated against COVID-19 – the O.C. Health Care Agency is planning a field test to figure out how proving immunity would work in the real world. The agency announced that in April it will launch a pilot program to test "digital passports" – likely through the County's [Othena vaccine scheduling app](#) – which a vaccinated person could display to enter places where strangers inevitably mix, such as at conferences, meetings, concerts and sporting events. But concrete information about the upcoming test run was limited; the Health Care Agency's initial notice on Wednesday lacked details.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

LACDPH Travel Advisory and Guidance

The County of Los Angeles has issued the following updated guidance for travelers, which supersedes the Travel Advisory and Guidance issued on February 3, 2021 and shall apply prospectively from April 5, 2021. Non-essential travel out-of-state or out-of-country is still not recommended. However, for those that must travel, the following applies:

- All travelers *who are not fully vaccinated* should get tested with a COVID-19 viral test 1-3 days before travel. Travel should not be initiated until a negative test result is returned.

- All travelers who test positive or develop [symptoms of COVID-19](#) must isolate and follow County [isolation instructions](#). Do not travel when symptomatic or with a positive COVID-19 test result, regardless of vaccination status.
- All non-essential travelers **who are not fully vaccinated** arriving in or returning to California from other states or countries must quarantine as described below.
- *Fully vaccinated* persons may travel but should continue to take precautions. If asymptomatic, no quarantine or testing is needed upon return.

Definition of Fully Vaccinated

A person is considered fully vaccinated 14 days following the receipt of:

- the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna)
- one dose of a single-dose vaccine (Johnson and Johnson/Janssen)

Persons who don't meet these requirements must follow the travel instructions for

Persons Who Are Not Fully Vaccinated

Persons Who Are Not Fully Vaccinated

Non-Essential Travel and Quarantine Requirements

1. Until they are fully vaccinated, Los Angeles County residents should continue to avoid all non-essential travel outside of California, unless they are traveling for essential purposes. Avoiding travel reduces the risk of virus transmission, including reducing the risk of exposure to new sources of infection and, potentially, new virus strains that are now present in California. "Non-essential travel" includes travel that is considered tourism or recreational in nature.
2. All non-essential travelers from other states or countries are strongly discouraged from entering the County of Los Angeles and must adhere to the quarantine procedures described below.
3. All non-essential travelers who are not fully vaccinated arriving in or returning to the County of Los Angeles from other states or countries must*:
 - a. [Quarantine for 7 full days after travel if:](#)
 - they get tested 3-5 days after arrival to Los Angeles and get a negative COVID-19 viral test result.
Note: Persons who have recovered from laboratory confirmed COVID in the past 3 months and are asymptomatic do not need a viral test. They can end quarantine after 7 full days. Recovery from COVID-19 is defined as having completed [isolation](#).
 - a. [Quarantine for 10 full days after travel if :](#)

- they did not get tested with a COVID-19 viral test after their arrival. **Note:** For 14 days after their arrival, continue to [self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19](#), and avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness. They must isolate and should get tested if symptoms develop.

*If the recent traveler is needed for urgent critical healthcare staffing needs or to otherwise engage in emergency response, they are permitted to work, but must quarantine when not doing their essential work.

4. Persons who travel into Los Angeles County solely for essential work purposes may work but must comply with all requirements related to wearing face masks and maintaining physical distancing. When not conducting essential work, they should take care to not mix with others.

To view the updated LACDPH Travel Advisory please use the attached link: [Travel Advisory and Guidance - L.A. County Department of Public Health](#).

If you have any further questions or need additional clarification, please contact Medical Liaison Section, Personnel Division at (213) 486-4600.

SACRAMENTO

No shot? No Problem: COVID-19 Vaccines Encouraged But Not Required At Cal State Universities

California State University will not require employees and students at its 23 campuses, including C.S.U. East Bay and San Jose State, to be vaccinated against COVID-19 this fall. Its decision comes as a small but growing number of colleges and universities are announcing plans to mandate vaccines to restore a sense of pre-pandemic normalcy this fall – but face political and legal challenges. Other Bay Area campuses – including Stanford, Santa Clara and University of California at Berkeley and Santa Cruz – are considering their options and have not yet announced their plans. While UC Davis doesn't mandate vaccines, it is now offering shots to anyone age 16 or older, including out-of-towners, a week ahead of the state's timeline. But C.S.U. campuses may require specific populations of students, such as athletes and dorm residents, to be vaccinated. These policies would vary from campus to campus.

Why California Isn't Getting Rid Of Its Mask Mandate

News that California will finally emerge from nearly all pandemic restrictions on June 15 included one glaring exception: The [face coverings](#) that have been around for over a year are not going away. Given a chance to provide a glimmer of hope for ending California's [mask mandate](#), Gov. Gavin Newsom and the state's health secretary, Dr. Mark Ghaly, firmly decided not to go there, saying there was no end date goal just yet. "It's the most powerful and important non-pharmaceutical intervention we can do to mitigate the spread of this disease," Newsom said during his briefing on Tuesday. "We are committed to extinguishing this disease, and we don't have any short-term goals as it relates to lifting the mass mandate." In a possible hint of future easing of the mandate for less risky situations.

NATIONAL

FBI, DCCA Warning On Selling And Buying Fake Coronavirus Vaccination Cards

The [F.B.I. is warning the public](#) about buying and selling fraudulent COVID-19 vaccination cards. The F.B.I. said by doing so, con artists are endangering those around them, and it's breaking the law. These fake COVID-19 vaccination cards have become a hot commodity on the black market. Officials have seen fake coronavirus vaccine cards advertised on social media and e-commerce websites.

More Contagious Virus Variant Is Now Dominant in U.S., C.D.C. Chief Says

A highly infectious variant of the coronavirus that was first identified in Britain has become the most common source of new infections in the United States, according to the C.D.C.

'Vaccine Passports' Emerge as the Next Coronavirus Divide

Legal experts say the answer to all of these questions is generally yes, though in a society so divided, politicians are already girding for a fight. Government entities like school boards and the Army can require vaccinations for entry, service and travel — practices that flow from a 1905 Supreme Court ruling that said states could require residents to be vaccinated against smallpox or pay a fine. ... Private companies, moreover, are free to refuse to employ or do business with whomever they want, subject to only a few exceptions, ones that do not include vaccination status. And states can probably override that freedom by enacting a law barring discrimination based on vaccination status.

5 States Account For Nearly Half Of All New U.S. Coronavirus Infections

New York, Michigan, Florida, Pennsylvania and New Jersey together reported 44% of the nation's new COVID-19 infections, or nearly 197,500 new cases, in the latest available seven-day period, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Total U.S.

infections during the same week numbered more than 452,000. The heavy concentration of new cases in states that account for 22% of the U.S. population has prompted some experts and elected officials to call on the Biden administration to ship additional vaccine doses to those places. So far, the White House has shown no signs of shifting from its policy of dividing vaccine doses among states based on population.

COVID-19 PPE Expenses Are Deductible

the I.R.S. issued Announcement 2021-7, which provides the welcome news that amounts paid by an individual taxpayer for such COVID-19 personal protective equipment (P.P.E.) are to be treated as “amounts paid for medical care” under Section 213(d) of the Internal Revenue Code.

COVID-19 PPE Expenses May Be Deductible. This means that amounts paid by an individual taxpayer for COVID-19 PPE for use by the taxpayer or by the taxpayer’s spouse or dependents that are not paid for by insurance or otherwise are deductible under Code Section 213(a), provided that the taxpayer’s total medical expenses exceed 7.5% of adjusted gross income (A.G.I.).

Or, COVID-19 PPE Expenses May Be Paid or Reimbursed, Tax-Free. This also means that COVID-19 PPE expenses are eligible to be paid or reimbursed, tax-free, under health flexible spending arrangements (health F.S.A.s), health reimbursement arrangements (H.R.A.s), health savings accounts (H.S.A.s) and Archer medical savings accounts (Archer M.S.A.s). But, because I.R.S. rules prohibit taxpayers from “double-dipping”, COVID-19 PPE expenses that have been paid or reimbursed, tax-free, from any of these arrangements cannot also be deducted.

Employers May Need to Amend Their Plan Documents. Employers whose group health plan documents (such as health F.S.A. and H.R.A. plan documents) do not expressly prohibit the payment or reimbursement of COVID-19 PPE expenses (most plan documents probably fall into this category) will not have to be amended to expressly permit such payments or reimbursements.

However, employers who wish to permit payment or reimbursement of COVID-19 PPE expenses but whose plan documents expressly prohibit such payments or reimbursements (such plan documents are probably rare) will need to amend those documents. Any such plan amendment may provide for payment or reimbursement of COVID-19 PPE expenses incurred for any period beginning on or after January 1, 2020. The I.R.S. will not treat any such plan amendment as jeopardizing the tax-free nature of such payments or reimbursements or as causing any Code Section 125 cafeteria plan (which often include health F.S.A.s as component plans) to fail to meet applicable legal requirements.

Employers that need to amend their plan documents must adopt plan amendments no later than the last day of the first calendar year beginning after the end of the plan year in which the amendment is effective, but no plan amendment with retroactive effect may be adopted after December 31, 2022. (For example, an employer that sponsors a plan with a calendar plan year and that wishes to amend the plan to permit payment or reimbursement of COVID-19 PPE expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2021 would have to adopt that plan amendment no later than December 31, 2022.) In addition, the plan must be operated consistently with the terms of any retroactive plan amendment during the period beginning on the amendment's effective date through the date the employer adopts the amendment.

Employers Will Need to Review and Update Employee Communications. Employers whose plans will pay or reimburse COVID-19 PPE expenses also will need to review and update to the extent necessary all employee-facing materials (for example, summary plan descriptions (S.P.D.s), employee handbooks, websites and claim reimbursement request forms) to enable employees to begin submitting their claims for such expenses.

Employers Will Need to Contact Third-Party Administrators. Employers whose plans will pay or reimburse COVID-19 PPE expenses also will need to contact their plans' third-party administrators (including claims administrators) to ensure that the administrators' participant communications have been updated and their systems have been geared up to correctly process participants' claims for COVID-19 PPE expenses.

EMPLOYER ISSUES

Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Law Retroactive to January 1, 2021

As noted in previous updates, Governor Newsom signed S.B. 95 into law, which provides for supplemental paid sick leave for reasons related to COVID-19. This new leave is in addition to paid sick leave already required by law or policy. The new law creates California Labor Code Section 248.2, with respect to supplemental paid sick leave to employers generally and firefighters, and California Labor Code Section 248.3, with respect to providers of in-home support services or waiver personal care services. This alert focuses on the requirements of California Labor Code Section 248.2 with respect to employers generally. California had previously enacted AB 1867, which provided supplemental paid sick leave to employees of private employers with 500 or more U.S. employees.

The Labor Commissioner recently [posted](#) a frequently asked questions list addressing S.B. 95. It also provided this [poster](#). **All employers with 25 or more employees must display in a conspicuous place in the workplace** or must disseminate to the workforce

through electronic means if employees are telecommuting and do not physically report to work.

While the sick leave benefits required by S.B. 95 may look similar to those required under AB 1867 or the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act, they are more expansive in a number of key ways, including with respect to the reasons available for supplemental paid sick leave, the methods for determining compensation while using supplemental paid sick leave, and the retroactive applicability of the law. S.B. 95 went into effect on March 29, 10 days after it was signed into law by Gov. Newsom and will remain in effect through September 30, 2021.

Which employers are covered by Labor Code Section 248.2?

All private employers that employ more than 25 employees are covered by Labor Code 248.2 and must provide supplemental paid sick leave for certain COVID-19-related reasons to its employees.

Which employees are covered by Labor Code Section 248.2?

A “covered employee” means any employee who is unable to work or telework for an employer because of a qualifying reason (addressed in the following section).

For what reason can an individual take supplemental paid sick leave?

A covered employee of a covered employer is entitled to supplemental paid sick leave if they are unable to work or telework due to any of the following reasons:

1. The covered employee is subject to a quarantine or isolation period related to COVID-19 as defined by an order or guidelines of the State Department of Public Health, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or a local health officer who has jurisdiction over the workplace. If the covered employee is subject to more than one of the foregoing, the covered employee shall be permitted to use COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave for the minimum quarantine or isolation period under the order or guidelines that provides for the longest such minimum period.
2. The covered employee has been advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
3. The covered employee is attending an appointment to receive a vaccine for protection against contracting COVID-19.
4. The covered employee is experiencing symptoms related to a COVID-19 vaccine that prevent the employee from being able to work or telework.
5. The covered employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis.

6. The covered employee is caring for a family member who is subject to an order or guidelines described in (1) or who has been advised to self-quarantine, as described in (2).
7. The covered employee is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed or otherwise unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19 on the premises.

How much supplemental paid sick leave does a covered employee receive?

Covered employees considered full time or who worked or were scheduled to work on average at least 40 hours per week for the covered employer in the two weeks preceding the date the covered employee takes supplemental paid sick leave are entitled to 80 hours of supplemental paid sick leave.

Are employees compensated for supplemental paid sick leave in the same manner as regular paid sick leave?

No. For non-exempt covered employees, each hour of supplemental paid sick leave must be calculated and compensated at a rate equal to *the highest of the following*:

1. Calculated in the same manner as the regular rate of pay for the workweek in which the covered employee uses supplemental paid sick leave, whether or not they actually work overtime during that week;
2. Calculated by dividing the covered employee's total wages, not including overtime premium pay, by the employee's total hours worked in the full pay periods of the prior 90 days of employment;
3. The state minimum wage; or
4. The local minimum wage to which the covered employee is entitled.

The rate of pay for supplemental paid sick leave for exempt employees is to be calculated in the same manner as the employer calculates wages for other forms of paid leave time. In addition, as with regular paid sick leave, covered employers must also provide notice in the covered employee's wage statement showing the amount of available COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave each pay period. This must be a separate line item from regular paid sick leave on the wage statement. For employees who work a variable schedule, an employer can satisfy the paystub requirement by performing an initial calculation of the supplemental paid sick leave available to the employee and indicating "(variable)" next to the number of hours indicated on the paystub.

What does this mean for covered employers?

Effective March 29, 2021, covered employers will need to comply with the provisions of S.B. 95 with respect to supplemental paid sick leave. This will require covered employers to provide notice to employees of the supplemental sick leave available to them (which

can be accomplished by sending a copy of the poster to employees via email) and to provide supplemental paid sick leave for qualifying reasons. The Department of Industrial Relations has also published [F.A.Q.s with respect to Labor Code Section 248.2](#). Employers should keep in mind that this supplemental benefit is in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other paid sick leave benefits that the employee is entitled to by law or policy.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Judge Dismisses Lawsuit Against Who Over Its Covid-19 Response

A federal judge [dismissed](#) a lawsuit from residents in Westchester County, an early Covid-19 hotspot, against the World Health Organization alleging it was negligent in its response to Covid-19, a victory for the WHO as it comes under increasing political scrutiny. The proposed class-action lawsuit, filed in April last year by seven Westchester County, New York, residents, asked for “substantial damages” for Westchester residents and accused the WHO of “failing to properly monitor the response to the Coronavirus pandemic in China.” The plaintiffs in the lawsuit include a doctor from New Rochelle and six nearby residents, according to [Reuters](#), who contracted the virus around the time when the area was an early epicenter for the virus, which spread rapidly after a lawyer attended a New Rochelle synagogue before the WHO officially declared the coronavirus a pandemic in early March 2020.

Harvest Rock Files For Another Emergency Injunction in the Ninth Circuit

Lawyers for a Pasadena church have once again filed for an emergency injunction by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals against the remaining restrictions on indoor religious services under the state’s health guidelines. “Plaintiffs have scratched and clawed for lasting relief for 259 days, and this Court should issue an injunction pending appeal against the Governor’s continued imposition of discriminatory restrictions on religious worship services while exempting myriad secular gatherings from any restrictions whatsoever and permitting other nonreligious gatherings and industries to meet with more favorable capacity restrictions than those imposed on Appellants’ religious worship services,” states a brief filed by the church. On a 6-3 vote in February, the U.S. Supreme Court cited the Constitution’s protection of the free exercise of religion and ruled that the church could open its doors to 200 members in the orange tier, but regulations upheld prohibitions against singing and chanting remaining in place. Last week, a federal judge ordered the state to explain its caps on worship services. This is the third time Harvest Rock has filed for an emergency injunction in the Ninth Circuit.

Lawsuit Challenges Biden Administration Covid-19 Visa Policies

A new lawsuit challenges the State Department's refusal to issue visas in countries the Biden administration maintains coronavirus-related restrictions on entering the United States. Beyond the legal issues, attorneys say the current policy is not advancing public health since anyone who obtains a visa must show a negative Covid-19 test result before flying to the United States and can quarantine. Moreover, people in some visa categories and individuals with previously issued valid visas are allowed to enter America, while individuals in other categories are refused visas.

WHAT WE'RE READING

California Moves Toward Reopening, But Employers Will Still Have Covid-19 Obligations

While California has announced tentative plans to lift COVID-19 restrictions by June 15, 2021, the difficulties for employers are not over. For much of the COVID-19 pandemic, California struggled to get infection rates under control, and businesses grappled with compliance with a multitude of COVID-19-specific statutes and regulations. Employers also were tasked with navigating existing California employment laws, which did not contemplate a worldwide pandemic. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Are Some Covid-19 Vaccines More Effective Than Others?

Are some COVID-19 vaccines more effective than others? It's hard to tell since they weren't directly compared in studies. But experts say the vaccines are alike on what matters most: preventing hospitalizations and deaths. "Luckily, all these vaccines look like they're protecting us from severe disease," said Dr. Monica Gandhi of the University of California, San Francisco, citing study results for five vaccines used around the world and a sixth that's still in review. To read the full story, click [here](#).

COVID Vaccine Passports: How They Could Work, When You Might Need One

As more people receive the COVID-19 vaccine in the United States, excitement is growing for the return to activities such as attending sporting events, watching a movie in a theater, dining in at restaurants and even getting on a plane for that long-delayed trip. On April 2, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) [updated its travel guidelines](#) to allow for fully vaccinated individuals to travel within the U.S. without getting tested for the coronavirus and without needing to quarantine afterward. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Newsom's Vow To Reopen California Is A High-Stakes Political Gamble

So the course of the pandemic and the course of the recall have become intertwined, making it impossible to separate whether Newsom's decisions about one are driven by the other. ... Though Newsom has been projecting optimism about the end of the

pandemic for several weeks, today's announcement was a big move that seemed to go beyond what he previously forecast. Last month, Newsom said he'd speed up business reopenings — but didn't promise a full-scale reopening — after 4 million vaccine doses had been administered in the state's hardest-hit communities. The state hit that number today, he said, allowing him to set the June 15 goal. To read the full story, click [here](#).

S.F. Supervisors Pass Right To 'Re-Employment' For Some Workers Laid Off During The Pandemic

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance Tuesday that would create a more permanent “right to re-employment” for some workers who lost their jobs during the pandemic, enshrining some of the protections enacted through temporary emergency ordinances dating back to last year. Spearheaded by Supervisor Gordon Mar, the ordinance passed a vote at the full board 10-1 with Supervisor Catherine Stefani voting against it. It requires certain employers to offer people their jobs back after having been laid off due to the pandemic, when they are hiring for the same or a similar position. It also requires companies to make reasonable accommodations for employees who are unable to work because of family care. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Gov. Newsom Vows To Keep Coliseum Vax Site Open, Says State Will Match Supply

The Coliseum site — which is co-run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and California's Office of Emergency Services — was set to close Sunday at the end of its planned eight-week run, just days before California is opening up vaccinations to all residents 16 and older. Alameda County and state officials pleaded with FEMA for an extension and for a continued vaccine supply sent directly from the federal government. FEMA denied the appeal on both counts last week saying it would not extend the operation past April 11. However, on Monday, Vice President Kamala Harris, visiting Oakland, announced that the site would stay open. Newsom said the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa now will partner with the state emergency services agency going forward to offer shots at the site. The state will match vaccine allocations coming from those two counties, and the site is expected to continue administering nearly 6,000 doses a day. FEMA said on Friday that it planned to continue paying for costs and personnel until October 30. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Biden Moves Up COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility For All Adults To April 19

Biden's original goal had been 100 million shots by the end of his first 100 days, but that number was reached in March. The announcement about vaccine eligibility is somewhat symbolic and comes as states already have begun moving up their deadlines from the original May 1 goal. It also comes as a flood of vaccine supply is being sent to states this week. Jeff Zients, the White House coronavirus coordinator, told governors Tuesday

during a weekly conference call that more than 28 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines will be delivered to states this week, Psaki announced at her daily briefing. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Senior Trump And Biden Officials Knew For Months About Problems At Vaccine Plant

Senior officials in the Trump and Biden administrations knew of oversight and quality assurance problems at Emergent BioSolutions' Baltimore plant months before the company accidentally contaminated 15 million doses of Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine, according to two people with direct knowledge of the matter and an internal report. Officials with the Trump administration's vaccine program, Operation Warp Speed, and the Department of Health and Human Services were sent a report in June 2020 on Emergent's inner workings. Written by a government official, the document concluded that the company's plan for manufacturing urgently needed Covid-19 vaccines was inadequate. Emergent's problems hiring and retaining skilled workers meant that it could not guarantee success in producing the shots, said the two people, who read the report and described it to POLITICO. To read the full story, click [here](#).

COVID Vaccine Passports: The New Trend In California?

On Friday afternoon, as they have done for generations every spring, baseball fans will head to San Francisco for the Giants home opener. But to enter the ballpark this year, they will need to bring something in addition to their ticket: proof they have been vaccinated or the results of a negative COVID-19 test taken within the past 72 hours. That requirement — imposed by San Francisco public health officials — has Bay Area residents asking: Is this a new trend or an outlier as California continues to reopen? To read the full story, click [here](#).

More Contagious Virus Variant Is Now Dominant In U.S., C.D.C. Chief Says

A highly infectious variant of the coronavirus that was first identified in Britain has become the most common source of new infections in the United States, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Wednesday. The worrisome development comes as officials and scientists warn of a possible fourth surge of infections. ... Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the C.D.C. director, who warned last week that she felt a recurring sense of "impending doom," said on Wednesday that 52 of the agency's 64 jurisdictions — which include states, some major cities and territories — are now reporting cases of these so-called "variants of concern," including B.1.1.7. The number of deaths, however, continue to decline — potentially a sign that mass vaccinations are beginning to protect older Americans and other highly vulnerable populations. To read the full story, click [here](#).

U.S. Jobless Claims Up To 744K As Virus Still Forces Layoffs

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits rose last week to 744,000, signaling that many employers are still cutting jobs even as more people are vaccinated against COVID-19, consumers gain confidence and the government distributes aid throughout the economy. The Labor Department said Thursday that applications increased by 16,000 from 728,000 a week earlier. Jobless claims have declined sharply since the virus slammed into the economy in March of last year. But they remain stubbornly high by historical standards: Before the pandemic erupted, weekly applications typically remained below 220,000 a week.

To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Unemployment Claims Rocket Higher

Unemployment claims in California last week rocketed to their highest level in three months, the government reported Thursday, marking a grim setback for the battered job market statewide. California workers filed 145,400 initial claims for unemployment during the week that ended April 3, an increase of 39,000 from the prior week, the U.S. Labor Department said. Nationwide, jobless claims totaled 744,000 last week, up 16,000 from the week before, according to the Labor Department report. California now accounts for about one of every five of the jobless claims filed nationwide, this news organization's analysis of the Labor Department report shows. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Advances Bill Aimed At Massive Unemployment Fraud

California lawmakers on Thursday advanced what they called commonsense legislation requiring two state agencies to share information aimed at helping stop billions of dollars in pandemic-related unemployment fraud. The measure that cleared its first committee would require the beleaguered Employment Development Department to crosscheck unemployment applications with inmate records to identify fraudulent claims. State officials approved at least \$810 million in the names of roughly 45,000 inmates, some of them on death row, according to a state audit in January that put the toll at more than double the amount previously reported by the state. Investigators say overall fraud losses will top at least \$11 billion. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Kaiser Workers Protest, Demanding Support During Pandemic

Kaiser Permanente workers held a protest Thursday at Los Angeles Medical Center, alleging the healthcare giant has slashed performance-sharing bonuses and provided scant support to overworked employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kaiser workers also held a protest Thursday at the company's San Leandro Medical Center. The employees are represented by SEIU-United Healthcare Workers West., which includes 58,000 Kaiser employees. Those were the first of 11 gatherings scheduled at Kaiser facilities throughout California. Additional protests will be held later this month in

Panorama City, Vacaville, Redwood City, Santa Rosa, San Francisco, Manteca, San Rafael, San Jose and Richmond. To read the full story, click [here](#).

No Region In The World Spared As Virus Cases, Deaths Surge

Hospitals in Turkey and Poland are filling up fast. Pakistan is restricting domestic travel to bring a surge in coronavirus infections under control. Even Thailand, which has weathered the coronavirus pandemic far better than many nations, is now struggling to contain a new COVID-19 surge. Even countries where vaccine rollouts are finally getting some momentum, infections, hospitalizations and deaths are surging. And that leaves even bleaker prospects for much of the world, where largescale vaccination programs remain a more distant prospect. The World Health Organization said Friday that it's very concerned as infection rates are rising in all of the world's regions, driven by new virus variants and too many nations and people coming out of lockdown too soon. To read the full story, click [here](#).

North Carolina Sites Halt J&J Shots After Adverse Reactions

North Carolina health officials said on Thursday that they stopped administering Johnson & Johnson doses at a mass vaccination site in Raleigh and at clinics in Hillsborough and Chapel Hill after at least 26 people experienced adverse reactions, including fainting. Four people were taken to hospitals for further examination, and state and federal health officials are reviewing the matter. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Insurer Says Vegas Casino Wants To Compel 'Phantom' Docs

Treasure Island L.L.C. is attempting to force production of "phantom" documents in its coverage suit for pandemic-related losses, Affiliated FM Insurance Co. told a Nevada federal court on Monday, saying the Las Vegas casino and resort was trying to divert attention from the likelihood that its case won't survive an upcoming ruling. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Study Bolsters The Case That Antibody Drugs Can Protect Against Covid-19

A monoclonal antibody cocktail developed by the drug maker Regeneron offered strong protection against Covid-19 when given to people living with someone infected with the coronavirus, according to clinical trial results announced on Monday. The drug, if authorized, could offer another line of defense against the disease for people who are not protected by vaccination. The findings are the latest evidence that such lab-made drugs not only prevent the worst outcomes of the disease when given early enough, but also help prevent people from getting sick in the first place. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Community College Enrollment Plummets Amid Pandemic, Putting Some Campuses At Risk

Systemwide, more than 260,000 fewer students enrolled in fall 2020 compared with fall 2019, a 16.8% drop. Enrollment in California's community college system, the largest in the nation with about 2 million full- and part-time students, has largely been flat for the past decade. Colleges that experienced significant drops could be at risk if they "don't stabilize or build back enrollment" over the next several years, said Paul Feist, a spokesman for the California Community Colleges chancellor's office, reiterating a warning that was delivered in a memo to the systemwide Board of Governors last month. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Recent Rise in U.S. Covid-19 Cases Driven by Younger People

Five states—Michigan, New York, Florida, Pennsylvania and New Jersey—account for some 42% of newly reported cases. In Michigan, adults aged 20 to 39 have the highest daily case rates, new data show. Case rates for children aged 19 and under are at a record, more than quadruple from a month ago. There were 301 reported school outbreaks as of early last week, up from 248 the week prior, according to state data. Epidemiologists and public-health authorities have pointed to school sports as a major source of Covid-19 transmission. Since January, K-12 sports transmission in Michigan has been highest in basketball, with 376 cases and 100 clusters; in hockey, with 256 cases and 52 clusters; and in wrestling, with 190 cases and 55 clusters. Overall, cases and clusters have occurred in over 15 sport settings, data from the state shows. To read the full story, click [here](#).

California Consumer Confidence Back To Pre-Pandemic Levels

California shoppers are feeling the best they have since the coronavirus slammed the economy, two surveys show. The Chapman University-C Claremont McKenna College California Consumer Sentiment Index jumped a record 37% in the first quarter from the end of recession-scarred 2021. The Conference Board's California Consumer Confidence Index hit 110.8 for March — up from a revised 96.1 a month earlier and up from 107.5 a year ago. That's a 15%, one-month gain (fourth increase in a row) and a 3% gain over 12 months. The last time optimism was higher was in February 2020, just before the pandemic throttled the economy. To read the full story, click [here](#).

Generous Federal Recovery Subsidies Prompt Special Enrollment Push At Covered California

Set to run through 2022, the funding increase impacts about 1.4 million Californians already covered by health plans from Covered California, the state's health insurance exchange. It also increases subsidies, or offers them for the first time, for about 1 million Californians who qualify for coverage but are not yet enrolled or have plans outside the

exchange. Peter Lee, executive director of Covered California, said that premium savings, which will average \$180 per month per household, require no paperwork for those already signed up. To read the full story, click [here](#).

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Note: While E.K.A. monitors governmental announcements, guidelines and recommendations, our updates are prepared for informational purposes and are compiled from publicly available sources. Our updates should not be considered health, medical, legal, or tax advice. Always consult a qualified professional regarding any specific questions you may have. All hyperlinks are live and will bring you to the information mentioned. If you are not interested in receiving future emails from us, then please reply with a “Remove” in the subject line and note the email addresses to be removed.

Previous Updates

Our previous COVID-19 updates can be found [here](#). Feel free to share our updates with friends and colleagues. We hope you find the information in the EKA updates and the questions they raise to be informative. If you have any COVID-19 government or communications questions, please reach out to any EKA. team members.