The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is launching a new public campaign encouraging North Carolinians to "Vax Up or Mask Up” to support the new guidance that lifts many of the state’s COVID-19 restrictions.

Vaccines have proven to protect people from COVID-19. To date, nearly half of the state has been fully vaccinated and everyone age 12 and up can get the vaccine (YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov). But for those who are not yet fully vaccinated against COVID-19, wearing a mask is essential to protect themselves and the people they love. The CDC recommends that anyone who is not vaccinated continue to wear a mask in public indoor settings and outdoors when they cannot maintain social distance. "For the past year, we have all been diligent about practicing the 3 Ws," said Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. "These preventative measures helped us get to where we are today. We’re incredibly grateful to the community organizations and businesses who helped share the 3 Ws and made them their own. As we transition to this new phase of the pandemic and this new campaign, we must continue to protect one another as everyone makes the choice to 'Vax Up or Mask Up.'"

NCDHHS recommends businesses and community organizations post signage reminding employees and visitors to wear a face covering if they are not fully vaccinated. Because it can be hard to know who is vaccinated and who is not, employers may decide to post signage asking all employees and visitors to wear a face covering until more people in North Carolina are vaccinated. The campaign provides downloadable flyers and social media graphics in both English and Spanish to help transition from the 3 Ws messaging to the new "Vax Up or Mask Up" campaign. Materials are available for download at covid19.ncdhhs.gov/communications-toolkit.

Under Executive Order 215, masks are still required in certain settings, such as child care centers, schools, hospitals, doctor’s offices and other high risk settings like correctional facilities and homeless shelters.

People who are fully vaccinated can do many of the things that they did before the pandemic. With the exception of the settings included in Executive Order 215, people who are fully vaccinated do not need to wear a mask or practice social distancing, although they may choose to do so. They also do not have to quarantine or get tested if they are exposed to COVID-19 unless they have symptoms.

Unvaccinated people will still need to do these things. Masks are strongly recommended for everyone — regardless of vaccination status — at large crowded indoor events like sporting

events and live performances. Read NCDHHS Recommendations for Protecting Each Other from COVID-19.