



To the community,

The following describes our actions and plans regarding COVID and its impact on the Blue Ridge Pride Festival and Welcoming WNC Procession, schedule for September 25. We also invite community input with a special [COVID Survey](#).

Close Watch on COVID

A few weeks ago, at a local COVID update, Buncombe County Health Director Stacie Saunders said predictive models suggest that COVID cases will rise through August and peak in September. We are paying close attention to updates to see if this shift occurs and how pronounced it will be. Clearly, if the current trend continues, the festival is at risk. We are hoping for a break before the festival.

We are also watching other trends: vaccinations, hospitalizations, and mortality rates. On the bright side, we are greatly encouraged by the uptick in vaccinations. Please, get vaccinated if you aren't already. They are free and readily available. Visit buncombeready.org for information and locations. Vaccines are the most important thing you can do to protect the safety of our community and yourself.

Finally, we are monitoring other events, crowd behaviors, and outcomes. We will be watching the upcoming LEAF and Goombay festivals particularly closely.

Protecting Our Community – Actions Taken

Our number one priority is the health of our community.

- We have reduced the number of booths to create more space.
- Local partners will offer rapid testing and vaccinations at the festival.
- We have stocked up on face coverings, gloves, and sanitizer.
- We have purchased additional card readers in order to reduce handling of cash.
- Our current plan is to request that people who attend wear masks.
- We have cancelled several indoor events and may cancel or postpone others.

We haven't cancelled yet because, as we have seen, a lot can change in four weeks. We don't want to rush to judgment unless it serves a purpose. This is where you come in. **We ask you to share your perspective in our special [Community COVID Survey](#)**. When do you want a decision? What are you most concerned about? What are your plans?

Our hope is that everyone can continue to plan for the festival without worrying too much. We don't want anyone to feel pressure to participate. If you have questions, contact us through your representative or at COVID@blueridgepride.org.

What You Can Do (Links)

- [Get vaccinated](#).
- [Fill out our Community COVID Survey](#).

- [Sign up as a volunteer.](#)
- [Register to walk in our procession.](#)

If we do not see a break in the trend, there is a good chance that we will have to cancel. Whatever happens, we want to work together as a community and to emerge stronger.

Wishing y'all health and good choices.

Your All-Volunteer Team at Blue Ridge Pride



Links Used:

- [Get vaccinated](https://www.buncombecounty.org/covid-19/default.aspx): <https://www.buncombecounty.org/covid-19/default.aspx>
- [Sign up as a volunteer](https://blueridgepride.org/join-us/festival-volunteer-opportunities/): <https://blueridgepride.org/join-us/festival-volunteer-opportunities/>
- [Register to walk in our procession](https://blueridgepride.org/gravity/procession-applicants/procession-application/): <https://blueridgepride.org/gravity/procession-applicants/procession-application/>
- [Fill out our COVID survey](https://blueridgepride.org/gravity/festival-covid-survey/): <https://blueridgepride.org/gravity/festival-covid-survey/>