

# News and Observer

Chapel Hill: Opinion

July 7, 2015

## **What's so important about the early years?**

By Ennis Baker and Linda Foxworth- Guest column

Our future as a community is inextricably linked to how we, as adult citizens, work to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. In our jobs, we have the privilege each and every day to meet Orange County's future in our offices, classrooms and neighborhoods across the county. Regardless of their age, when we see these children play, learn, and grow, we see the future prosperity of our community. The good news is – we know exactly what we need to do in order for all children to thrive.

A child's brain is built from before birth. By the time a child is three, about 85 percent of their brain is developed. By age 5 that number is 99 percent. New insights from research over the past four decades have shown that children's early experiences literally shape the way the brain is built.

We think of the development of a child's brain like the construction of a house. We know if we expect a house to stand the test of time, it needs a strong foundation to support the walls and roof. The same goes for the foundation of a child's developing brain – they need positive early experiences to build a strong brain foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.

Early experiences need to include positive, stable relationships with adults, a safe and nurturing environment, good nutrition and healthcare, and quality early learning experiences. When Orange County fully addresses each of these areas for children, we can expect to see our children grow up to be responsible citizens and productive workers. This means that what we invest in children almost always comes back to us many times over. It also means that earlier investments help get brain architecture right the first time, which is easier and less expensive than trying to fix issues later.

We have many opportunities in Orange County to make sure that every child has the environment, relationships, and experiences that are critical for healthy development. The first step has already been taken. A group of organizations in Orange County have come together to start the conversation. Over the next few weeks, you'll see perspectives from diverse people and organizations in Orange County in the newspaper, on social media, and in your communities. We hope these perspectives will increase our community's understanding of the importance of the earliest years for the lives of Orange County children, their families, and our entire county.

We also hope you'll join in the conversation in at least one of the many ways we're providing! You can take part in the conversation on social media by following us on Facebook through the Orange County Health Department and on Twitter @OrangehealthNC. There will be lots of information there, as well as fun opportunities to show your support for our community's youngest children. If you have a business,

organization, or group that you would like to have learn more about the importance of early childhood – let us know by e-mailing [mstewart@orangecountync.gov](mailto:mstewart@orangecountync.gov)!

Ennis Baker, MSW, LCSW, is the early childhood manager/mental health specialist at Orange County Head Start/Early Head Start. Linda Foxworth is the director of KidSCOPE.

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/community/chapel-hill-news/chn-opinion/article26615356.html#storylink=cpy>

## In Orange County and Across the Nation, Heroin Use is on the Rise

By [Elizabeth Friend](#)

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*Posted July 10, 2015 at 12:58 pm*



Photo by Mels Evans/AP

A [new report from the Centers for Disease Control](#) shows heroin use is on the rise across the nation. That's true in Orange County too.

A recent [undercover drug operation](#) by the Orange County Sheriff's Office netted nearly 700 doses of heroin. Narcotics Investigator Brandon Wilkerson says he wasn't surprised.

"It's really not new; it's becoming an epidemic along with the abuse of prescription medications," says Wilkerson.

A study released Tuesday by the CDC shows heroin use increased 63 percent from 2002 through 2013. At the same time, the rate of heroin-related overdose deaths has quadrupled.

Researchers say the increase in usage affects men and women across a wide range of ages and income levels.

According to the report, heroin is cheaper, stronger and more readily available than in decades past, but what's driving the demand is the popularity of prescription opiates.

CDC officials say states can address the problem by reducing the availability of opiate pain relievers and increasing access to medical insurance that covers treatment options.

States can also authorize law enforcement and medical personnel to carry naloxone, a drug that temporarily reverses opiate overdose.

Orange County was the first in North Carolina to issue naloxone kits to emergency responders following the passage of the state's Good Samaritan law in 2013. The drug has already been used to [save lives in Carrboro](#).

Wilkerson says Orange County deputies are training to use the kits as well.

"Starting in February this year, we actually have 15 deputies that have gone through the training," says Wilkerson. "We're still working on the naloxone kits and policies to implement that to be able to go out there and use it. We're looking to get the whole department trained before the end of the year."

In addition, the Orange County Health Department offers naloxone kits to friends and family members of those at risk of opiate overdose.



# tarheel

## County seeks feedback on community health

[Elizabeth Harvell](#) | Published 8 hours ago

The Orange County Health Department wants to know the health priorities of its county residents.

Stacy Shelp, spokeswoman for the health department, said a community health assessment survey is currently being conducted to learn about the health and quality of life in the Orange County community.

“We will use this survey to set priorities for the next four years of services across the county,” Shelp said.

Shelp explained the survey will cover several topics related to health and quality of life.

Questions will range from issues across Orange County to personal health issues. It only takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete, is confidential and has no right or wrong answers, Shelp said.

The survey first opened in early June and will close late July, she said.

Shelp said the results of the survey will be analyzed and used in a public report. The report will be available to agencies across the county to develop programs and identify gaps in service.

Some examples of questions on the survey include asking about where residents get health-related information, what the most urgent health issues for teens in Orange County are and what cancer screenings residents have undergone.

The survey also asks questions related to participants’ mental health, exercise habits and nutrition.

“The report will also be used at the annual Healthy Carolinians of Orange County meeting in September,” Shelp said.

Some UNC students have mixed reviews of the survey.

Garrett Powell, a junior biology major, said he is less than optimistic about the number of residents who will actually complete the survey.

“I think the survey is a great idea,” Powell said. “But I don’t think that many people will fill it out since it’s voluntary.”

Maggie Brownrigg, a junior chemistry major, said she thinks the survey would be more effective with a different title.

“The implications of the assessment go further than the name of the survey implies” she said. “It’s an awesome idea — as long as people will do it.”

The survey asks about issues that are more indirectly related to health, such as poverty.

For example, one question asks the participant if there was a time in the last month where they had to skip meals because of a lack of money for food.

Even though over 1,700 Orange County residents have already completed the survey, Shelp said she urges residents who have not completed the survey to do so.

The survey can be found at [surveymonkey.com/r/OCCHA2015](https://surveymonkey.com/r/OCCHA2015).

Shelp said there will also be a door-to-door collection of the survey Friday, Saturday and Sunday for those who do not use the online assessment.

# Live Wire: Sanitation ratings for Fayetteville restaurants available online

Posted: Thursday, July 16, 2015 5:55 pm

## Live Wire: Sanitation ratings for Fayetteville restaurants available online

Q: How can you find a list of all the restaurant sanitation ratings? - M.B., Fayetteville

A: M.B., you can find information about restaurant sanitation ratings from the health department's Division of Environmental Health on the county's website at [co.cumberland.nc.us/health/environmental/sanitation\\_ratings.aspx](http://co.cumberland.nc.us/health/environmental/sanitation_ratings.aspx). The site provides a link to a database of inspections of food and lodging businesses.

Soon, however, finding this information will be much easier. The county's restaurant ratings and inspections will be integrated into Yelp, a website that provides information and user reviews of restaurants and other businesses.

"It's still in progress, and it should be within two weeks," said Daniel Ortiz, the environmental health director for the Cumberland County Department of Public Health.

Yelp entries accessed with a computer browser will show violations for given inspections and number ratings in addition to letter grades, he said.

Orange County has already made that move, and the health score of restaurants show up alongside their operating hours, price range and menu details. Ortiz said the Yelp mobile app will give the letter grade for a given establishment but they're still working "to get out the kinks" to show the full data on the mobile app.

- Paige Rentz

Live Wire seeks to answer questions of general interest and consumer topics within two weeks. Initials are used to identify questioners when names are given. Contact Live Wire at [facebook.com/foLiveWire](https://facebook.com/foLiveWire), at [livewire@fayobserver.com](mailto:livewire@fayobserver.com) or at 486-3516.

# The Herald-Sun

## Health officials to walk ‘Appalachian Trail’

Jul. 25, 2015 @ 04:40 PM

[Keith Upchurch](#)

DURHAM —

Orange County Health Department officials have thrown down the gauntlet to their counterparts in Durham, challenging them to walk the Appalachian Trail.

The 2,168-mile walk won't really be on the trail, but will be measured by Fitbits and other devices that count every step a staff member takes.

The first team to collectively log the equivalent mileage of the length of the trail wins bragging rights and a trophy. The challenge begins Aug. 3.

It's the second challenge this year for the Orange County staff, who collectively walked 2,505 miles in March and April, reaching their goal ahead of the eight weeks they expected it to take.

This time, their competitive spirit is turned outward.

As of Friday, 35 people at the Orange County Health Department had signed up, compared to 50 in Durham's department, which has a larger staff.

"We hope to continue to motivate people to walk and practice healthy behaviors," Stacy Shelp, communications manager at the Orange County Health Department, said. "I think the extra challenge of competing against Durham has really inspired more people to get involved."

The real goal, she said, is to get the public to follow step.

"Walking is such a great form of physical activity," Shelp said. "Walking during the day helps keep you energized and your brain engaged. It improves your physical and mental health."

Shelp said last spring's challenge produced the added benefit of bringing staff members closer together.

"We've seen an increase in morale and staff cohesion," she said.

Research shows daytime walking boosts a person's mental capacity and stimulation in the afternoon, she said.

"A cup of coffee can wake you up but give you the jitters," Shelp said. "I have yet to see a walk give someone the jitters."

Shelp expects the challenge to last seven or eight weeks. It will culminate in a joint celebration at Little River Regional Park, a park shared by Durham and Orange counties.

## OC Health Officials Challenge Durham Officials to Walk-Off

By [Jess Clark](#)

**SHARE THIS:**

*Posted July 27, 2015 at 4:52 pm*



The Fitbit is a popular device for keeping track of steps. Photo Credit:

Wikimedia Commons.

If you're wearing a fancy pedometer like a Fitbit or a Jawbone, you may be swept up in a little competition for steps with your friends and co-workers. Last week, the Orange County Health Department took step competitions to a whole new level.

"We have challenged our brothers and sisters at the Durham County Health Department to a walking challenge," Orange County Health Department Director Colleen Bridger said.

The two departments will compete to walk the equivalent of the Appalachian Trail starting August 3. The first team to complete the trail's 2,168 miles will win. And it's not just bragging rights on the line.

"The health director and I have a friendly wager," Bridger said. "So whichever health department wins, the other health department will owe a basket of that county's themed items for a value of about \$50."

This is the Orange County Health Department's second walking competition. The department held an internal competition among its staff this spring to walk to Orange County, California. Bridger says these competitions are meant show that exercising doesn't have to be a chore.

“It’s really important to have people understand that moving can be fun—should be fun,” Bridger said. “And any time that we get the opportunity as public health professionals to kind of walk that walk—complete pun intended—then we are really excited about it.”

Bridger says she hopes the competition will also raise awareness about the benefits of walking, which she says, are many.

“It’s good for your weight, it’s good for your blood pressure, it’s good for your muscles and balance,” Bridger explained. “But there have also been a lot of studies that show that walking is extremely good for your mental health. And the way that we’re doing it facilitates the fact that it’s a really good way to build camaraderie with people, which is also good for your mental health.”

The departments expect the challenge to last 6 to 8 weeks. We’ll have to wait until the fall to find out which county will come out on top.

# The Herald-Sun

## ON THE MOVE: FSA hits ground running, preps kindergartners

Jul. 29, 2015 @ 05:38 PM

[Katie Jansen](#)



Sue Anne Decker reads during a Family Success Alliance summer program at New Hope Elementary School on Tuesday, July 28, 2015. The Herald-Sun | John Joyner



Luis Rios, right, works with Gisel Nunez on an English exercise during a Family Success Alliance summer program at New Hope Elementary School on Tuesday, July 28, 2015. The Herald-Sun | John Joyner

CHAPEL HILL —

A handful of small children sat in a classroom at New Hope Elementary Tuesday, playing with blocks and answering questions about the blocks' colors and shapes.

They had been in school for a week and a day as part of a new four-week kindergarten readiness program launched by the Family Success Alliance.

The program provides extra academic and social support for students about to enter kindergarten and helps bridge the gap between staying at home and sitting in a classroom fulltime.

The kindergarten readiness program is one of two programs recently launched by the Family Success Alliance, a new initiative launched in two pilot zones in Orange County geared toward providing support for underserved children and families.

The Family Success Alliance used \$90,000 from the county's social justice fund to roll out kindergarten readiness in three schools: New Hope Elementary in Zone 4 (Hillsborough east of Interstate 40) and Carrboro Elementary and Frank Porter Graham Elementary in Zone 6 (Chapel Hill and Carrboro).

About 70 students are being served through the first rollout of the program, said Stacy Shelp, communications manager for the Orange County Health Department and the Family Success Alliance.

Although kindergarten readiness is where the organization is starting, the Family Success Alliance plans to focus on many different areas that affect children's success, such as transportation and literacy.

Every school has had the freedom to develop its kindergarten readiness program to meet the needs of its students, Shelp said.

Ambra Wilson, New Hope's assistant principal, said this freedom has been helpful because it will be easier to measure students' growth and success throughout the year.

At New Hope Elementary's kindergarten readiness program, the vast majority of the students speak Spanish. This is representative of the school's greater population — nearly half of New Hope's students are Latino.

At least one bilingual teacher is on hand at all times, giving instruction in both Spanish and English to help students build their academic vocabulary. Dawn Bagwell, ESL differentiation coach for Orange County Schools, also completed initial assessments so that ESL support would be in place for students from the first day of the school year.

Shelby Nelson, a kindergarten teacher at New Hope that is also helping with the kindergarten readiness program, said that she saw tremendous growth in the students just within the first week.

The students were getting used to a structured day and were also learning a new number each day, she said.

"These kids will really be able to serve as role models once they get to school," Nelson said. "It also helps them socially."

In addition to the kindergarten readiness program, part of the Family Success Alliance's funding went toward hiring three zone navigators who will help guide families through the network of services offered in their communities.

Angela Clapp and Ali Rojas will serve as the zone navigators for Zone 4. Beatrice Parker will work in Zone 6, and the Family Success Alliance is in the process of hiring another navigator for Zone 6.

Rojas is currently out of the country, but both Clapp and Parker have already started their work as zone navigators. For both women, the work isn't much different from what they were already doing within their communities.

Both Parker and Clapp are active within their children's respective schools. Both heard about the Family Success Alliance and the zone navigator position through their schools' social workers.

Parker said she sees the zone navigator position as peer guidance. She hopes to be a resource for parents who are overworked and don't have time or energy to seek out resources on their own.

“Those simple acts can sometimes lead to lifetime changes,” Parker said.

Wilson agreed, saying that the kindergarten readiness program is in place to “really set (students) up to love learning.”

“That’s ultimately our goal,” she said. “To just develop lifelong learners who feel successful and can be successful.”

# The News of Orange County

## Durham health departments duel in walk off

### The Benefits of Walking

- 1 Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease
- 2 Improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- 3 Improve blood lipid profile
- 4 Maintain body weight and lower the risk of obesity
- 5 Enhance mental well being
- 6 Reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- 7 Reduce the risk of breast and colon cancer
- 8 Reduce the risk of non-insulin dependent—type 2—diabetes

*Source: American Heart Association*

Posted: Friday, August 7, 2015 5:00 am

By Amanda VanDerBroek, News of Orange staff writer, [a.vanderbroek@newsfororange.com](mailto:a.vanderbroek@newsfororange.com)

Local health departments are not only talking the talk but walking the walk.

On Monday, Aug. 3, employees from the Orange County Health Department and the Durham County Department of Public Health strapped up their shoes to compete against each other in a walking challenge.

The competition tasks those participating to collectively walk 2,168.1 miles—the distance of the Appalachian Trail.

Stacy Shelp, public information officer with the Orange County Health Department, said the idea came from Health Director Colleen Bridger, who wanted to get her staff more active to promote both physical and mental health.

Shelp said it wasn't until Bridger challenged her staff this past spring to walk the distance collectively between Orange County, N.C., and Orange County, Calif., that employees took note.

"We had tremendous results," Shelp said. "The staff was excited and competitive."

Coming off the success of the California challenge, the health department decided to up the ante by extending an invite to Durham. And Durham County Department of Public Health was willing to take their counterparts head on.

"We're going to give them a run for their money," Eric Nickens Jr., Durham County Department of Public Health communications and public relations manager, said.

Over the next six weeks, the two departments will track their steps in order to meet the more than 2,000-mile goal. Shelp said the steps are logged using technology like Fitbits and pedometers, making it easy for staff to keep up on the activity they do.

Orange County has 44 percent of the employees participating, while Durham has about 28 percent of staff lacing up their shoes for the challenge.

In addition to amping up the competitive spirit in the workplaces, Shelp and Nickens said the walk off will help employees keep physically and mentally fit.

Shelp said the challenge shows residents that those in public health care are invested in their own health.

“We need to practice what we preach,” she said. “We need to be doing it, too.”

Nickens agreed, saying the walk off not only raises employee moral but also promotes health as a whole.

“Not only does it rally our employees in a team fashion, but it also looks after the overall person,” he said.

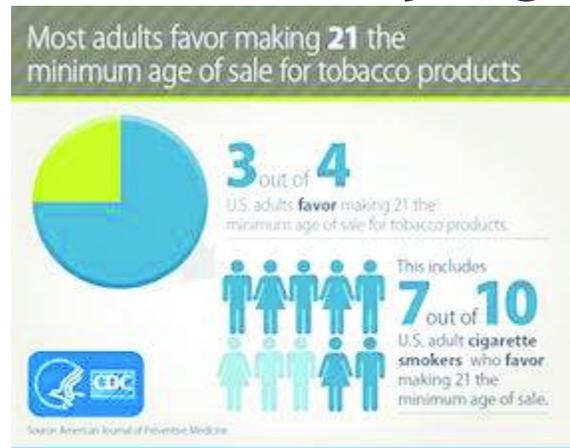
Nickens said encouraging daily activity is already part of the culture in Durham County. Employees are allowed 30 minutes each work day for exercise, and Nickens said staff is keen on meeting the goal.

Shelp said at the end of the challenge, the departments will get together for a celebration.

The winner of the challenge not only gets bragging rights, but there is also a trophy and a friendly wager between the health directors of a gift basket of local goodies.

# News of Orange

## Local teens seek change in tobacco buying age



Infographic courtesy of the CDC

### Smoking age

According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 73 percent of American adults support making the legal smoking age 21 years old, including 70 percent of cigarette smokers. Orange High students conducted a similar survey.

Posted: Monday, July 27, 2015 7:30 am

### From staff reports

On July 7, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a press release stating that 75 percent of American adults, including 70 percent of cigarette smokers, favor making 21 the minimum age of sale for tobacco products. The research was published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

The same press release also stated that “Age-of-sale restrictions have been shown to contribute to reductions in tobacco use and dependency among youth. In March, 2015, an Institute of Medicine (IOM) report found that increasing the legal age of sale for tobacco will likely delay tobacco use initiation by adolescents and young adults. The IOM found that if all states were to raise the minimum age of sale for all tobacco products to 21, there would be a 12 percent decrease in cigarette smoking over the next generation. This would translate into nearly 250,000 fewer premature deaths from cigarette smoking among people born between 2000 and 2019.”

In January 2015, local high school students who are members of the Tobacco Reality Unfiltered clubs at Orange and Carrboro High School petitioned peers and educators at their schools. They collected 318 signatures in support of increasing the minimum legal sale age to 21. Of the

signatures on the petition, 290 were high school students—44 of whom are 18 years or older—and 28 adults.

“Many teens can easily access tobacco through people who are 18 or 19,” Shanaera Davis, an Orange High School TRU Club member, said. “Because of this, we feel that tobacco shouldn’t be sold to people younger than 21. We have collected over 300 signatures from people, mostly high school students, who agree with this. Tobacco use is steadily increasing, and people should take that into consideration and help stop it.”

According to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, more than 68 cities and counties in eight states have done the same. Hawaii became the first state to raise the tobacco sale age to 21. In North Carolina, state law preempts local governments from regulating the sale, distribution, display or promotion of tobacco products—including e-cigarettes—which prevents counties and towns from increasing the minimum legal sale age. Local control and ability to pass such a policy would be restored if the General Assembly rescinded preemption, or a law to increase the sale age could to be adopted at the state level. Recently the Orange County Board of Health and county commissioners expressed support for raising the legal sale age to 21.

# FSA makes movement in the county

Posted on Aug 13, 2015

by [Amanda VanDerBroek](#)

After just a year in existence, the Family Success Alliance is putting down roots in Orange County.

Last August, FSA started to link existing resources together to combat poverty and create a pipeline of success for children and families.

“We’ve done a lot,” Meredith Stewart, program manager, said. “We started a year ago in August with forming our advisory council, which is made up of a number of nonprofits, local government officials, we’ve now included parent representatives as of this coming month.”

In December 2014, two zones in the county were selected to pilot FSA—Zone 4, an area located between Interstates 40 and 85 in central Orange County that includes A.L. Stanback Middle School and New Hope Elementary, and Zone 6, a densely populated area that encompasses downtown Chapel Hill and Carrboro southwest of N.C. 54.

“We based that look of what it should be on national models like the Harlem Children’s Zone and the other Promise neighborhoods around the country,” Stewart said. “That led to some community priorities around children being ready for kindergarten, around affordable, accessible childcare, around transportation, housing.

“And so from that we did two things with some funding we had available from the Social Justice fund at the end of the year. The first was to hire our zone navigators from each zone so we have two part-time navigators in each zone, and the other was to pilot a kindergarten readiness program in three schools—two schools in Zone 6 and one school in Zone 4.”

Beginning in July and August, kindergarten readiness works to help 70 children—including some at New Hope Elementary—to prepare for the big leap into school. Stewart said the program helps the kids academically and socially.

“The kindergarten readiness program is aimed both at kind of the academic side that we think about—like at New Hope—learning numbers, learning letters and colors, those kind of things but also at the transition and the routine that happens from going to a home that you’ve been used to to a kindergarten setting where you’re meeting new children, you’re learning new routines, you’re going to lunch—all of those

things that might be new to you,” Stewart said. “It includes academic curriculum that you would expect to learn from school, and it’s also about learning about new routines and how kindergarten is going to work.”

In a two-fold approach, FSA has also implemented a literacy program for parents, as well.

“Supporting parent literacy program works directly with the parents of children in the program, helping them with being able to navigate the school system,” Stacy Shelp, public information officer with the Orange County Health Department and FSA, said. “So it’s very practical information that we’re giving them. So it’s really a multi-generational approach.”

Two zone navigators help connect families to the resources they need. For years, Angela Clapp, Zone 4 navigator, had mentored children and adults at Gateway Village Apartments, a low-income, public housing complex. Through her group Breaking the Cycle, Clapp hosted community events and took children on trips outside of the neighborhood. It was a staff member at A.L. Stanback Middle School that cued her in on what FSA was trying to do in Orange County.

“She sent me the information, and I read through it, and I thought, ‘This is pretty much what I do at Gateway anyway,’ ” she said.

Clapp came on board happy to help link the community to FSA. Shelp said the navigators are key to FSA’s success in the zones.

“The nice thing about the navigators is they were basically identified by the communities as people who are already kind of doing this work within the communities,” Shelp said. “They come with the community knowing them and them knowing the community, so they become a real bridge and liaison for the work and a great source of knowledge and information with that.”

Clapp is currently working with the kindergarten readiness program at New Hope, helping teachers and staff as well as getting input from the parents of students.

“It varies from day to day, but it’s basically helping to get the kids ready for kindergarten,” she said. “After that program is over, I’ll be touching base with the families, the children, connecting them to resources, connecting them to other outreach programs.”

With the navigators in place and two programs up and running, Stewart and Shelp said FSA is in the community for the long haul. Stewart said the next step is looking at what other areas they need to cover, including after school programs, child literacy, nutrition and child care.

“We’re in a period of where we’ve heard from the community, we’ve worked on this kindergarten readiness and literacy programming and are going into a period where we want to look at the long-term sequence of what’s going to happen and when,” she said. “That is going to include a wide variety of items.”



## Durham physician explains vaccination requirements for back to school



A loca  
Embed



By [Caitlin Knute](#)

Thursday, August 13, 2015 05:16PM  
DURHAM (WTVD) --

With a new school year about to start, health officials are reminding you to make sure your children are up-to-date on their vaccinations.

"For Pre-K and kindergartners, we want to definitely make sure they're up to date on their MMR (measles mumps rubella) and the vaccine for chicken pox (varicella,)" explains Nicole Swiner, MD, with Durham Family Physicians.

In addition to those vaccinations, 4 to 6 year olds need to have their DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis) for whooping cough and tetanus, along with IPV, for polio.

[For more on requirements for 4-6 year olds, click here.](#)

Students entering 7th grade, or who are about to turn 12, must now have a Tdap booster for tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough. They are also required to have the meningococcal conjugate vaccine, which is a protection against meningitis.

These requirements are new this year, giving students 30 days from the start of the school year to comply before being suspended.

[For more on requirements for 7th grade, click here.](#)

"I think they're really important, not only for the protection of that particular patient, but also for what's called herd immunity," Swiner said. "You're protecting the people around you."

She also cautions that cases of whooping cough are emerging in some areas in central North Carolina.

"We got a report from the Orange County Health Department, and I think we had a number of cases in Durham, but it's definitely spreading," she shares.

As for the safety of vaccines, Swiner stands by the medical community at large in supporting them. She encourages patients to do their research and separate fact from fiction.

"There's a lot of information out there on the internet and the media that is not correct, like with the MMR vaccine. It was actually proven that the reports were falsified that it was a dangerous vaccine."

Swiner has advice for parents that are still skeptical.

"Be honest about it, bring it up to your doctor. If you have stories or articles that people have shared with you, bring it to the doctor's visit so you can talk about it," she says.

[For more common questions about vaccines including their safety, click here.](#)

North Carolina only allows exemptions for medical and religious reasons.