

COVID

- COVID CDC community levels remain low
- Cases seem to be decreasing
- Under 3% of hospital beds are COVID patients
- Current rate of COVID admissions is 6 per 100,000
- 80% of the strain typing is XBB.1.5
- Wastewater data is stable
- Vaccination rate continues to plateau at about 34%
- Deaths remain in the 6-8 per week range
 - Many with COVID as a contributing factor

Influenza

- Flu cases are as low as they can get
- Vaccines and treatment are showing to be very effective
- Question remains on if we will see an influenza B outbreak

DAIL (Department of Aging and Independent Living)

- Has signed a contract with a vendor, who are specialists with working with Vermonters with severe mental care needs and justice involvement
 - Hopefully will help patients with complex care needs to free up hospital beds

Substance Use Disorder

- Legislatively, there is a focus on cannabis concentrates and lifting the potency caps (currently at 60%, most states that have been having a regulated market, don't have a potency cap)
 - Health Department stands in alliance in VMS in protecting kids' brains and not lifting the potency cap
 - Unclear how things will go
 - Committee is meeting on Mar 2, 2023, but not hearing testimony
 - Health Department has put out new informational pages on their website
- Buprenorphine has been decriminalized
 - Most people aren't aware that it has been decriminalized
 - May lead to more advocates for decriminalizing of all illicit drugs, but doesn't believe it to be in any legislation currently
- Opioid settlement Advisory Committee is going to announce their recommendations
 - Recommendations will probably include transportation, test strips, Narcan with multiple ways to saturate the community, outreach workers, more opioid medication units

Legislative

- Dental bill that increases commercial insurance for Medicaid from 50% to 75% will most likely go through
- Testified for Senator Lyons to remove menthol from everything and there was a lot of testimony
- Desire to treat co-occurring substance use disorders and mental health needs continues and we will see where the legislature goes with those budgetary requests, including DULCE to be spread statewide

- EMS Workforce – some bills in responses to the plight to support them better
- H.230 Suicide Prevention Bill – firearms is the most successful way to commit suicide
 - 2 strategies for the safety of firearm possession in relation to suicide include a waiting period strategy to decrease impulsiveness (72 hours to potentially go by before you get the firearm you want to purchase) and safe storage of firearms, which should be included with purchase of a firearm at the time of sale

Questions and Answers

Any comments on masking mandates related to the anticipated end of the PHE in May in the healthcare setting?

ML: CDC continues with the same recommendation.

Any comment on RSV Vaccines for older adults?

ML: None of this is ready for prime time, but things are going in the right direction.

Our next call will be April 6th

Zoom Information

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86726253105?pwd=VkVuNTJlZFQ2R3diSVdqdlJlZG4yQT09>

Meeting ID: 867 2625 3105 / Passcode: 540684

One tap mobile

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Information will be posted here: <https://vtmd.org/thursday-public-health-updates>