

Gov Scott Intro Comments

- Condemning shooting in Buffalo
- Recognizing historic legislative investments in infrastructure, broadband, wastewater, economic development, climate change (EV, weatherization), housing

Dr. Mark Levine, Commissioner of Health

- Recognizing the 1,000,000 deaths due to COVID-19 reached last week
- Paxlovid
 - o On Friday released a HAN to health care system
 - o Want to reduce any barriers to availability and prescribing
 - o Encouraged prescribing even if symptoms are mild
 - o Suggested a triage system for offices to make sure patients can get as soon as possible
 - o Patients should not just assume symptoms will be mild, don't think you are saving for someone who is more needy – we currently have plentiful supply - reach out to your health care provider
 - o Just received 4,000 more doses this week
- VDH released new surveillance report last week
 - o Case trends
 - o Outbreaks
 - o Vaccination rates
 - o Wastewater monitoring
 - o Statewide risk level
 - o Don't base your decisions on daily fluctuations in case numbers – statewide risk level is the most important way to decide what steps you should be taking
 - o Case dashboard will no longer be updated after tomorrow
 - o Will also begin to sunset other weekly reports as they are contained in new weekly report: LTC report, weekly self-test reports, pediatric test report, weekly data summaries
 - o Thank you to Vermonters for following the data and knows this will take some adjustment
- Testing
 - o We continue to evaluate how efforts to protect efforts are sustainable and shared across existing systems of care
 - o Next step will be transition for testing infrastructure from state run to health care system and pharmacies
 - o Testing efforts in VT have been incredible from the beginning
 - o Seeing demand for PCR testing is slowing as at-home tests increase and people want faster results, pharmacies have various testing options
 - o Remember only those with symptoms and close contacts who are not up to date have to test
 - o 3 options: at home, pharmacy, and health care provider
 - o Will continue to meet all of our needs
 - o Testing sites will phase through May & June

- Committed to home testing continues to be as available and free since this is the best options; can order a 3rd round from the federal government, make appt to pick up from State sites through the end of June
- Infant Formula
 - FDA and USDA working to make more available
 - Abbott Laboratories will reopen plant
 - We know that will take weeks to months to ramp up
 - Health Department and WIC and local health offices are working to support families by making appropriate substitutes and recommendations available
 - Small stores and some pharmacies may have available supplies
 - Critical to families: do not substitute goat, cow, or plant-based milk; do not water down formula; don't make homemade formula; make sure online distributors are legitimate
 - If you have questions about formulas, contact your pediatrician office

Questions

Questions for Governor about seeking reelection, number of legislators/committee chairs not seeking reelection

Are you aware of families who have exhausted their options for finding baby formula and are there plans to have a state supply?

ML: not aware of this in the State, he is aware nationally of some desperation, it does depend where you are and your specific availability in your community; we don't believe there is anyone in Vermont at the point of no supply; Scott: for anyone who needs help they can call his office: 828-3333 – there are certain places it is available and they are looking to help/locate, create a list with VDH

Gave warnings to families not to use milk substitutes or water down – have you seen this happen in VT?

ML: this is more cautionary, sure families are contacting their pediatrician's offices; we do realize there is plenty we can tell families what not to do but are trying to be helpful and direct them where to go

Does he recommend kids get booster – heard it just got approved by FDA?

ML: expects we will hear by the end of the week about the recommendations of the CDC's Advisory Committee. Have to congratulate how Vermont is doing with 5-11 year olds, at 56%, about double the rest of the country – most concerned with getting the remaining 44% - but will also weigh the data about boosters and offer a recommendation after that

About 2 months since DOE shifted guidelines and getting back to more normal operations – is there more data on academic gaps, how schools are doing?

Dan French: It has been a hard year, so good to have this good weather to end the year. We are putting out more information soon about recovery and plans as we move to next school year, make transition to leverage federal dollars to have an impact at the local level

Questions about this new testing strategy. What about people looking to do international travel and need PCR testing? Dr. offices not doing this or scheduling far out.

ML: the pharmacy setting is the best option, PCR tests are widely available there.

What about people needing to test multiple times in a row and the cost of affording these tests?

ML: people with commercial insurance and Medicaid can get 8 free tests a month. If you have trouble affording testing, you can go to FQHCs, free clinics, VDH local health offices. All of this will continue.

Note that some people are going a bit overboard and testing repeatedly once they know they are positive – there is no need to test each day if you are feeling better and have no symptoms; no need to test after 5 days if you have no symptoms

Just heard that Rutland has reopened a COVID unit. Any response to that and different approach to winding down testing or data reports?

ML: we are watching hospitalization very closely, have not spoken to Rutland recently but have been watching overall hospital capacity; most issues have been due to staff capacity/absenteeism due to COVID; 7 day average of people in the hospital for COVID reasons is 5%, which is a very low number