

### Gov Scott

- Just got off White House call:
  - Watching Omicron closely, recommendations remain the same: get vaccinated and boosted, wear a mask indoors
  - White House plan released last week looks a lot like what we are already doing in VT: Test to Stay at schools, making testing widely available
- VT is 12% higher than the next highest state in terms of how much we are doing COVID testing; there is a huge variety in testing between states right now
- VT continues to lead many other states in terms of metrics, including those other states where there are mask mandates
- Get boosted now – if you do, you will have full protection before the new year
- Working to obtain 1000s of rapid, at-home tests, working to secure a steady supply and have available at no charge to Vermonters – more info in coming days
- Biden working to reimburse for at-home tests; DFR is already working in this at the state level – will launch in next few weeks – DFR releasing emergency rule today; hope not just to covered commercially-insured but others
- Use at-home tests before and after holiday gatherings
- Secretary Smith retiring as AHS Secretary at the end of the year – thanking for service

### Mike Pieciak, DFR

- Modeling Report: [https://dfr.vermont.gov/sites/finreg/files/doc\\_library/dfr-covid19-modeling-120721.pdf](https://dfr.vermont.gov/sites/finreg/files/doc_library/dfr-covid19-modeling-120721.pdf)
- Those at home tests you have purchased since Dec 1 will be reimbursable
- Please have some patience as this is fully implemented and on supply chain for access
- Should impact 140,000 Vermonters
- Vermont's cases have increased since Thanksgiving – up 54% over last 7 days, 31% over 14 days
- Also an increase in testing this week so positivity rate up 1% over last 7 days but down from height over Thanksgiving
- Does look like a surge after Thanksgiving – led by those not vaccinated – 5x greater case rate in not fully vaccinated
- Cases lead in Bennington and Rutland but elevated across the state at this point
- Good news in older age groups is that cases are lower there, but still getting slightly elevated over past weeks, which increases chance of hospitalization
- 74% of those hospitalized are those not fully vaccinated, increase of 18% in rate of hospitalization over 7 days
- 24% increase in ICU usage over 7 days; 81% of those in ICU not fully vaccinated
- 9% increase in availability of ICU beds over 7 days – reflecting decrease in use for non-COVID reasons
- Active outbreaks in LTC down dramatically over past week
- Forecast: cases expected to remain elevated over next 4 weeks – maybe down a bit at end of 4 weeks as more people get boosted and kids get fully vaccinated – everyone can play a part in this in getting vaccinated and boosted
- 38 fatalities in Nov – number has crept down slowly over past few months

- 47% 5-11 started vaccination; 10% fully vaccinated; rate continues to be strong – 14% started last week

#### **Sec French, Education**

- Elevated case counts since Thanksgiving continue to pose challenges to schools, especially at elementary school level
- Demands unsustainable on school nurses
- Contact tracing and testing falling on schools
- Vaccination of those 5-11 will have an impact on school operations after mid-Jan; but more work to do especially in those schools with lower vaccination rates – will work on targeted outreach
- Test to stay is challenging to implement especially in times of high cases but schools are building momentum to implement – approximately 11,000 tests have been done meaning 11,000 school days preserved
- Increasingly confident in supply chain for test to stay so can work to implement in pre-k
- Staffing task force starting to meet – acknowledge no easy answer but looking at short and long-term strategies – working on some immediate feedback for schools

#### **Sec Smith, AHS**

- 42% of 18+ has now received a booster – leading the nation – remember everyone now 18+ eligible
- Over 21,000 5-11 (47%) have now received a 1<sup>st</sup> dose
- Opened 80 sub-acute beds over October, now 39 more beds getting opened up
- ICU beds – 1 more available at SVMC, 1 more in operation soon; UVMC and Northwestern adding 5 more beds each; working with CVMC to bring 2 or 3 more beds online
- Adding FEMA paramedic and EMT capacity at 3 hospitals – UVM, RPMC, SVMC – not certain they will receive since other states seeing much more severe strain on hospitals but working on the request
- Testing capacity: feds putting new capacity on rapid tests; VT working to move to rapid testing options – rapid results, take-home testing options will continue and ultimately be VT's main strategy
- Self-tests will mean working with Vermonters to know how to respond to a positive test result: isolate, report to Dept of Health, contact your health care provider, reach out to close contacts – info on VDH website

#### **Mark Levine, VDH**

- Why are cases so much higher now after Thanksgiving? Each positive with Delta is infecting 3-5 people and we started with higher numbers of cases
- We all need to do what we can – stay home when sick, get tested, wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status, keep gatherings small, get boosted/vaccinated
- Gatherings: know the vaccination status of everyone, keep numbers of people/households small, have a testing strategy
- If you are eligible for a booster and you have not gotten a booster you are NOT fully protected. Period.

- Omicron – all of these layers of protection are especially important as we monitor for the new variant. Not in VT yet but in NY and MA. We will report any detection when we find it. We lead the nation in the number of samples for sequencing.
- Interesting info coming out of Africa about how it is spreading and may share characteristics with older cold coronaviruses but too early for any conclusions
- Message for those who are not vaccinated from front line staff: people are showing up when they are very ill & need hospitalization, even after they have been ill for some time – if you are unvaccinated at a minimum get tested as soon as you have symptoms, you might be able to get treatments that prevent hospitalization and death