

### White House Call

- Rapid tests - White House indicated putting millions in to purchasing - hope to quadruple supply by January
- Merck and Pfizer antivirals – could be approved by FDA in next couple of weeks
- Signed S.1 this morning – a compromise between “extreme differences of opinion” – thinks mask mandates are just divisive;
- Still have lowest hospitalization and highest vaccination rate in the country
- S.1 will leave the choice to the municipalities
- State will still be encouraging voluntary wearing of masks
- Senate also passed Resolution asking for “all measures” to be taken to control the spread – that would include things like preventing gatherings, closing schools, he is not willing to send us backwards and it undermines how effective the vaccine is and takes hope away
- Take reasonable precautions over the holidays
- In last week, completed 69,000 tests – 10% of population
- Wants to be honest – in next week after Thanksgiving we probably will see an increase in cases

### Commissioner Pieciak, DFR, Modeling update

- [https://dfr.vermont.gov/sites/finreg/files/doc\\_library/dfr-covid19-modeling-112321.pdf](https://dfr.vermont.gov/sites/finreg/files/doc_library/dfr-covid19-modeling-112321.pdf)
- COVID 19 cases are on the rise in the country (15%) and the region (27%)
- In VT, cases have remained steady over past week – only 4% up – though it is at an elevated level
- Testing is up 16% so the positivity rate is actually decreasing – that is a good indication we don’t see positivity rate going up as testing rate
- Continue to have wide difference in rate of cases between fully vaccinated (declined 1%) and unvaccinated (increased 11.3%)
- Really critical to get 5-11 year olds vaccinated - still highest case rate in this age
- VT today – number 1 in country in terms of vaccination rate of 5-11 - 30% has had one
- Highest cases in Essex, Rutland and Bennington Counties
- Cases are not expected to decrease over next 4 weeks, Thanksgiving brings uncertainty
- Hospitalizations are up 17% - 69% were unvaccinated
- ICU beds – 78% unvaccinated – rate remains fairly stable – 12% increase – fluctuates day to day
- Fatalities – 11 more this week, up to 30 deaths in November

### Mike Smith, AHS

- 40% of 5-11 year olds (approx. 17,000) either have had first dose or have one scheduled
- Contact local pharmacy, doctor’s office, call center to get scheduled
- Vt leads the nation in % of population with booster doses – 61% of those 65+; 33% of those 18+
- 80 additional subacute beds brought on-line to help relieve stress on hospital capacity
- Still a need for more subacute beds – working to bring 47 more beds online in next 2 weeks
- Meeting with VA to discuss extending agreement to serve civilians – 10 mental health beds have been available as capacity allows
- Working with hospitals to open 10 additional ICU beds – providing finances to CVMC, NW, SVMC to staff

- VT tests more than any other state on per capita basis, daily average over 9,000 tests with 32 locations
- Continue to review needs for more testing capacity
- Not too late to get tested in time for Thanksgiving – if you test on Wed, goal is to get results by Thursday
- Holidays have given us an opportunity to try more testing platforms – e.g. some locations on Wed trying LAMP tests – quicker turnaround; some trying self-service tests
- Also encourage Vermonters to try rapid tests at home

#### Mark Levine, VDH

- Highlighting importance of boosters, especially as we are gathering over the holidays
- Please get your children 5-11 vaccinated – more safe gathering with family members, improves safety of schools
- Visit AAPVT.org to learn more from your local pediatrician
- Do what you can to keep Thanksgiving/holidays safer
- We are now starting to see some cases of flu in VT - not much but it is here
- We are behind where we were last year on flu vaccine uptake – especially ages 18-64 seeing a gap from last year
- It looks like we will indeed have a flu season
- Please get vaccinated to avoid a surge of flu on top of COVID

#### Questions

- Given what we are seeing in VT, how many people are yet to be infected or vaccinated and how many are left – will they all need to get it?
  - Scott – he was wondering the same thing and asked the same question: 100,000 still unvaccinated and some of those have not been infected yet – so we are not there yet; ML about 40-50,000 only in VT have gotten COVID through the pandemic – very low % of the state; 50,000 unvaccinated and many kids yet to be vaccinated – plenty of “fresh, uninfected people” who can still be infected
- What are LAMP tests? What is their accuracy?
  - ML: NAAT test – nucleic acid amplification tests – PCR tests are the main type, but other technologies are also NAAT tests so share same sensitivity and accuracy and can be a substitute for PCR tests – LAMP tests are an example and can get results in the same day – same nasal swab, nothing different in how you get the sample; not widely available yet – if supply chain was different we could try to convert to these but can't at this point in time
- Are people avoiding boosters because of concerns of side effects over the holidays?
  - ML: not seeing huge side effects from 3<sup>rd</sup> dose, they only last 24-48 hours – get it as soon as you can
- Testing capacity over the holiday?
  - Testing Wednesday and Friday – only closed Thursday
- Do you think legislature will consider more mitigation measures when they come back in January?

- Scott: does not think legislature has same experts advising them that he does, he thinks we are doing what is best for VT; though understands they are hearing from a very vocal number of constituents but he does think mandates are counterproductive; even white house is not recommending further lock downs or economic restrictions; he is confident in his experts; what else did Senate mean by “all other measure” except lock downs, limits on gatherings, closing of businesses
- Does he support Welch for US Senate seat?
  - They have a good relationship, have served in VT Senate together, but there may be a lot of candidates to consider – premature for him to endorse a candidate
- Are at home tests a good option?
  - Scott: yes, they are part of the future but the issue now is supply, especially in the Northeast; ML – to discuss how to do them properly – they come in a 2-pack and it increases the sensitivity if you use 2 – test today, test again in a few days
- Does it matter if VLCT didn’t do a full survey of members to see if they wanted the local mask mandates?
  - Scott: surprised that a number of towns were pushing back and saying they didn’t want this; but VLCT as an organization said they did
- Antigen tests are \$25 at pharmacy –will state/feds be helping to pay for this as part of testing strategy?
  - Scott: Gov’s association is looking into this, talking to white house about it – not clear what final strategy will be
- Are the take home tests antigen tests?
  - Mike Smith – there are many different types of tests, the “take home” from the testing sites are PCR tests that people self-swab and send in for analysis
- What do we know about outbreaks in correctional facilities? Should we be changing any policies? Or is this due to low vaccination?
  - Mike Smith: it reflects that these come into the facilities in areas with high transmission; we do see vaccines working – we see pockets of cases but not the huge outbreaks; we will be doing boosters as soon as inmates are eligible
- We are seeing quick drop off in registration of 5-11 year olds, most of registrations were in first week or two – are you worried we will not get to high vaccination?
  - Scott: we knew this would be a difficult age category, pediatricians are doing great counseling, some parents just taking some time to decide; ML – he gets it, parents want to get the right information, make careful decision, but he also sees 20% of daily cases in this age group with lots of disruption – hopes parents don’t wait too long – you can watch a video of any of the AAP forums
- Does it concern state that we have less info about outbreaks, demographics because we are no longer doing as much contact tracing?
  - Noticed less in data summary document from VDH. ML: it is correct we cannot add to all of the data because of less data collection from contact tracing. But most of the data will still be there.
- Is vaccination rate lower of staff at correctional facilities with outbreaks?
  - Mike Smith will get data to reporter. country, plenty of RSV