

VMS Notes on Governor Scott Press Conference from Tuesday 4.27.21

DFR Commissioner Pieciak –

- Cases in a steady retreat – Vermont fewest cases and deaths in the country
- Met our vax goal under VT Forward plan
- Our 7-day avg dropped 37% - reported under 100 cases in nearly 9 days.
- Dramatic drop in cases – was only matched when it fell last April – unlike last April when we were closed – now we are using a life-saving vaccine
- 10-17 yr old cases down
- Covid cases down on colleges and down in K-12 schools
- Cases improved across the state – including a 42% drop
- Certainly encouraging that cases are dropping across the State – including NEK – but our neighboring counties in NH and ME not seeing the same trends.
- People living in the NEK should be extra protective because it could impact and please get vaccinated.
- Looking at demographics of hospitalization – over 70 making up fewer and fewer cases
- Fewer vulnerable VTers getting vaccinated means less deaths
- 14 died this month, but that number is trending down
- VT Forward plan – take a step back to April 9th – case rates went down in the 14 days – have met our May 1st goal. Looking generally at vax progress VT is a leader 2nd in administration of first doses, 4th in second doses, older 96% of older Vermonters vaxxed.
- Nationally, the vax rates have decreased a bit.
- J&J just put back online and now the availability is there.
- The region case rates and hospitalizations has been down all through the region.

VT Dept. of Labor Commissioner Harrington –

Work search requirement reinstated for UI

Additionally, the VT Labor Dept. will be holding a media event – tomorrow afternoon.

Fraud – organized crime has forced us to have increased security crosschecks – please report on the VDL fraud webpage

Independent sole contractors do not need to show a work search if under a PUA – the federal govt may require them to be engaged in business recruitment. If people are concerned about COVID and are COVID qualifying they do not need to complete the work search requirements.

Jenny Samuelson, Deputy Commissioner of AHS

- The CDC and the FDA has lifted the pause of the J&J – and use should continue – this vaccine known's benefit outweigh the risks – people should review fact sheets
- We are excited to announce the J&J clinics which will resume today – highlighting a clinic in Barton today – drive-up for 100 VTers. Can sign up online or call
- If you haven't scheduled an appt then extra appointments have been added for all 3 vaccine types. 52% of VTers btw 16-17 have been vaccinated or registered
- BIPOC VTers – making great progress – 54% vaxed or registered
- Vermont has a lot to be proud of – 2nd and 1st in 65 and older – pandemic has taken a toll on all of us. Moving in the right direction – please get your vaccine.

VDH Commissioner Levine

- VT is doing the right things now – but does not mean our work is done here knowing the variants are all around us – 60% of Vters 1st dose – 40% have completed both doses.
- Only 3% of Vters have not completed their full vaccine. Pleased to offer J&J vaccine – manage and recognize these events – 15 cases
- All in women – what this means is that instances of TTS are very rare – we know one dose vaccine is very helpful.
- I do encourage people who have questions to contact your health care provider – but the most important thing is to get vaccinated.
- Our VT Forward plan means we need you to get vaccinated
- Guidance might be coming from the CDC on not wearing masks in the outdoors – our State team is continuing to review data
- We now have releases summer and overnight camp guidance – includes testing and masking for kids to have a fun and more normal camp experience.

Gov. Scott –

- Just got off the Whitehouse call – reinforced confidence in the J&J and saying reactions is extremely rare. Said that there would be new guidance for people fully vaccinated. Pfizer and Moderna supply will remain steady – the pharmacies will see a slight uptick. J&J small distribution next week – 1,800 more doses this week and next week. And then over the next few weeks J&J will start to increase.
- 90% of over age 65. 2nd in the nation for vaccine administration. CT is first but followed our age-banding method.
- Vaccines are working – puts us in a strong position to move to step 2 in the VT forward plan – which we will outline on Friday. Everyday closer and closer to being able to travel. Appointments available all over the state – please sign up – do your part. A lot to be proud of and let's make sure that continues.
- Published summer camps – found on VT forward plan – opportunities for kids to reconnect this summer. I'm confident our kids will have an enjoyable summer
- State collected over 7,000 lbs of expired prescription drugs

Questions:

Vax rates decrease 3% - what sort of barriers are you seeing?

M.L. – not sure we will see it increase. I think you will see more opportunities for walk-in and bringing the vaccine to them. We will be specifically looking at demographics and how to make it easy for them as well. We are hoping that the 12-15 group will receive the EUA and working with our colleagues in pediatrics to make it easy and answer concerns regarding the vaccine

Gov. Right time – we are taking a major step on Saturday and then another in June and feel it's the right time.

The work search being put back in place – do you see this as helping our hospitality sector?

Gov. I don't see this as a silver bullet. Still a lot of issues of going back to work and one is childcare. A lot of opportunities. Recognize that we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country pre-pandemic.

All about supply and demand – wages will increase naturally – we need more people and wages will come up as a result.

Restauranter said workforce is catastrophic – is there a concern people wont go back to the workforce?
Gov. because of our demographics we naturally have a work shortage as older people are not working. We need to adopt policies to bring people to Vermont and make it more affordable.

What do you think of 20k jump in people in census?

Gov. we have had strategies to bring people to Vermont. With the pandemic we have seen an increase in real estate sales. Being the safest healthiest state in the nation has its attributes. But, again, not enough - we are still lagging behind the rest of the question.

Gov. Canada border did not come up in the call with the Whitehouse – we have to wait and see what they decide.

Did the population increase surprise you? Has this been a hidden increase?

Gov. It did surprise me – happily. Only a 2.7% increase which isn't enough for our workforce challenges and growing our economy.

Is there data collection on people's vaccine – if they lose their card – is there a record?

M.L. – there is an immunization registry – sometimes there is a lag period for pharmacies to get the info. Wouldn't want to promise as a quick go to place to check if people have been vaccinated. The vax passport discussion is only at the debate stage. Hold on to you immunization card.

Franklin cty – businesses saying if they cant fill job openings then they may leave the State – is that why the work search requirement has been reinstated?

Gov. No – we need to work on a myriad of policies to increase workforce.

Gag order on teens and adolescents in driving accidents – a 16-yr old killed her classmate in a drunk and driving incident. Does the Administration feel the public needs to have the truth and are we going to have transparency in VT?

Gov. we need a change in the statute – which means not giving out this information. But this means a law change and not sure if the legislature is going to move forward or not. May be better to ask them.

CDC has revised guidance on lifting mask order outside?

Gov. we will reflect on that before determining Vermont's guidance. Levine – CDC is trying to practice what is pragmatic – begun to recognize that in an outdoor setting it is safe to not wear a mask and not spread the virus. A lot of literature to support. 3 things you need to consider – is the person indoors or outdoors? Is there a way to distance people? And what will a mask do in those settings? 2 out of 3 need to be in support of not spreading the virus in order to not wear a mask. We have kind of been saying this from the beginning. Times outdoors where you are not near anyone when you don't need a mask.

NYT – some that are immunocompromised may not be as protected by the vaccine?

Levine – very important questions and considerations. You never know how much immunity that group of people will have – everyone should get vaccinated. The vaccinated person must be careful about who you are surrounded by – the reality is there is still plenty of virus around. If that person has immune issues we should wear masks.

Told 2nd gentleman that VT needs more vaccine – is there concern that we are dealing with a too little too late here?

Gov. – we have to do our part and get our supply in and thus far we have been successful. Working with pharmacies to get more pop-up clinics. We have seen other states around the country who have turned down their supply. We have one grp to go – the college students who are not staying in the State and the second homeowners. Part of our strategy and path back to normal.