

VMS Notes on Governor Scott Press Conference from Tuesday 5.18.21

Mike Smith –

- Update on vaccination – anyone can get vaccinated in VT, not just Vermonters
- 9,000 + 12-15 registered to vaccinate
- Doses available for walk-ins – 12-17 only allowed to walk-in with parent or consent form at schools
- Pop-up vaccination clinics in Windham Cty, North Beach Burlington no appt necessary, Church St in Burl.,
- EMS Week – annual recognition to thank the 2,000 Vters that are first responders and the response during the pandemic has been remarkable – opening doors to the public to get people vaccinated in a festive environment – thank them and get vaccinated
- 31 EMS clinics all walk-in only
- School-based clinics started yesterday – parents and families can go to any site across the state – get vaccinated right along with your child
- First wave for restaurant hospitality and other worksites – we will be hosting other worker clinics including State parks.
- We are also transitioning to smaller settings – urge VTERS to take advantage of these opportunities – closing in on 393K Vermonters have been vaccinated against COVID
- Eligible Vters 12-17 – 73.8%
- 18+ 78.1%
- All Vermonters with at least one dose 65.1%

Pieciak – Vermont's high vaccination rate continues to lead to good trends, cases down, hospitalization and deaths down

- Communities are getting safer by the day
- Case demographic – each age band decrease
- Case rates in 18-29 age group remains higher because the vax rate is lower
- Step up and get vaccinated
- Hospitalization rate the lowest over the last 6 months
- VT lowest hospitalization per capita in the country
- May lowest deaths in the last 6 months
- VT leads in total doses administered, those with first dose, those 65 and older vaccinated
- Highest rate in the country
- Regionally the Northeast is leading the nation in the uptake of the vaccine – cases will fall in the next 6 weeks since the pandemic started

Levine – case rates 20s-60s and 30s yesterday under 10 hospitalizations with 9 – 2 additional deaths

- Vaccination rate impacts all of the others right now – doing so well on other metrics
- The dashboard has an issue cant update it accurately
- The work is not over but we need to celebrate how far we have come
- We at the Health Dept work to support the EMS and I want to offer a profound thanks
- Get more info on VDH website
- Even if you are not concerned about vaccinating yourself it can protect other people, especially children
- Our high rates create a wall of immunity

- Vaccination equals protection – vaccinated people are unlikely to spread the virus
- VT forward plan is no possible because of it
- Many are comfortable with the new mask guidance – but some are not
- And some businesses will have people wear a mask until everyone is vaccinated
- Keep a mask with you at all times
- And please don't judge – patience and understanding during this time
- And it is also important for fully vaccinated people to be respectful of others
- You can have confidence in the vaccination
- We know Vermonters will make the right choices and step up and take care of each other

Questions:

Ems has a hard time finding volunteers for their clinics and for recruitment?

Levine: EMS is going to have a lot of people to talk to – in general volunteerism is suffering, so step up if you want to very gratifying.

Of those who have passed away, what is the age range?

Levine: still 65 and older – spans the older Vter generation.

For Commissioner Harrington – fraud situation under control?

Harrington: in general, the fraud situation is controlled, but continues around the country. The question about putting it back online is about the volume.

How many vaccine doses VT is requesting this week and comparisons to other weeks?

Smith – it all depends on our allocation this week, but we are requesting extra from the pool – 2,340 Pfizer and 1,000 of J&J from the pool. Last week we couldn't order J&J – we ordered 4,000 of Pfizer last week from the pool. We will start to reduce Moderna – but it doesn't have the range of people we can use it on because we can't use it on 12-17 yr olds. We think bringing J&J to people is better – we will start to reduce Moderna and will ask for more Pfizer and J&J. 9,000 out of 27,000 12-15 yr olds have registered.

Governor Scott – confidence in vaccines which is why fully vaccinated people can participate more fully in activities. Highly protective and not spreaders.

No J&J next week – we will continue to request 1,000 doses from the pool. Join all VTers in thanking EMS for all of their contributions – thank them and get your vaccine.

Remind everyone – it's okay – its natural that for some that the return to normal wont happen over night. Not only are you at very little risk of getting COVID and of transmitting it to someone else. No state in the country is in a better place to transitioning back to normal. If VT was its own country we would have some of the highest vaccination rates in the world. Tomorrow marks the 14month of our first loss – flags at half mast for 254 Vermonters who have lost their lives.

Update on AstraZeneca trial in VT? Still a cloud over it because it hasn't been approved? What about the Vermonters who took part in this?

Levine: first I want to tell them thank you for volunteering for the trial. They can communicate with those who ran the trial at UVMHC and VDH worked closely and VT wasn't the only site. If they were fully vaccinated with AstraZeneca then no need to get another vaccine dose. The full EUA hasn't been gone thru in the US despite it having full approval in other parts of the world.

Teen drivers protected from identity released in crashes/deaths? S.107 would protect teens up to 20 from the release.

Scott: I have until Thursday to sign it. It appears they are going in this direction – haven't counseled on this in the cabinet. You'll know by Friday. The VPA has requested I veto this bill.

Many businesses that are choosing to keep the mask mandate in effect?

Scott: It is interesting – not surprised that it will take time to get used to this new policy. And remind you that if you aren't vaccinated you need to wear a mask. Businesses can make these decisions. Follow the science from Day 1 – decided to move forward. This is what the CDC determined is the best approach – scientists and experts say it's safe. Most everyone has believed in the science unless it conflicts with their ideology

What about wasted doses?

Smith – haven't heard about much that has been wasted. There is some logic that walk-ins may create more wastage. We need to continue to strive to get as many people vaccinated as possible. Dispel the notion that there is a ton wasted.

Canadian border – will the closure be extended this Friday?

Scott – had a conference with New England leaders and Premiers – Canada is a little behind in their vaccination rate and more difficulty getting the vaccine. The border will probably be closed for at least another month. Still closed between provinces as well. Will note – the premier of Prince Edward Island very low cases and very low deaths – but hesitant to allow tourists back into their province. Won't be a forced opening need to have both the US and Canada agree on when this is – I still believe that by mid-summer it will be opened back up. I believe VT tourism will do well – despite the border.

Pension dollars – grounds for a veto?

Scott – no. We have been working together – not opposed to buying down the pension debt but needs to come with structural changes. I believe there is enough money to go around – if we continue to make progress we may have something I can accept.

Non-Trump Republicans in the press talking about starting a third political party – what do you think of this? Would you be interested in it?

Scott: Much rather see the disenfranchised to continue to advocate and stand up against the downfall of the party. But again we need to see how far this ideology goes. The litmus test of being a supporter of the former President is very disturbing. But I have never been asked about my allegiance to the former president.

Municipalities and mask mandates – should they continue to have this authority beyond the executive order is lifted?

Scott – not sure it is legal beyond the executive order.

Scott – still the 4th of July – can make significant progress in vaccination and to continue to protect each other through the winter when it comes back.

Scott - Still hopeful of a broader plan for the ARPA funding – what I've seen we have made significant strides in that direction and the legislature will put in intent language.

People fully vaccinated, but immunocompromised – should they be tested for antibodies?

Levine: the bottom line is please stay tuned and be patient. We expect that there will be better testing that will be quantitative and better predictors. Don't get tested now because the testing that would be appropriate to the questions they have asked.

UVMMC put out a press statement saying that they had a relatively stable quarter, but it was dependent on federal and state funds.

Smith: We have invested a lot of money into the hospitals but now as we are coming out of the pandemic – we need to continue to watch the hospitals. UVMMC having a good quarter based on state and fed money is not exactly good news. I am concerned that they are fiscally stable as we move forward. You can't continue to have a stabilization fund in the long-term because that is not sustainable either.