

VMS Governor's Press Conference Notes from Tuesday, July 27, 2021

Gov Scott:

- We are not letting up on vaccination just because of what we are seeing across the country with Delta
- It is becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated
- This is bearing out in VT, too, the risk of becoming a case, hospitalizations and deaths is much higher in those who are unvaccinated
- If you want to avoid spreading or getting or spreading COVID, get your vaccine today
- There are still about 90,000 Vermonters who are unvaccinated who are eligible
- 22-29 at 62%
- 18-21 we are at 50%
- 16&17 we are at 71% - lead the country
- 12-15 we are at 63% - also a national leader

Commissioner Pieciak:

- DFR Modeling Report
- <https://dfr.vermont.gov/document/covid-19-modeling-july-27-2021>
- 171 new cases in last week – most among those not fully vaccinated
- This week sharing new statistic on 14-day average cases among those vaccinated vs unvaccinated – for those fully vaccinated as of April 1 2.6 vs 5.3 at end of July - but case rate is actually less as % of Vermonters vaccinated has increased so significantly since April (2.09 vs 1.24)
- We do expect cases to increase over the next number of weeks, especially among the unvaccinated
- We are seeing some good news of increases of vaccination starting in states with lowest vaccination rates

Sec. Mike Smith –

- Might want to consider getting tested if you have traveled to high prevalence area – we have plenty of testing opportunities, moving to COVID service centers

Mark Levine –

- We are at an unfortunate stage in the pandemic with cases going up in many parts of the country
- In Vermont, there is still reason to be hopeful – hospitalizations and deaths remain low
- But means we still have a lot of emerging questions but we do know vaccination is the right thing to do and works
- People not vaccinated are the perfect host to spread and mutate the virus
- We see some breakthrough cases, but not many and we also know people vaccinated are much less likely to get serious illness
- If you travel to high prevalence areas, testing is a good idea – for everyone, whether vaccinated or not

Questions

- What about requiring vaccination for state employees, this is being done in other states? Gov Scott: does not think this is required in VT at our high vaccination rates

- What about masking indoors? CDC may be recommended again. ML: CDC is noticing high incidence, hospitalizations across the country and new data convincing them that transmission rates are so high that returning to mitigation is necessary; he has not seen this data; differentiating between high and low prevalence makes sense; does not think VT will be impacted because we are a low transmission state; but it does make sense to be more careful if you travel somewhere with higher levels of transmission
- Masks indoors at schools? ML: we will probably come out with decision on this at press conference next week
- Will we go back to more restrictions? ML: does not think we will need that – 11 cases yesterday, 5-6 people in the hospital, 1 death in July – not a reason to take an alarmist stance and make any major changes; Gov Scott – think about how different we are this summer vs last summer – we are doing all of this without masks, with parades, fairs, restaurants open, traffic counts close to 2019 levels – we’ve done this without overwhelming our hospitals
- Have we had any fully vaccinated Vermonters die? 5 people hospitalized and 1 death over the course of the pandemic were fully vaccinated – he’s trying to dig into the data more to see if there are any conclusions we can take from this
- Even if there won’t be any other state requirements are there behavioral changes Vermonters should consider? ML: state website has guidance that all Vermonters might want to consider, including for those who are unvaccinated
- NH just enacted a “medical freedom from vaccination” law – do we need one in VT? Scott: we do not need a bill like this for Vermont, we have 84% vaccinated now and it’s still climbing; we’ve already allowed people to make their own decisions and we’re just trying to educate and make it easily available
- Statewide paid family leave campaign is going to relaunch later this week; you have said pandemic has hindered your voluntary program – where does it stand now? Gov Scott: we are getting ready to put RFP out very soon – want to continue to move forward on the voluntary plan
- Last week GF was up by \$33 million – where are we economically right now? Gov Scott – this is good news compared to impact we thought pandemic would have – money from Fed gov has benefited us significantly, created economic activity – year end we were \$200 m surplus – E board meeting on Friday to take a look at where we are at and where we want to go in the future
- We have a higher case count for this past week than we did for the same week in 2020 despite the vaccinations – is this because of people being more back to normal behavior or due to Delta? ML: thinks this is more due to Delta
- What is uptake by PCPs like? The number enrolled is very high and they are deploying vaccine; we are seeing continued increases in vaccine and sure this is part of the progress
- Do you anticipate health insurers charging more of those who are unvaccinated? Pieciak: do not anticipate this in VT
- Are schools being directed to prepare for in person and hybrid learning in the fall? French: schools are being directed to prepare for all in person learning
- Do you support an “equity audit” of state employees and the current diversity training? Gov Scott: he has not heard about issues with the audit, he thinks equity training is important and we will continue to provide this education to our employees