

## VMS Notes on Governor Scott Press Conference from Tuesday 4.16.21

### Governor:

- This Saturday 16-18 yr olds can register on Saturday if in high school
- On Monday – 16+ can register on Monday
- Rank in top 5 in registration
- First state to get to 65 and over
- Opening eligibility to all of this 16 and over – please sign up this is our shot to get back to visiting friends and family and I think it will be a great summer in VT

### Sec. French:

- Weekly surveillance of testing – 1/2 the State was off for vacation- only half of the normal tests
- No positive cases in staff
- Daily case counts in schools is higher than normal – we remain confident that the vaccination rate will make this better
- Contact tracing in schools in partnership with VDH
- Survey on in-person vs remote schools 53% hybrid – in person and remote I missed the percentages – 85% of schools responded
- EBT for kids that register for free and reduced school lunch – benefits to replace school meals
- Families are encouraged to use both resources – 21,800 VT households
- Graduation guidance – districts can use VT forward plan – we are optimistic that many schools can hold these celebrations and we should end the school year on a positive note

### Mike Smith –

- VT is following CDC guidance and pausing J&J administration for another week. Waiting for ACIP to determine risk
- All appts for J&J will be off through next Friday 4.23 – all appts should be able to get an appointment for Moderna and Pfizer
- After 4.23 we will keep 300 appts for J&J that were already scheduled
- Pharmacy appts need to work with the pharmacy on this
- By July 4<sup>th</sup> if J&J shots continue we will move up appointments
- Let's talk about the 16, 17 yr olds – only eligible for Pfizer shots and also want to vaccinate high school graduates who have missed out. Opening up this Saturday at 10am – entire age group of 16+ will be able to register online on Monday April 19 at 6am – can register online on Monday.
- On Monday all VTers will be eligible to register on Monday April 19 –
- If you are 16 or 17 you will need parent to confirm
- 30+ 18k made appointments
- BIPOC – made progress to close the gap btw BIPOC and white, non-hispanic Vermonters. I encourage the BIPOC who are 65 and older as there is still a lag there.
- Overall progress – 279,400 p. 92,900 first dose 186,000 second and last doses. Over half of Vermonters have had at least their first dose
- Today any Vermonter who wants a test can get one – we have gone from no vaccine to vaccinating half of VT
- We must remain vigilant – there is much hope as the light at the end of the long tunnel will be here. Do your part to protect yourself and others. Thank you!

### Mark Levine –

- Overall not seeing a lot of change – 100-200 range
- 7-day range is continuing to trend downwards
- Positivity rate 1.9%
- Hospitalizations remain stable
- Recent deaths bring us to 242
- Majority in April were among hospitalized individuals
- Also share that variants are in 10/14 of vT counties – presume they are making up increasing proportion of the tests
- Surpassed 50% of Vermonters and 1/3 of adults are now fully vaccinated – really encouraging and knowing more VTers are protecting themselves and each other
- Virus is among us and spreading btw young people not vaccinated – for those traveling for spring break go out of your way to follow the guidance
- Follow up on the pause of J&J – the ACIP met Weds. – the Committee decided it needed more time to determine the impact of the side effects. The pandemic has been long and difficult – it is appropriate that the Committee take the time to review the public health implications – this is how we build confidence in vaccines
- Only in J&J with thrombosis – not Pfizer and Moderna – keep your appt. Anyone that has received the J&J the risk of this side effect is very low
- To review the impact
- To educate the public and
- To wait this week to see if anyone else experiences this side effect
- VDH will be posting all of this information
- We hope we can resume using this one-dose shot – but regardless what happens with the J&J vaccine – we will continue to work to get everyone vaccinated. Thank all Vermonters we get closer to the finish line every day.

Questions: How do you reach the 16-18 yr olds? Will they take time out of school? Gov. I don't have all the answers – Sec. French will roll this out. They can be made through our health care providers, the State and some of our pharmacies. Wanted to give them a bit of a head start. 18 yr olds can get Moderna.

What about college students?

Gov. We have been saying Monday for them. Again – these high school students have been impacted and want them to get their graduation.

How many schools will be switching to full in-person after break?

We don't know – schools have plans but will need to adjust with on the ground experience. Half the schools on vacay now and then the other half next week – there are some headwinds in their decision-making.

The recent groups of deaths and hospitalizations – age groups?

Gov. I had questions too that Dr. Levine can answer. Levine- people have to understand not every death happened the day before. The majority have been people in the hospital none in LTCF – some in their home. Age range – goes to mostly 50-90 yr age range. Tend to be more females and males – most were “not fully vaccinated.” None were fully vaccinated. These individuals did represent a subset of sicker Vermonters with comorbidities. They truly died from COVID.

NH gov has let the mask mandate expire?

Gov. every state has taken a different approach. Every governor has to do what they think is best. NH was one of the last States to have a mask mandate and first in New England to lift the mask mandate. VT thinks we are doing the right thing.

Highway signs that say quarantine before coming to the State?

Gov. They will be coming down.

Unemployment data shows fewer people in the workforce now than during the pandemic?

Gov. I have been concerned – which is why we have recovery plans with our ARPA funds. I continue to be concerned that is why we are so focused on bringing people back into the State.

Thinking about those with J&J scheduled – and were disappointed that they were canceled because of a 1 in a million risk of bloodclot?

Gov. we are following the CDC – who have asked us to pause. We believe it will be shortlived. From the very beginning we have listened to the health experts – we can second guess but that has been our approach. Levine – one do no harm – if there is any possible harm you have to pause. The medical community felt we need more time to prevent doing any harm. Keep in mind also these vaccines are still under EUAs which means that they haven't been through the same amount of time of other vaccines. Prudent thing to do with our information.

6,000 J&J doses – will they be destroyed? Do they have a shelflife?

Gov. They do not have a shelflife – any we have is safe and we can use them.

We have heard that the EMTs are getting paid \$40 an hr for testing and vaccine clinics?

Smith – we are using FEMA funds and I don't know the rate.

4 counties are without the variant? Can you tell us which ones?

Levine – you can find it on VDH website – now variant webpage. The variants do not abide by borders and we can imagine that it is probably everywhere.

What is administration doing with the approval of Pfizer vax for 12-16 yr olds?

We are awaiting that approval – just as fast as we can we want to be able to do that. Looking forward to it – no idea when it is going to happen. We believe we are on a path to open up by July 4<sup>th</sup> – but we want to open up the vaccine process for the younger grp just as fast as we can. Levine – all that has happened is Pfzers press release stating that they have had great success in trials. There hasn't been an application yet. We will have some advance notice – may not happen until even June. At that point there should be plenty of vaccine that may outstrip the demand and we may be able to deliver on demand vax for the 12-16 yr olds.

Has J&J manufacturing been halted?

Gov. I cant confirm – but I would speculate that they are continuing to manufacture as they have confidence in the product.

How long will the vaccines work?

Levine – everyone believes the duration of vax immunity is longer than 6 months – but will probably need a booster similar to a flu shot. With regard to the variants what is becoming more obvious – if you can overwhelm the virus with a large amount of antibody you will be successful. It is really the concept

of what a booster does. If there are variants that are not responding to the vaccine. It really is that the vaccine level needs to be high enough.

Why hospitals are not administering the vaccine to their patients?

Levine – I would hate that blanket statement of no vax in hospitals -mostly in emergency rooms. Not encouraging hospitals to be the major component of the vaccination administration.

Vermonters supporting the media – Rep. Welch suggested direct government support of the media? Gov. I'm a capitalist at heart – I don't think the government should run that.

Mask mandate and NH – you've said each state has to do what's best – but how concerned are you that other state's decisions could impact VT?

Gov. that has been my concern from day 1 – but I'm comforted in some respect that we have a high uptake of the vaccine in VT – so that is what will save us. Which is why we need to continue with the guidance and we believe that Vermonters should wear masks.

High schoolers that could receive doses – if they have some of the side effects like soreness and mild side effects. Should they stay home?

Levine – If they have any side effects they owe it to their school community to take time off. Adults are taking an overabundance of time off right now.

Early sign-up of high schoolers – will it allow more in-person learning? What about on campus vaccination clinics at high schools?

Gov. we thought about that but the logistics were too difficult with parents permission, etc. we thought this approach will be better. From our standpoint this will help expand in-person graduation because of the need for two doses.

Is there a public health case for this age group vs 20-29 yr olds?

Gov. it only gives them a 2-day headstart. The public health equity case to be made is that they can only get Pfizer which is specifically age determined.

How the VT forward plan will protect children?

Gov. we will be providing guidance when the emergency order is lifted and probably includes that those not vaxed will need to wear masks.

Border communities?

If you live on the border and they have supply than they should – if they have more supply. But we will see what happens – if we get the J&J then we will open it up to second homeowners and the college students. We are doing the same thing but don't have as many.

Are the pharmacies going to be scheduling appts for 16-18 yr olds?

Yes.

Do you think that there will be a high uptake in the younger age groups?

Smith – we expect a high uptake in all age groups. This is the age groups we are concerned about. I hope they are spreading the info to get vaccinated through their peer grp.