

VMS Notes on Governor Scott Press Conference from Tuesday 5.11.21

Mike Smith - Vaccination

- VT is leading the way nationally in many measures
- 1st for vaccination administered per 100k people
- Still a lot of work to do – look for more access at walk-ins and drive-through events, mobile clinic “barnstorming events” along Rt 100, Windham County coming up
- Starting to see fewer people scheduling appointments further out and more using walk-ins
- Hope to hear from CDC ACIP on Wednesday – tentatively planning to open registration immediately for 12-15 year olds
- May 17th starting school based sites – schedule in works for up to 40 school based sites
- Ordering 4 extra flats of Pfizer (4480 doses total) today – if approved doses will arrive next week

Commissioner Pieciak - weekly modeling report

- https://dfr.vermont.gov/sites/finreg/files/doc_library/dfr-covid19-modeling-051121.pdf
- US is approaching 50% vaccination rate – seeing decreased hospitalizations, deaths, cases
- VT is doing even better – approaching 60% - and seeing corresponding decreases in cases
- VT doing better than national average in vaccination of those 30+; also seeing improvement in under 30 age bracket
- Continue to see 1000s more starting vaccination each day – strong demand continues
- Already meeting June 1 goal of 60% vaccination
- This week 390 new cases – 146 fewer than last week; 7 day average down 20%; down 69% since April 1
- Cases do continue higher in least vaccinated age bands
- Now seeing drop in hospitalization rate as well – lowest rate in the country on per capita basis – 16% decrease in last 7 days
- 2 fatalities in May – forecast lower rate in May – 5 to 15 total forecast
- Cautionary tale – Maine has 50 in the ICU – increase is driving by unvaccinated younger patients down to 20s – we need to continue high vaccination in all age bands

Monica Hutt – Chief Prevention Officer

- Impact of COVID on youth – importance of this summer for youth
- Have asked summer programs to step up to expand offerings, reduce costs
- Parallel testing program for day camps – voluntary, free and with consent of parents – camps can register online for testing by CIC

Mark Levine – Health Update

- Daily cases well below 100
- Positivity rates 1.1%; hospitalizations 14, 3 in ICU; 50 outbreaks – about ½ of a few weeks ago
- State is doing well but still need to get vaccinated to protect loved ones, get back to normal
- FDA approval for 12-15: no cases in vaccinated group, side effects similar to those older; state is ready to start almost immediately
- Continue to watch impact of high vaccination rates in countries like the UK and Israel
- Get the facts on vaccination from people you trust – your health care provider, the VDH website
- Thanks school nurses for School Nurse Appreciation Day

Gov Scott – federal update

- Pfizer & Moderna vaccines will be the same as last week – but NO J&J supply this week – about 1200 dose reduction for this week – but on a good track for supply – should not set us back
- This is first week of new federal pool where states can order more than maximum allocation so we are likely to request more doses
- Optimistic approval for 12-15 year olds coming soon
- Our goal is to make vaccine so accessible so that not getting a vaccine is an active choice – not due to inconvenience/inaccessibility – continue to bring to worksites, events
- Today hit 60% vaccination target for June 1: 2 weeks ahead of schedule
- Considering accelerating our Step 3 or Final Step of Vermont Forward plan – but to do that need more people to get vaccinated – more information on this to come on Friday

Q&A (health related)

- If Pfizer or other vaccines get full approval can school require it? ML: yes, he doesn't see any reason why they couldn't at that point
- Will primary care practices be getting vaccine? ML: yes, starting May 19; still enrolling practices in immunization program; can't do mass vaccination efforts that way but there are a number of adults who want to have that interaction with their own physician and use the office setting where they get their other vaccines so important to start getting vaccine there
- Any advance registration for 12-15 year olds with high risk conditions? ML: yes, we do know how to identify these children; but registration for everyone will happen quickly – about 20,000 in that age band total – will not take long to register them and vaccinate; Gov Scott – there is plenty of Pfizer in the national pool – so can now request more if needed
- Do 12-15 need parents with them? Can they walk in to sites? MS: easiest way is to register online and go through existing clinics – parent checks a box of consent; if you walk in, will need written parental consent; also make sure if you are doing a walk-in that it's a Pfizer clinic not other vaccines
- Can Gov Scott respond to law suit filed about masks and pandemic requirements? GS: this is not a new law suit, was filed a few weeks ago; AG is representing if it proceeds; state feels good about its positions (<https://www.wcax.com/2021/05/10/vermonters-sue-scott-administration-claiming-overreach-during-pandemic/>)
- Will Gov Scott sign bill removing statute of limitations for physical abuse? GS: Yes, he will be signing this
- What is status of vaccine for children under 12? GS: soonest we expect is September; ML: Pfizer is eager to move forward on this, might hear an update in July, doubt it will be available until the fall
- Can under 12 year olds still pass virus to the rest of us? ML: they are not getting the virus as much as others, they are not major vector of the illness, if we look at counties like Israel that are at 60% vaccination they have seen precipitous drop off in cases – and have not vaccinated anyone under 16 yet – will get much progress even before we can get to that group
- Why does modeling report make it look like more Vermonters are hesitant to get vaccinated? MP: keep in mind this is % of unvaccinated Vermonters – so as more and more get vaccinated this is % of those who remain over time
- Are there some testing labs that are not processing COVID tests on the weekend? MS: yes, that is the case – he wants more info on specific testing delays describedp
- Has Gov considered incentives for those who get vaccinated? Cash? Free giveaways? GS: we are fortunate in VT that we have high vaccination rate – we have talked about it but don't think

we need it yet as a state – we've had so many step up for the right reasons – just for the common good – but we do appreciate some business owners doing things like free tickets to the speedway; employers giving incentives to their employees

- Is COVID just becoming endemic? Will we always need masks? ML: becoming endemic does not necessarily mean we will always need mitigation measures – it may effect those who are not vaccinated, be part of winter respiratory illness testing but does not mean we will always need masks, distancing, not being inside, hardship – it may show up in periodic cases but not turn into an outbreak
- Is Governor committed to vetoing the budget if it continues to use ARPA funds as it does – that seems to be what Sec Young's letter is saying? GS: this is money that should be used wisely; don't disagree on much of what is in the budget but which funds are used – we also just got new guidance from the Treasury on using ARPA funds – want to see their entire plan for the \$1B; he doesn't want to wake up a year from now and wonder where all this money went; broadband bill does not go far enough – need to solve the problem
- Can VT swap which doses it is getting, i.e. swap Moderna for Pfizer? We can choose which extra doses we order from pool – will be asking for more Pfizer