VMS Notes on Governor Scott Press Conference from Tuesday 5.25.21

Sec. Mike Smith, AHS
Last week, governor set out challenge – if 80% have one dose of vaccine before July 4 he would lift remaining restrictions
- That would be just under 28,000 people
- CDC reported 78.9% already over the weekend – they were not sure about those numbers – reached out to CDC and that showed some duplicate reporting – have asked CDC to update their numbers
- Current correct % stands at 76.9% of those over age 12, 17,250 people remaining – this still reduces goal from Friday by 10,000 Vermonters
- Still need to reach out to those Vermonters not yet vaccinated
- School-based clinics and other efforts to reach Vermonters where they are have been successful, have events planned at mobile home parks, state parks and Thunder Road – all walk-in
- Other events targeting large employers and then small businesses
- Submit ideas for clinics to: https://accd.vermont.gov/vaccine

Commissioner Sarah Squirrell
- As we see life reopening we also see mental health impacts of the past year, eg children seeking out services in the ED
- VT is well poised to address these needs – school based mental health services, DOE programs, etc
- State committed to meeting youth needs over this summer with extra enrichment, fun, social time
- VT afterschool grant funding for summer programs will be announced over next few days

Commissioner Pieciak
- Vermont modeling shows very good news – best numbers in 6 months
- No deaths in a week – first time in over 28 weeks
- May forecast shows fewest deaths in over 6 months
- Hospital rates continue to decline – 6 month low
- Average age of hospitalization continues to trend down
- 219 cases this week – 138 fewer than last week – 85% decline since April 1
- Cases uniformly decrease across counties and all ages
- No active outbreaks in any LTC facilities, no cases in a resident of LTC in 2 weeks
- Lowest weekly total in K-12 since before Thanksgiving
- College reporting is concluding – had some of the highest testing across the country this year
- Vermont forecast shows cases will continue to fall and reach the single digits
- Results of vaccination: Only 8 cases total last week in those over 65, continue to have high initiation numbers of vaccination

Commissioner Mark Levine
- Colleges – met weekly w. VDH on Tuesdays for over a year – those meetings set important policies, testing, quarantine and vaccination protocols
Cases around 20 per night – last night saw single digit (9), no death since May 16
- 1.2% positivity
- Quickly approaching new 80% benchmark and doing all the things we love
- Moderna now also reporting results in 12-17 year olds; no new news on vaccines for kids under 12
- Thank you to all those who are getting vaccinated; make sure to come back for your second dose
- Being asked about boosters but focus on everyone getting a first dose
- This weekend is Memorial Day – let’s celebrate all we can do if we are fully vaccinated now – get together with friends & family without masks or distance, travel without testing or quarantine

Governor Scott
- Just got off White House call – emphasizing effectiveness of vaccine and declining case counts
- VT will remain steady in Pfizer & Moderna doses, no J&J
- VT can and will meet our goals with these doses; VT can continue to ask more through federal pool – VT is one of only 7 states to ask for more allocation
- Recent cases concentrated in 18-29 year old age band – hopefully that motivates them to get vaccinated
- We won’t be satisfied when we reach 80% - we have the infrastructure to get unvaccinated number as low as possible before fall/winter
- Also noted he signed proclamation to mark today as George Floyd remembrance day

Questions (health care related):
Is there an issue of people not showing up for their 2nd shots? ML: about 2-5% - not huge but significant – hope all of them find a convenient time/location to come back
How will people know we are at 80%? Scott: hopefully would be a quick press conference to mark the occasion
Would he like to see Sen Leahy run for Senate again next year? Scott: Yes
Why can’t you just walk into a pharmacy to get a shot with having to make an appointment? Scott: you can do this already; MS: we have walk in capability at all of our clinics now, at many pharmacies
Might DOE update guidance for schools about social distancing at year end events once all other restrictions are lifted? Sec French: these are under discussion and might update before end of school year
Have there been reports of heart issues in adolescents either post-vaccination or generally post COVID? ML: there have been so few cases reported nationally post-vaccination – FDA looking at closely – no public alerts at this point; not aware of cases of heart issues in kids after cases of COVID
Will restrictions be eliminated for corrections when other restrictions go away? Mike Smith: expect to open up more but would also like to see better vaccination rates – only at about 60% now – would like it to mirror the general population plus follow any CDC guidelines on this setting
Can VDH respond to CDC reports of 8 deaths of Vermonters due to the vaccine? ML: he will have to look into this – is not aware of this number – they do get reports from VERS and CDC
Is VDH confident in Essex Co vaccine % (around 55%) – could this be that many like teachers and HC workers crossed to NH for vaccine? ML: they are confident in this number – they do get reports from other states based on state of residency – it may take some time for data to get to VT but would have caught up by now