



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

Well, it's great to be here. We know that there's obviously quite a large storm going on out there. And we hope everyone has been able to weather it safe. And hopefully most folks are just at home, comfortable, and safe, maybe with a cup of hot chocolate or something.

Just a little reminder on the storm, before we get started around the COVID-19 pandemic information that we want to put out, if you are out and about, obviously please, the drifts are high. If there are loved ones out there or neighbors that maybe just checking in on them a little bit would be great.

We do have 700 different pieces of machinery that are out on our roads today, both on the State and local side. They'll be cleaning up, as this storm heads out over the next hour. So, just be careful with that. Obviously, a lot of kids are out sledding and having fun in the light snow. But we just want to make sure that folks are driving, if you don't need to be on the roads, if you could give those plows just a little while longer, the Emergency Winter Storm Warning is in effect through 4:00 p.m. this afternoon. But the good news is we think that most of the State should be cleaned up and in good shape by this evening.

And we just want to thank everybody for their patience through the storm. A lot of folks were able to stay off the roads. We did have some power outages, pretty minimal, given how light and fluffy a lot of this snow was. But there were a few power outages out there. And there are crews just kind of taking care of those last individuals across the State.

So, we've weathered the storm pretty well. It looks like it's going to be a white Christmas and a white holiday season for all of us. That's a good thing. I think that puts folks in the right spirit. With that, I guess we will start with Dr. Daly and the Public Health update.

Dr. Daly:

Great; good afternoon, everyone. So, today, we will be announcing 872 new people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, bringing our total case count to 34,264. In the last week, we've averaged around 800 to 900 new infections per day in our State. And we currently have 6,928 people with active infection.

On average, around 8,000 people are being tested in our State each day. And about 9% of those people are testing positive. Currently, in New Hampshire, we have 284 people who are hospitalized with COVID-19 statewide. And today, we're announcing sadly that there have been four new individuals who have passed away, due to COVID-19, bringing the number of people who have died to 629. Three of these individuals are associated with long-term care facilities.

We continue to conduct our contact tracing efforts for people who are at highest risk for transmitting their infections, such as people working in congregate settings, healthcare facilities, and schools. For people who test positive and who we do not reach out to, we're asking them to do the right

thing by staying at home and then notifying those people who have been close to them, while they were potentially infectious.

In order to support you in doing that, we have made some resources available right on the homepage of our [nh.gov/COVID-19](https://www.nh.gov/COVID-19) website. There are two buttons right at the top there for if you've tested positive, or if you've been told you were exposed. And we're really asking everyone to follow those guidelines very carefully so that we can prevent future transmission.

We know that COVID-19 has been a hardship for our communities. And together, we've endured this last 10 months. So we're very excited about the potential of this COVID-19 vaccine and bringing this pandemic under control and saving lives.

To-date, we have distributed 3,135 doses of the Pfizer vaccine to our hospitals. And in the last two days, there have been 901 frontline Health Workers vaccinated to protect them against COVID-19. This new Pfizer vaccine and the upcoming Moderna vaccine, however, both require two doses in order to be completely protected at that 95% efficacy. So we expect that we will have to continue vaccinating individuals and that we will need vaccine going forward coming into the State. We expect that it's going to continue coming into the State over the coming weeks and months. And we will be able to offer vaccine to additional individuals who want to receive the vaccine.

It will take several months to get everyone vaccinated. This means that we must continue to make sure that we're taking our COVID-19 precautions, especially now as we head into the holidays, where we want to come into closer contact with our family and friends.

But we want to remind everyone to please be careful and make sure that they wear a mask, avoid those gatherings, stay at least 6 feet apart from everyone. And then, we continue to recommend that people avoid traveling during the holidays, even travel within New England. We know that people are growing tired of these precautions. But we don't want you to give up on them and we want to finish strong. Thank you.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Good afternoon. I have a brief long-term care outbreak update. Today we are closing four outbreaks in long-term care facilities: Oceanside Genesis; Prospect Woodward Home at Hillside Village; Ridgewood Genesis; and Studley Home Assisted Living. They are all closed.

We are also announcing eight new outbreaks today: The Arbors of Bedford; Clipper Harbor Cedar Healthcare Center; Community Bridges in Concord; Country Village Center; Harris Hill Center; Merrimack County Jail; Mount Prospect Academy; Seacoast Treatment and Stabilization Center; and the Strafford County Jail. Our outbreak tables with the numbers of Staff or residents will be updated with our daily report either today or tomorrow. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Thank you very much, Commissioner. So a couple things we want to bring folks up-to-speed on, specifically the vaccine. Just, again, Dr. Daly touched on it a little bit. But obviously that's kind of the hot topic of the week, if you will.

As everyone knows, on Tuesday, we administered the first doses of the vaccine. The first person to get the vaccine in the State was Heidi Kukla, the ICU Nurse over at Elliot Hospital in Manchester. I think anyone who was watching that press conference on Tuesday morning, I think her words struck

with a lot of us. And I think she said it better than anyone, why the vaccine is so necessary and something that has clearly resonated in a very positive way across the State. It's a safe vaccine. A lot of folks in our healthcare are taking it as we speak. The long-term care facilities are getting theirs, as we speak. So we're really on a very positive path here.

There were some questions, given today's storm. Hat's off to the Team at Public Health who made sure that, with the storm coming, kind of made some alterations to the vaccine delivery and made sure that we kept up-to-speed and on schedule. So, we didn't let the storm interfere with the vaccine delivery system for the State and for our citizens.

Over the next week -- I think we had about 12,000 doses of the vaccine come in this week -- we will get tens of thousands of more before year's end. That's very positive news, which also includes Moderna's vaccine, which we should be receiving the first shipments of early next week. And as a lot of us know, the Moderna vaccine is being manufactured very much right here in New Hampshire, which is a bit of point of pride for a lot of us Granite Staters.

Some questions earlier today also on what we're seeing out of Washington, D.C. I think we're all very hopeful that Congress can actually get something done. As with anything related to Washington, I'm not holding my breath with anticipation. But it looks like they're getting closer and closer, hopefully in the next 48 hours, to getting some type of agreement and package passed.

In the event that they do actually get their act together and pass something, it does not look like there will be funds for State relief or relief, direct aids to cities and towns. That's something that we've been advocating very strongly for. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like that will be in there. But that's okay. Something is definitely better than nothing.

It looks like they're focusing a lot of their efforts on small business relief, some type of addition to the PPP Program, maybe some unemployment relief, some potential stimulus checks is what we're hearing. And obviously it looks like there'll be some funds in there for vaccine distribution and some other COVID-related costs, which is frankly the brunt of our costs right now, something that we definitely need, and would be very appreciative of, as we know that this is going to remain with us for the next couple months, to be sure.

I just want to let people know, rest assured, if Congress does do nothing, we will be okay in that we can -- our economy's very strong. We have general funds that we can tap into to make sure vaccine continues to be distributed, to make sure that we're still buying the PPE that we need for the State. We're going to have testing capabilities.

So, it would be great if Congress lived up to the obligation that they've set for us and got it done. But, even if they don't, the State is in a good economic position, and we will have funds available at a local level to make sure that we have what we need to carry forward through the remainder of the pandemic, one way or another.

The last thing we want to do is just talk about some CARES Act allocations. So, of the \$1.25 billion of flexible CARES Act funds that we received back in March or April at this point, we have to spend pretty much all those dollars by -- or all those dollars by December 31st. So there's only a couple weeks left.

A few of the programs that we've allocated all this money to have lapsed funds, meaning we may -- broadband is a good example. We allocated \$50 million. Only about \$15 million in projects were eligible. So that \$35 million kind of lapses back in and we can reallocate those dollars.

Well, the final reallocation of dollars that we're looking at over the next week-or-so, we still have some money available to us. And knowing where some of the highest-hit areas are, specifically around hospitals, especially, we want to at least create some opportunity.

So, a couple things; first, let's talk about UNH. UNH, the university system, has done a tremendous job increasing our testing capacity for the State, doing literally thousands of tests a day sometimes for the State, for their students, and now also assisting the State, as most of their students are on break, assisting the State with some of our additional testing capacity needs. We will be allocating an additional \$4 million to the university system to offset some of their additional costs that they did not anticipate. But, frankly, they were just testing at such a high rate. That's all really good stuff. So about \$4 million will be allocated to the university system.

An additional \$7 million is going to be allocated directly to hospitals and specifically the hospitals that have been hardest hit with the COVID pandemic. We know that a lot of hospitals have had to give up certain elective procedures, elective surgeries. Those are kind of their moneymakers sometimes, frankly. And they've given that up to make sure that the beds and capacity are there for our citizens. And so, we're going to put our last \$7 million into the hospital system.

That, combined with an additional over \$70 million that the Federal Government is also allocating this week to our hospitals and Providers, creates a lot of economic opportunity for hospitals and Doctors that have really been hard hit by this. So, that's all very, very positive news.

And then, finally, our final allocation is committing on something that we talked about quite a long time ago. Our nonprofits traditionally have to pay part for their unemployment insurance. They've been very hard hit. The Federal Government has offered to pay for part of their unemployment insurance. The State is picking up the rest of that cost for our nonprofits, which includes our hospitals.

So there's about \$12 million that we're going to be allocating to ensure that that cost is not borne by nonprofits, from about \$6 million, \$7 million, \$8 million of which will directly offset costs in our hospitals, as well. But we want to make sure they're not carrying that cost burden. And that'll be, frankly, one of the final allocations that we do as part of the CARES Act.

We've spent it down almost to the penny, frankly. We've tried to schedule this out. And I think the Team did a great job. The Team at GOFFER did a great job of making sure that we had emergency funds available all the way to the end of the year. And we're taking care of some of these last-minute costs, as they potentially hit the State. With that, I guess we can open it up for questions.

Q&A Session

Governor, can you describe how you decide which Doctors and Nurses get the vaccine first? Is there a scoring system? I don't know if HHS or Dr. Daly wants to weigh-in.

Governor Sununu:

Dr. Daly, you want to talk about that?

How do you decide that?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, you bet.

Dr. Daly:

Yeah, so the way that we have allocated our vaccine initially is that we want to target those Healthcare Workers that are at highest risk. These are people who provide direct patient care. And then, also Healthcare Workers who are in patient care areas and may come into contact with those patients who could be infected with COVID-19; eventually we will also get to other people who work in healthcare settings who might not have direct patient care but perform critical functions. And we want to obviously get everyone who's performing critical functions, as well, too. But they are going to come in later phases. So it's really looking at that person's specific role. Are they caring for patients? And that would put them at high risk, and that they should be vaccinated in this first phase.

So, COVID Units first essentially, and then moving out from there?

Dr. Daly:

It's up to the hospitals to look at their organization and determine who is at highest risk. And we have made some suggestions to them for determining who to vaccinate first, because they did not get enough to do all of their highest risk Healthcare Workers.

So they're going to look for areas where the Staff are going to have the greatest likelihood of coming into contact with someone with COVID-19. That includes those COVID-19 Units. That include the ED, for example, the Emergency Department. And then, work their way out from that.

And sorry, is inoculation immediately after the second shot? I guess, when can you consider someone inoculated?

Dr. Daly:

It takes about one to two weeks to develop antibodies against the virus, after you have received that vaccination. So, in order to get that complete 95% protection that we believe this vaccine offers, it would be about one to two weeks after that second dose.

Governor Sununu:

Great; yes, sir. Sorry, I'm just going to grab a pen here.

Can you describe? We've heard media reports that some places have been able to expand the amount of vaccinations they're giving, based on the vials have more dose in them, I guess. Have you heard about this? There's some places where they're getting more vaccine. Is that happening here?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, it's a great question.

Dr. Daly:

So, this formulation that's currently available to us, Pfizer requires we're adding saline solution to the vial that contains a suspension with the vaccine ingredients within it. And when they reconstitute that and create that vaccine that's then going to be administered to the person, it provides enough for five doses definitively.

In some cases, they may have remaining vaccine, which, if they have a full dose available after they've used those first five doses within that one vial, they can go ahead and administer that to another person. So we're working with communicating to the hospitals who have this vaccine currently around this process and making sure that they're able to account for those doses, report that those doses have been administered to us.

But, we are hearing from the FDA that this is acceptable, as long as it's a full dose and they do not mix leftover amounts from different vials into one to get that full dose. So it has to be a complete dose from one vial that is remaining.

How much does that expand our current supply, theoretically?

Dr. Daly:

Well, it's typically one extra dose per vial. So, I haven't done the math.

Governor Sununu:

At most 20%.

Dr. Daly:

Yeah.

Governor Sununu:

If it worked for every vial, then it would be, at most, 20%, which is even just getting a couple more, I mean, that's great. We will take any amount that we can get.

I know you'd mentioned it depends on what happens with Congress. But with all this CARES Act money that we've gotten and allocated, what happens in 2021? Do you expect any new aid coming to the States?

Governor Sununu:

I do. No, I expect something to happen. I think it would be great if this Congress got something done before they left. It's kind of the lame duck Congress, before the new group comes in. I can tell you I was on a call with all the Governors and President Biden yesterday -- President-Elect Biden. And just it was clear that they want to get something done, as well. So I think they'll see what this Congress gets

done and whatever else might be needed. They'll be looking to do their own Bill with the new Congress, as well.

So, I do remain fairly confident that even if we don't get something this week, there's going to be a lot of pressure and the right pressure, frankly, to make sure something gets done early in the year. Whether it's before President-Elect Biden takes office or not, I'm not sure. But the Congress and Senate could step up prior to that, if necessary.

A long time before kids get vaccinated, obviously, most are heading onto winter break at this time, is there a plan to try and reduce spread, because we were seeing those numbers bump up in that younger age group, I guess? It's going to be three, four, five months before they get that.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, right now, technically the vaccine is not authorized for under 16 years old. So if either future vaccines are authorized that way, or the current Pfizer and Moderna vaccines go through additional studies that allow them to be authorized for future use for children, that is something that really remains to be seen.

Until then, we don't know what the stipulations, or the risks, are around that. So we're just asking folks to take a lot of the precautions that we've already put into place. We've been very fortunate that, well, we've had clusters of illness in some of these schools, no major outbreaks, no major inter-classroom community transmission, across multi-classrooms, multi-disciplines. Some schools have pulled back, either gone remote for a week-or-two here-or-there. But then, they get the kids right back in.

So, everyone's finding a way to manage and that's the good news. There's been very little illness amongst children and students that didn't already have another complicating condition. And even that's been fairly rare. So, that's the silver lining, if you will, on any of this.

So, we're just asking folks to stay disciplined. Keep those practices; keep an eye on your kids. A lot of schools require a temperature to be taken and students to be asked the questions of symptoms and whatnot, prior to the beginning of every day. Take that seriously; we do it in our family. Every morning, I'm asking my daughter those questions and I'm putting it in on her school's website. And we're doing the temperature checks.

Keep it up, I mean, because those really are the precursor signs for what could be a domino effect of getting other kids infected. And you just don't know. Again, you don't know who those kids come in contact with every day. You have to appreciate that a lot of kids are being taken care of by their grandparents right now and they have to go home and be with them one way or the other. And it just does drive a higher risk. And so, as we always say, it's not about ourselves. It's just about understanding that we don't know the risks that the people we come in contact with might have.

It's back-and-forth with me, Adam. Yesterday, there was 21 deaths announced. I think it was the highest single day. Also seven hospitalizations, that was high for one day. Are we starting to see the effects of Thanksgiving, of that time? I don't know if somebody wants to talk about that.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so yesterday was a tough day. Our numbers were very, very high and that could be for a variety of reasons. But, what we do know is that, as you see these peaks of case numbers across the country -- we even saw it earlier this year here in New Hampshire -- the hospitalization and unfortunately the fatality that results from that tends to lag by a couple weeks.

So our hope is that we're kind of in this, bouncing around near the top right now. We've only had a day-or-two, maybe, cross 1,000 cases. So it's still very, very high, of course. Our hospitalization rate is sitting still a little under 300, which is high, nothing we can't manage, but it's high.

My sense is hospitalization and unfortunately the resulting fatalities may stay elevated for a couple weeks, even if we start coming on the downswing of daily cases, because the symptoms take a while to progress. I mean, so it's just a mathematical follow-along, if you will. Often, the symptoms are worse in the second week, which drives the hospitalizations.

So, we're just -- even if our numbers -- if we're fortunate to see our numbers start going down in the next couple weeks, we still have a lot of work to do. And we still have to know that these outbreaks, especially in the long-term care facilities, can be extremely dangerous. And so, unfortunately I suspect -- I don't think it'd be appropriate to sugarcoat it -- I suspect that the fatalities and hospitalizations are still going to be elevated for quite some time.

Especially with the holidays that are happening and the Christmas next week, expecting that to be part of that?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, I got to tell you. I think we've talked about it a little bit. I think the people of this State did a very good job over Thanksgiving, keeping their group gatherings smaller. We heard a lot of rumors and stories of, well, we were going to have different parts of our family, but we decided to cancel. And everyone did their own thing. And we suspect and hope that that will be the mentality, as we go into Christmas.

But still, we still saw a lot of cases within the immediate family. Obviously, we're not asking the immediate family not to associate with one another. And so, that very well may happen over Christmas, as well. Not here, in New Hampshire, but all across the country, I mean, we're kind of all in the same boat there a little bit.

So, we did see a bit of that bump after Thanksgiving with our case numbers. That's probably driving what you're seeing a little bit today. We could see another bump, even if we're on the downswing a little bit, by Christmas. You could see potentially another bump up.

All just telltale signs that we got a long way to go, we have to stay disciplined for quite some months ahead, unfortunately. And until the vaccine really gets through our population, we're not going to be out of the woods just yet.

You mentioned that the lag indicators and that discipline it's going to take. You have these amazing headlines of here's this vaccine in just a matter of months, what an achievement. At the same time, deaths mount. It's a lot to balance, I guess, with the public. And you still have to worry about the COVID fatigue factor. Is that something that is really...

Governor Sununu:

Very much, the COVID fatigue factor is something that weighs on us all the time. How do we properly get the message out that we have to stay disciplined? At the same time, we're working on messaging why the vaccine is safe and why it's good to take. And a lot of folks are making that vaccine decision, not just for themselves, for our Healthcare Worker. We've seen the uptick in Healthcare Workers phenomenally high. That's wonderful.

A lot of people are deciding whether their loved ones may be in a long-term care facility. Are they going to sign that Consent Form? And we want folks to know that it is safe and we feel very confident that there will be a high usage rate there.

And then, balancing out the very tough stories of, even while we're at the beginning of the end, unfortunately there is going to be some lag here. We are going to likely see a bump over the holidays. And ultimately, that may result in potentially more hospitalization and more fatalities. And we have to be prepared for that.

When it comes to long-term care facilities, we're on the phone with them every single day, whether it's the VA, the State Veterans Home, or any long-term care facility, frankly. Whatever they need, we're there for. We have stockpiles of PPE. We've put funding on the frontlines with the additional stipends trying to incentivize the Workers to be there. And they've given so much, I mean, 20 hours a day sometimes just doing everything they can to stay viable within their own facilities and take care of those patients.

Testing, doing -- increasing the amount of testing and availability for testing for them, we've just put everything we can. But we just know that these long-term care facilities really are on the frontlines of this and are -- unfortunately have always faced the brunt of this very tough virus.

Do you have a target date for the majority or almost all of that long-term care population to have received the vaccine?

Governor Sununu:

Our most vulnerable population, the first 100,000 of Phase 1, should likely have at least their first shot within the first couple weeks here, and their second shot by the end of January.

So it's the entire long-term care population?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, I think that's all of long-term care. I'm looking over here. I think that would include all Phase 1A and 1B. Yeah, which is great news, right? I mean, they're -- and then, again, there'll be a little lag. And hopefully again the hospitalization and fatalities by mid-February theoretically hopefully really

start dropping. And that will be, I think, a big sigh of relief for all of us. So, do we have some questions on the phone?

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Hi, thank you. We're hearing from several States. Officials in several States are saying they have been told they'll receive fewer doses of the Pfizer vaccine this week than they had anticipated. Have you heard anything like that? How many were we expecting? And is that still the case?

Governor Sununu:

Yes, we have heard that. We were originally expecting about 12,000, 13,000 vials approximately next week. I think that number's going to be reduced down to around 9,000, maybe even just shy of 9,000.

Again, everybody gets their pro rata share by State. So New Hampshire isn't treated any differently than any other State. But because of production and how they're managing their production, unfortunately, at least for the next couple weeks, it's going to come in a little bit short of what we were originally told. But it's still 9,000 doses. And we will take it and use it.

Nancy West with InDepthNH:

For taking my -- good afternoon, Governor. Thank you for taking my questions.

Governor Sununu:

You bet.

Nancy West with InDepthNH:

I know there's been quite a bit of concern about people testing positive -- Legislators testing positive who attended the GOP Caucus November 20th in Manchester, and then followed by the Organization Day December 2nd, and, of course, the tragic death of House Speaker Dick Hinch and the infection of Speaker Pro-Tem, and some House Staffers and State House Staffers. And I guess my first question is: will you say how many Legislators and Staffers connected to the State House have tested positive for COVID-19? I did ask that question of the Department of Health and Human Services and they said they would not answer that, because of privacy protections. But my concern is, how would releasing the number of people who tested positive, how would that violate anyone's privacy?

Governor Sununu:

Of course, so I...

Nancy West with InDepthNH:

I have a couple of questions. So, do you want me to ask them?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah. No, no. Let me answer that one first. Again, I don't get a running tally of how many Legislators or Staffers in the State House necessarily have COVID. We know that some do. That's private information. Just because we work in the -- it's a different branch of Government. Just because we're Elected Officials, we don't -- that's private information. So I don't have that number. I couldn't tell you how many Republicans or Democrats have tested positive for COVID that are Elected Representatives.

I know a couple Staffers, just because I know them personally, that have been infected at the State House. But you literally know as much as I know about that, at this point, because it's private information. And just because they work in a certain building doesn't mean we make public all of that information and data. Is there another question?

Nancy West with InDepthNH:

Yeah; I guess I've been told by a couple of Legislators that they're concerned that the State House could be becoming a super spreader, where you have Lawmakers coming and going, and Staffers coming and going. Some GOP Lawmakers refusing to wear masks; and then taking the virus home to their communities, if they are, in fact, infected. But how will we know if they are, in fact, infected? I know that when Senator Martha Fuller Clark tested positive, she put out a news release to that effect and another release when she recovered. Do you think the people have a right to know if their Elected Officials have tested positive for the virus?

Governor Sununu:

So, a couple things there; if someone tests positive for the virus, it is their choice and up to them whether they want to release that. That is medical information that is typically held private. But if someone wants to tell the public that, that is absolutely their choice.

I do know the Legislative Senator Chuck Morse and Sherm Packard in the House side worked with Dr. Ballard at Health and Human Services. They set up their own testing day to make sure that anyone who wanted a test could get a test.

When you talk about a super spreader, those -- a super spreader is a singular event, a singular point in time. A super spreader is not a location. So it's not like that -- I've been at the State House all day today. It's not like the State House, itself, is infected and if you walk in, you're going to get infected with COVID. Super spreader events do occur. But those are single points in time. I know they're constantly cleaning the State House. I know that they've offered testing to everybody.

In terms of what information is released to the public for those individuals who have tested positive, that really is up to those individuals. We don't ask Elected Officials to put all their health records out on public display. And that's effectively what you're asking. And so, I don't think it's appropriate.

Now, that being said, they need to make provisions. And I've been very -- it's just my opinion. The Legislature makes their own rules and pathway. I don't really have a say in that. But I've been very public and I think a lot of folks agree with me that they just need to make sure they make provisions so that if they have hearings, if they do anything that engages with the public or even their own members,

they allow that process to take place remotely, as well as in-person, for any individuals who don't feel comfortable potentially coming into certain situations, whether it's from the public that might testify, whether it's from a Representative or a Senator that might also be on a Committee, or whatever it might be.

So, they have to use the technology that is afforded to them to allow the legislative process to take place in a safe way. And anyone who does come in, of course, we have been very adamant and very strong in our messaging that people need to wear masks and they need to make provisions for the social distancing, for the health and safety of those individuals, so that, to your point, you don't get a super spreading event at any single hearing or gathering of such. Is there another one?

Michael Graham with the New Hampshire Journal:

Yeah, one quick question for the Medical Pros and one for the Governor. First, for the Medical Pros, I'm trying to understand the numbers on hospitalizations. The daily update for yesterday had 870 cumulative hospitalizations, just 41 higher than on November 30th. But the number of people hospitalized yesterday was 286, which is 126 higher than November 30th. So which number is right? What are we supposed to be looking at?

Governor Sununu:

So, I'm going to actually answer that, because I play a medical professional on TV every Thursday at 3:00. So, you're exactly right. It can be a little confusing. The way contact tracing works is through contact tracing, we ask folks if they've been hospitalized and what the situation is. And that's often the daily number that you see.

The most -- I think the most important number is the total hospitalization number. That could include folks that don't let us know that they're in the hospital. It could include non-New Hampshire citizens. Maybe citizens from Massachusetts might be up here, or whatever it might be, for various reasons. They may be in a hospital up here.

So there's a couple different reasons why the total hospitalization number, the census, if you will, doesn't necessarily add up, or is usually a little bit higher, than if you added just all the daily numbers that we report, because we're just getting information from so many different locations. So, the most important number is that total daily census. That's the most accurate number, in terms of how many COVID patients are in a bed at any given time.

But we only do contact tracing with our New Hampshire citizens. So if you're a Massachusetts citizen but you're in a New Hampshire hospital, we wouldn't necessarily know and they wouldn't necessarily be recorded as part of our daily number. And I'm getting nods that I actually got that one right.

Michael Graham with the New Hampshire Journal:

Great, okay. Good, we will grade you on a curve, so that'll be fine.

Governor Sununu:

Okay, thank you.

Michael Graham with the New Hampshire Journal:

So, there's been some concern about how the Republicans have handled the COVID issue. You had the question just earlier from another Reporter. And some people are unhappy with the general state of the Republican Party here in New Hampshire. Former two-term New Hampshire Party Chair Jennifer Horn just announced that she's leaving the Republican Party, because she's so unhappy with the Party. What would you say to your fellow New Hampshire Republicans who are looking at whether it's COVID, or the Electoral College, or presidency, whatever, and they're saying it's time for me to leave the Party? What would your message to them be?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, what would my message be to someone who wants to leave the Republican Party? Bye. I mean, if someone doesn't want to be part of a Party, or an Independent, or a Democrat, yeah, it's their choice. That's fine.

The Party isn't defined -- the Democrat Party isn't defined by a single individual, or a single issue. Neither is the Republican Party. It's a philosophy. It's a belief, in terms of how you believe civics and government should be conducted, what's appropriate in terms of public participation, taxation, all of those issues.

So, nobody should define their Political Party based on the COVID pandemic, or based on just a single point in time of the current political strife that we see in this country. And it's everyone's choice. Everyone can do exactly what they want.

So, I'm a very proud member of the Republican Party. And I think we do it right here. I think we maintain that New Hampshire advantage. That's very important to us and those of us on our side of the aisle. And some people agree. Some people don't. And again, people can come-and-go with the Party as they please. It's their right to do so.

Jordan H. with the New Hampshire Public Radio:

Hi, I've got two questions today. The first is about a story that NHPR reported this week about the outbreak at Green Mountain Treatment Center, where multiple clients and Staff say that Management was unprepared for the outbreak. CDC and State recommendations weren't followed. Staff were moving COVID-positive people into rooms with people who had tested negative or hadn't been tested at all. So what's your response to that? And does the State have plans to take action, given that Granite Recovery Centers contracts with the State? And the second is about vaccine distribution. Long-term care facilities are preparing to potentially start distributing vaccines on Monday through a partnership with pharmacies. But a few are saying they've had next-to-no communication with their pharmacies and have pretty much no idea when they'll be getting vaccines. So is the State doing anything to intervene there? And is there any kind of backup plan, should problems with those partnerships continue?

Governor Sununu:

Sure; I'm going to turn it over to the Commissioner for both the long-term care and Granite Recovery. Got it.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Thank you for that question. The -- what you're hearing about Granite Recovery, we did get some communication about that. And the AG's Office will be looking into that. And certainly, they're licensed by the State of New Hampshire. So, if anything comes out of those investigations and the questions that we would ask, related to what the Employees are reporting, what you've just said, then we can certainly send a Team down to do an infection control tutorial, or do an inspection. So, we have heard that and we are looking into it.

When it comes to long-term care vaccine, the pharmacy partners have three weeks from the date they receive the vaccine to vaccinate all long-term care residents and Staff. So they received the vaccine on the 21st. They have three weeks from that date to do their first round of vaccines.

We've heard from many facilities that they've been scheduled. There's certainly a chance that there are some that have not been scheduled. But we have regular meetings, teleconferences with our pharmacy partners to make sure that they're meeting the needs of our residents.

So it's really important. We are very confident that they're going to be able to fulfill their obligations under the Federal Contract to vaccinate the nursing homes. But if, for some chance -- or in any chance that they're unable to fulfill those obligations, we do have a Plan B already set to go that we will pick up that ball and run with it, and make sure that all of our long-term care residents and Staff are vaccinated timely.

Kevin Landrigan with the Union Leader:

Yeah, thanks. Question for you, Governor, and one for Commissioner Shibinette; for you, some States are being transparent about where the vaccine is being distributed before it's being given. But we're not doing that at this point. Is that -- again, is that a privacy issue? And is there any plan, after all the vaccine is distributed, in Phase, say, 1A and 1B, to actually say how many doses went where? The question I had for Commissioner Shibinette was about the outbreak at the Prison in Berlin. We'd received a report that -- from folks that were concerned that some people who were transferred from Concord to the Berlin Prison's D Block were those who first tested positive for COVID and now there are apparently 30 cases in that Block. And wondered whether there's any truth to that, you know how sometimes these stories get started about the origin of a COVID outbreak. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Well, thank you. I'm going to actually ask Dr. Daly. She's on the frontlines, I think, of both of those. We will give her a shot at it.

Dr. Daly:

So, I'll answer the second question first, about the Prison question. I don't actually have any information on that to share. I can certainly look into that and you can loop back around with our Public Information Office to follow up, if you'd like.

And then, in terms of transparency with where the vaccine doses are, I think we have provided information. We've received this just over 12,000 doses in this first week. We had to set aside a certain amount of that vaccine. It was 7800 doses that had to be set aside for that long-term care facility Federal

Contract Program, so that they could get that started right away on December 21st. And the remainder of the doses went to the hospitals. And all of our hospitals in our State received vaccine. And they're providing those vaccines to their Healthcare Providers.

Going forward, we will continue to communicate with our partners when we're ready to provide vaccine to them. And as we roll out this program where members of the general public want to sign up and know where the vaccine is, there is a Federal Data System that's in place called Vaccine Finder, where you'll be able to go and see where there's vaccine available for you. And you can contact that organization to sign up.

We will also be opening six vaccination sites to serve the population, as well, if they're not able to get their vaccine from their Healthcare Provider. And all of that is going to be available and listed on our website, as well as the Vaccine Finder website. So there will be transparency and you'll know where our doses are going.

Governor Sununu:

Great, sorry, just to follow up on Kevin's question. So, ultimately, would we be able to show that a certain hospital received a certain amount of vaccine? Right?

Dr. Daly:

Yes.

Governor Sununu:

That would be public information, I think, right? We can't say -- we wouldn't be able to say exactly who got the vaccine. We're not saying that publicly. But we could at least say the number of doses that were administered, or given, to any given hospital, correct?

Dr. Daly:

Because many of the hospitals are sharing this with the public, when asked to.

Governor Sununu:

Right, and just to follow up, Dr. Daly was saying that many hospitals are sharing that with the public when they're asked. So, yeah, we're going to, again, be as transparent as we possibly can.

When are we going to see the fixed location sites for vaccination set up?

Dr. Daly:

December 29th.

Governor Sununu:

December 29th?

Dr. Daly:

Yeah.

Governor Sununu:

December 29th. I didn't know it was that soon, either. That's great. Okay. Great, anything else?

And sorry, is that for all 13?

Commissioner Shibinette:

I think we should clarify.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, I don't know if that's all 13.

Commissioner Shibinette:

The fixed sites will be set up and operating December 29th for the First Responder and ambulatory care communities. So we're going to funnel all of our First Responders, Police, Fire, EMS, and our outpatient people through our fixed site. So that is the end of 1A, early 1B-type phase. Phase 2, general population, we don't know when that's going to start, because we don't know what our vaccine supply's going to be for six weeks. We're working two and three weeks out. So, as soon as we have 1A and 1B vaccinated, we will be making announcements when Phase 2 will be starting.

Governor Sununu:

But they use the same fixed sites, correct?

Commissioner Shibinette:

They'll use the same fixed sites. And we will additionally have mobile sites up, too, that will be going around the State to be in different communities to do vaccination clinics.

And how are you going to manage demand versus supply? I'm assuming at a certain point there are going to be a lot of older people who are going to want to get this and only so much vaccine.

Commissioner Shabinette:

Yeah, I think we have different priority populations. And obviously people over 65 is going to be a priority population. People with underlying medical conditions; our hope is that a lot of those citizens will be able to get their vaccination from their Provider, right? We expect that about 75% of the citizens in New Hampshire will be able to get the visitation just by going to their regular Provider.

We don't expect that everybody's going to have to go through a public vaccination clinic to get a vaccine. So just like you would go and get your flu shot, or get any of your other vaccinations, should be the way that you're planning on getting vaccinated for COVID.

Governor Sununu:

Great; all right. Well, thank you, guys, very much. And again, that kind of concludes for today. We hope everyone has been able to ride the storm out. It looks like the snow is really petering off in the rest of the State at this point. I think there's a few more hours for us to clear the roads and make sure that everyone can travel safe.

It looks like we're going to have a great weekend. The vaccine is here. We're underway on that, which is just, I think, great news for everybody. Next week, we are going to do another press conference, but it will be on Tuesday at 3:00 p.m., not Thursday, given that we're kind of getting close to Christmas. Christmas Even probably wouldn't be ideal for a COVID update. But next Tuesday, the 22nd, at 3:00 p.m., is when we will be back. Thank you, guys. Have a great weekend, everybody.