



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

Well, good afternoon. Great to see everybody. I'm sorry we're a little bit delayed. Things are moving very, very quickly here in the State. And it's all for really, really good reasons, frankly. So, we have a lot to talk about today. Let's start, as always, with our public health update from Dr. Chan.

Dr. Chan:

Great, good afternoon. So, two things: a quick numbers update; and then just a couple brief remarks on the availability of the new Janssen vaccine. The numbers first: we are announcing 231 new people diagnosed with COVID-19 in New Hampshire. In the last week, we have been average about 200 to 250 new infections per day that we've reported out. That's a slow decrease over past weeks. The number of people with active infection in the State is 2,191.

Our test-positivity rate is now below 4%. That 7-day average is 3.8%. There's another number that continues to slowly trend downwards. And then, in terms of hospitalizations, there are 92 people currently hospitalized statewide with COVID-19.

Unfortunately, three new individuals have died from COVID-19 that we are reporting, bringing the total to 1,178. Zero of these new individuals that have died are associated with long-term care facilities. And in the last week, there have been a total of 15 people that have died from COVID-19 in New Hampshire.

So, we now have, with the rollout of the Janssen vaccine, also called the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, we now have three different COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for use by the FDA, and recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and their Advisory Committee, the ACIP. These include the Pfizer vaccine, the Moderna vaccine, and now the new Janssen or Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Excuse me. All three of these vaccines are effective at preventing disease from the COVID-19 virus. And all three vaccines have been shown to be highly effective, especially at preventing severe disease, hospitalizations, and deaths.

The CDC and their Advisory Committee, ACIP, does not recommend one vaccine over the other. And so, we are also recommending that people be vaccinated as quickly as possible and take advantage of the first-available vaccine appointment offered to them, regardless of the vaccine that's offered, and advise against people waiting to be vaccinated, to search for a specific vaccine or formulation.

The vaccines will become increasingly important. And as we get more and more people in our population vaccinated, we will be able to relax restrictions even further. But the focus right now is on rapid rollout of the vaccine and putting needles into arms. And the new Janssen vaccine is critical for those efforts. And so, we're very excited with the fact that we now have three vaccines as tools to use to

increase the rate of vaccination within our State. With that, I will turn things over to Dr. Daly for a vaccine update. Thanks.

Dr. Daly:

Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. I have a few quick updates on the progress of the vaccination. To-date, in New Hampshire, 340,000 doses of vaccine have been administered. This includes 235,000 first doses and 105 [sic] second doses. This means that in the last week we administered more than 50,000 vaccine doses in our State, between first and second doses. At this time, 17% of the New Hampshire population has received one dose of vaccine, and 8% has been fully vaccinated.

This week, we received 42,000 doses of vaccine, which includes 11,600 doses of the new Janssen Biotech vaccine. And in addition to that State allocation, vaccines are coming into the State through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program with Walgreens, which we continue to use to move people scheduled for vaccinations forward to get vaccinated sooner. This program has now vaccinated more than 15,000 people in New Hampshire.

Our Equity Allocation Program continues to grow, with an additional 17 events planned for this week. And that will mean 1500 more individuals vaccinated through that program. The majority of these events have served low-income senior housing, including homebound persons and organizations serving people experiencing homelessness.

We continue to offer vaccination at our 26 sites across the State. Through these sites, we have been able to vaccinate as many as 6,000 to 7,000 people per day. And then, lastly, as a reminder, if you are a Phase 1B person scheduled for vaccination and you indicated that you are bringing an individual to one of our fixed sites to get -- as that second person to get vaccinated along with you, that person must also be eligible for the vaccine. Please do not bring someone who's not eligible, because they will not be able to get vaccinated. And with that, I'll turn it over to Commissioner Shabinette.

Commissioner Shabinette:

Good afternoon. Just a couple of quick updates; for an outbreak update, we are announcing the closure of two outbreaks: St. Vincent Rehab. and Nursing Center and Sullivan County Nursing Home. We have one new outbreak to announce. Hillsborough County Department of Corrections is now under an outbreak status again. They have 19 residents and two Staff cases. So that takes our outbreak list down to four long-term care facilities and two correctional facilities, so continuing to see that great progress in our outbreaks.

I just want to give some details on our homebound vaccination efforts. Beginning tomorrow, we will have a 211 option for anybody that is homebound to follow prompts and get screened for a homebound vaccination. What this means is that those that are not affiliated with a Homecare Agency should be calling 211.

So, to be clear, if you receive your services, if you are homebound and you receive services from a VNA or a Homecare Provider, you do not need to call anyone. You are on our list. Your Homecare Agency has given us your information to set you up for a vaccination, if you're choosing to get a vaccination.

If you do not receive services from a Homebound Agency and you would like to self-select to receive a vaccination in your home, then you are to call 211 and follow the prompts so that you can be screened in. There are two different categories: either one that just -- one for groups of people that just

need transportation; and one for people that truly need the vaccination given in their home. So that begins tomorrow for those that do not have a Homecare Agency providing services.

I want to assure everybody, the homebound vaccination program is going to take longer than, let's say, the fixed site vaccination program. Logistically going out and traveling to people's homes, sometimes 30 and 40 minutes away, is going to spread out the amount of time we need to vaccinate the number of people that are homebound.

I want to assure everybody that we've allocated the vaccine for this population and we have enough vaccine to populate. So even though we may start opening up other phases, or we may start vaccinating other people at the fixed site, we have allocated the vaccine to ensure that everybody that is homebound will have access to the vaccine in the coming weeks. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Great, well, thank you very much, Commissioner. And I think I'm actually going to start a little bit, just to follow up on what Commissioner Shibinette -- just to reiterate, for those individuals who are homebound and have -- don't currently work with one of those daily Providers, call 211. Make sure you get on the list. It's a great program. We've allocated the vaccine. And we just want to make sure that everyone has access to it.

A bunch of things to talk about today, but they're all framed under the fact that we are getting vaccines out very, very quickly across New Hampshire. I think every day we look at not just our internal numbers, we look at our logistics, how well it's going at a lot of our fixed sites and how well it's going with our partnership with Walgreens. Walgreens, to date, has been a tremendous partner with the Pharmacy Program. They're constantly moving people up.

And we've just hit a lot of our milestones a lot sooner and faster. So, what we're going to talk about today is just some of the dates that we're putting ahead for both Groups 2A and 2B, as we come up, and some of the milestones we've been hitting to allow us to speed things up.

First, let's talk with the Speedway. Obviously, I think a lot of folks know we have a great update to talk about with our mass vaccination site, which will be happening this weekend. Our original goal was to vaccinate about 10,000 people over a period of three days. And we're pleased to say that, as of right now, we've booked approximately 12,000 appointments. We're almost fully booked for Saturday, Sunday, and Monday of this weekend. There's still a few folks that we can fit into some last-minute spots.

But, the team, in just a matter of two or three days, has been able to reach out and have folks reach out to us, as well, so that we have moved 12,000 individuals up, mostly all from April, into just this weekend. So, it's a great opportunity to make sure. We always made the commitment that we're going to move folks out of April, if they wanted to. And we can announce today that we've really been able to achieve that with this super site.

As it has been reported, we are offering the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, also known as the Janssen vaccine, at the Speedway. It's a great vaccine. People should have a lot of confidence in it. We encourage anyone with an appointment to select the soonest-possible vaccine appointment. All of them work very, very well, when you talk about hospitalizations and fatalities. They are all at or nearly 100% effective, when you look at J&J, Pfizer, or the Moderna vaccine. They're all working very, very well, as designed. And that should give folks a lot of confidence to sign up, to move up, and to get the vaccine.

As a reminder for those listening at home, the Speedway is by appointment only. I just want to kind of cap that one. We still have a few spots left. But it is by appointment only. If you don't have an appointment, please don't just show up at the Speedway thinking that it's a free-for-all. It isn't.

It's a super site. It's a mass-vaccination site. But we've tried to really schedule by appointment so that we can be efficient not just with our Team, but also try to maximize and be efficient with the time of our citizens, as well.

We ask those who have appointments to arrive no more than 15 minutes early. Again, please don't all line up at 6:00 a.m., like it's a Black Friday sale going on. Everyone has a scheduled time. So please only arrive within about 15 minutes of your appointed time.

And as with any new operation, look, we also know there could be a few growing pains early on in the weekend. We haven't tried anything like this before. We have a lot of confidence in it. And I have full confidence that it's going to be very successful. But we just want to remind folks just to be patient. I think we've had a lot of patience with individuals for all of our fixed sites. And I got to be honest. People move through our fixed sites much quicker than I ever anticipated. The Teams really do a phenomenal job there for the most part, barring weather and things of that nature. No one should have to leave their cars to receive the vaccine. So people will be able to remain comfortably in their vehicles, if they are waiting.

Our vaccine rollout, again, as we said, it has been going very well. And as soon as we do get any shipments from the Federal Government, we work to get those shots into arms as quickly as possible. And that's exactly why we felt confident we could operationalize this mass vaccination site this weekend.

And one final note, although we are fully booked at the Speedway this weekend with just the last few appointments being filled as we speak, we are continuing to make appointments available in March for those are in 1B. So if you're scheduled in April and, for whatever reason, you didn't choose to take advantage of the mass vaccination site this weekend, there are still fixed vaccination site spots available in March. And so, we encourage anyone to pick up the phone, call 211, and we will move you up into some of those spots.

It could be through our Walgreens partnership. It could be a spot at one of our fixed sites. There's a variety of different ways that we can move people up and have them go faster. And again, with so much vaccine coming in and our Team being able to operationalize it quickly, huge, huge opportunity for the citizens of New Hampshire.

So, let's talk about vaccination phases. We're now at the point where everyone with an April appointment in Group 1B has been contacted about moving their appointment up. And everyone who has an appointment in April at least has been given the option of moving up. Some folks have chosen not to take it. That's fine. And there are still folks in April who haven't chosen. But we encourage anybody with an April appointment that wants to move up, again, just call 211. There's a lot of space available. So we just want to kind of reemphasize that time and time again. Everyone in Phase 1B with an April appointment should call 211. There could be new openings across a variety of the different State sites.

So, we know that this has been very successful so far. So we are moving forward. We're way ahead of schedule, in fact that we are on pace to move 2A well-before March is over. Our original goal was to start 2A sometime in early-April, and that's primarily Childcare Providers, Teachers, Administrators, and School Staff. We can definitely move them to even well-ahead of that original April timeframe, which means that vaccinating those individuals, we're looking at, again, keeping a lot of options for those individuals to be vaccinated.

So, what you can see next to me is some key dates that are coming up. We're kind of taking a two-pronged approach with the 2A population. That's the Teachers and School Administrators, and Childcare Workers. It will begin as early as next Friday, March 12th, as follows.

So, first, where possible, our Regional Public Health Networks will work in partnership with School Officials to organize and schedule vaccination clinics for their populations to administer first doses in closed pods, as early on and beginning on March 12th. So that's the Regional Public Health Networks working with the SAUs and the schools directly. For those who choose and can organize it, we can actually provide the vaccinations right there in a closed pod clinic atmosphere. Some folks across the State have already been working on these plans for months. And we definitely want to make the opportunity to honor those commitments.

There are, however, areas of our State where some of the local clinics just aren't possible. And that's where we step in, as the State, and provide additional vaccination options for these communities. And so, that brings us to the second prong of our plan, our State-hosted vaccine sites.

Starting on March 17th, we will open up registration for vaccine appointments through the new State-run scheduling system, which will be unveiled kind of down the road a little bit. So, March 17th, VMS opens to the K-12 schools.

So, for the closed pods, they can start as early as March 12th, because a lot of them have already been in process. On March 17th, Teachers can go onto our VMS Scheduling system. It's kind of a one-stop shop, very simple, very easy. And we can start getting those registration appointments started on the 17th, with the actual vaccinations starting on the 22nd. So, that's why we do the graphics, right? They can start registering on the 17th with the actual vaccination on the 22nd.

And of course, Walgreens is always going to be a part of this program, as well. So, they continue just to be an awesome partner with us, moving people up, allowing for more space. And so, as they get more vaccine over the coming weeks, it'll allow even more spots not just for folks in 1B but in 2A, as well.

And then, furthermore, because we only have about 50,000 folks-or-so in Group 2A, and between the closed pods, opening up for fixed sites, and working with Walgreens, we're already ready to go into 2B. And so, we're already here to discuss that today.

And Phase 2B includes individuals that are 50 years older [sic] and up, and they can make appointments in our State-run system. That will be available to them on March 22nd, with the first actual appointments and vaccinations to begin on March 25th.

So, 2A is going to be right in the middle of March and it kind of rolls in. It's not linear. One doesn't close and one opens. They all kind of mesh into one another, because we're simply going so fast, which is a really great opportunity. First shots for Group 2B, that's 50-and-up, will be beginning before the end of the month. That's on March 25th.

So, this is all great news. And again, if we get more and more vaccine, there is still an opportunity for some of these dates to change, to even move up further. But right now, we feel very confident that we can meet these dates. We can meet these goals. There's a lot of availability, and we just don't want to slow down. We want to keep making it available to folks. And it's really a testament, I think, to the Team in how fast the process has moved.

Oh, and one last thing surrounding the vaccines, and then we will open it up for questions, is the dashboard. So, as we continue to make sure that we get doses in the arms of Granite Staters as quickly as possible, today we're also rolling out our new dashboard that highlights our vaccination efforts, so people can keep score at home, if you will, a little bit.

Sometimes some of the national dashboard sites, they're off in terms of timing, and they don't always give the most accurate data. So we just have more of a localized dashboard that will be quite a bit more accurate, so you can view daily updates with the total number of doses administered, the number of Granite Staters who are now fully vaccinated, and details on the progress that has been made over the last seven days.

Right now, about 17% of Granite Staters have received their first shot, and about 8% are fully vaccinated. But, again, as the number of vaccines increase almost every week and every day now, those numbers will just keep increasing exponentially, which is a very, very positive thing. You can check out the dashboard at [nh.gov\COVID](https://nh.gov/COVID), as you can see right there, [nh.gov\COVID](https://nh.gov/COVID).

So, I apologize. There's a lot of dates we're throwing at folks. I know it's coming at folks very, very quickly. It's all just frankly because we're going so fast, and we don't -- I know if I wait another week until next Thursday, we could miss opportunity. And we just want to make sure that people have an expectation of the timeline going forward.

So, could you guys go back to just some of those dates, just so they're on the screen for folks? Go back one more, that's 2B. Yeah, this is, I think, the key one. This is the one really around the K-12 schools and Childcare Staff. The 12th, 17th, and 22nd are kind of the next three big dates for those individuals, with closed pods being able to sign up and the fixed sites actually beginning the vaccinations as early as March 22nd. We can open up for questions. I know that's kind of a lot to digest. It's all coming together real fast.

Q&A Session

Governor, we've seen in other States they're taking a similar approach with Teachers that the pharmacies have started beginning vaccinations sooner, such as in Florida. CVS is taking the initiative there. Will we see something similar? Could the pharmacies begin vaccinating Teachers here in New Hampshire before...

Governor Sununu:

Oh, Walgreens will be a part of this, as well. That's a big prong of this, absolutely. Yeah.

But is the timeline the same? Could it be sooner than that?

Governor Sununu:

I suppose it could be. I mean, right now, Walgreens is kind of moving everybody up out of April and into the later times into March. So as soon as the opportunity opens up for the Group, 2A, to register into our fixed sites, then they should be able to go into the Walgreens sites, if not sooner. I mean, it could even be sooner. And again, if we can move things faster, we definitely will.

Right now, I don't want to overcommit to a specific date. But, yeah, Walgreens is definitely a part of this. And folks can call 211, when kind of 2A opens up to schedule that. And 211 will schedule you through Walgreens and a fixed site all at the same time.

And you said time and again you don't want to prioritize Teachers in their 30s over people who are maybe older and still need the vaccine. Are you confident that's not going to happen here now? I mean, just within the last few days, you were saying, we can't do this and now we can?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, we're just going so fast. I think the Team did such a good job moving so many folks up. And we weren't 100% sure how many folks would want to be moved up out of April. We basically have moved up everybody that wants to be moved up. We still have some available slots.

So, yeah, I think kind of 1B, as we close out 1B, we start 2A and then start 2B, over the new few weeks. I hate to keep using this term, but it'll all kind of mesh together a little bit. But, anybody who's in 1B can be getting a shot this month. There are sites open. So if you haven't registered yet, by all means you can register. But we're ready to move onto 2A.

Can you describe a little bit more on what the closed pod schools are? Like, who are those Teachers?

Governor Sununu:

Sure; so the local -- there's 13 Public Health Networks. Many of them will work with and have been working with some of the SAU Districts, themselves, to provide the administration of the vaccine somewhere within that district, a closed pod being just the Teachers and the Childcare Workers, and those within that SAU, for example. It'll help being managed and administered by the Public Health Networks and working in conjunction with those schools.

So there's a couple different ways that that could look. But I know a lot of schools are looking to basically run their own vaccination sites, if you will, for their District Teachers. And our Public Health Networks are going to work hand-in-hand with them to manage that process.

Do we know who's going to be first?

Governor Sununu:

No, I don't think we know who's going to be first. I know a lot of them have been working to this. It's all happening so fast. So, as soon as the first date that they're available to start, which I believe is the 12th -- is that right? Yeah, well, you lost my dates. There we go. Yeah, as soon as March 12th, so that's next Friday. Is that right? Next Friday, March 12th, some of these closed pods may start up.

But, again, if a school can't do it, if a district can't do it, or there's logistics that don't allow it, the Teachers can then, on the 17th, just go to the VMS one-stop shop, new registration system, sign up and off you go.

And what role did the Biden Administration Directive play in your decision-making here?

Governor Sununu:

None, really, because we were already kind of fast-tracked. We were just getting the vaccine out. I think the Biden Administration, it's been very confusing. I think a lot of people understand they're kind of one -- Biden Administration on the Teachers and vaccinations have been kind of back-and-forth a little bit. My sense is that's mostly directed to States that didn't prioritize Teachers at all. We did. And they were kind of next in line. And so, we're just going right to it.

Governor, of the 2B population, we're talking a couple hundred thousand people, right, 50-and-over?

Governor Sununu:

Yes.

And you're looking at starting that in a couple weeks. As we saw in Massachusetts, any concern that the system can handle the kind of -- which is going to be a Black Friday moment when everybody over 50 is going to try and get a vaccine? Can the system handle? We saw in other States when they've tried to do that, websites crashed and...

Governor Sununu:

Perry, can the system handle it?

Commissioner Plummer:

We're using the same registration that handled the 300,000 people, and 120,000 in the first day.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

Commissioner Plummer:

So we're don't have any concern with that.

Governor Sununu:

Absolutely, yeah. It'll handle it. It'll handle it.

With regard to logistically or logically, with regard to appointment dates, some folks in that 2B should expect to start with an appointment date maybe in May? Could it be as late as May or not necessarily?

Governor Sununu:

I don't think. Yeah. No, not necessarily. No, look, they could start with an appointment date three days later. On March 25th, 2B vaccinations are going to start. And based on the size of that, let's say it's a couple hundred thousand -- and that's a rough estimate -- if the uptake were 50% or 60%, let's say it's 100,000 or 150,000 individuals, when we're getting 40,000 to 50,000 vaccines a week, there's no reason to think that we couldn't get through the majority of it, if not all of it, by the end of April.

Yeah, I mean, we're just getting vaccine at such a rapid rate. I imagine that we're going to have a lot of availability of sites. So, there will be a big crunch onto the system. But, again, it's not like you're going to -- I don't think you're going to be booking months and months out.

So don't feel you have to get on at 8:00 a.m. on March 22nd, or anything like this. I think this is going to be, unlike the first time around with the VAM System, this new system will be able to handle the load. And there'll be a lot more availability of vaccinations because we literally have three or four times as much vaccine as we originally had. I think when we first started, what, we had 13,000 doses in the first week? And now we're pushing 40,000 to 50,000, when you add Walgreens into the mix.

And then, I'm sure you've seen some of your counterpart Governors this week in Texas, Mississippi talk about opening 100%, the President referring to that thinking as Neanderthal thinking. Where do you come down, in terms of fully opening? When's logic dictate that we could be 100% fully open and might not need a Mask Mandate?

Governor Sununu:

Well, I'll say this. First, I was very disappointed with the President's comments. I don't think there should be name-calling or anything like that. Every State is taking -- is looking at their variables to make their decisions. Texas or Mississippi, or Florida, or New York, or New Hampshire, we are all very different and so whether you look at the weather, the administration of the vaccines, the fatality rate the hospitalization, all of these variables come into play.

And again, I can only speak for New Hampshire in particular. I would never try to speak for another State, per se. When those -- all of those things that we want to see trend in a positive direction are trending in a positive direction: vaccine is going out faster. Hospitalizations is going down rapidly. Fatalities is going down very rapidly. It's clear that the vaccine is working. The number of outbreaks that we're seeing in facilities is going down rapidly. As all of that data kind of marries together, if you will, over the next, let's say, two weeks to six weeks, something like that, I think we will be able to make more announcements of flexibility of restrictions and things of that nature. So I think we're very close to that point, frankly, because everything is trending.

Now, if something happens that we're not expecting, I suppose we have to be cautious of that. But just to be frank about it, we've been very, very good at predicting the trends over the course of this pandemic. We work really, really hard. Dr. Chan and his Team, and Beth Daly work so hard at looking at the data, predictive analytics, all these things that we talk about.

And so, if everything stays on the right trend, there's no reason that we shouldn't be flexing a lot more things open and then talking about where we go with the Mask Mandate in the next month-or-so, something like that. But there's really no timeline on it, per se, other than to say you don't look at a single datapoint, because, I mean, it was wonderful. Last week, we had a couple days where we had zero deaths. That's awesome and that was wonderful. But we know that's not consistent. So we have to get some of these numbers a little more consistent, when you look at the trends of the data and where they're all marrying together to give you confidence that, by flexing things open, you're not putting folks in harm's way.

Governor, just kind of going off that point about deaths, this may be for you or Dr. Chan, while there has been success, I mean, three new deaths today, all them not in long-term care facilities.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

Have you guys identified any sorts of trends or underlying conditions that you could point to as...

Governor Sununu:

No, not really. I mean, there's -- I think we had 15 fatalities this past week. That's a lot better than 50 or 60 like we saw just a month ago. A lot more of them are happening outside of long-term care facilities, primarily because long-term care, for the most part, received their vaccine. They're done. They've gotten at least their option of having their first and second shot. The vast majority of individuals there have been able to build up their antibodies. And that's why I think we're seeing very successful numbers in our long-term care, and we don't have the fatalities at such a high rate as we did.

So, obviously, there is still community transmission. If anything, that is the fact that we still have fatalities, maybe 80 or 90 people in the hospital today, something like that. So we're still in this, and that's why we still want people to make sure you're wearing your mask. You're maintaining social distancing. You're doing all those things that have made us successful. The people of this State and their discipline are what made us successful.

But we have to -- I've said it a few times this week, but I really mean it. This is a marathon. We're at about mile 23 of the 26-mile marathon. You don't stop and pat yourself on the back, and call it a day, right? You've got to finish strong. But that means you got to sometimes work hardest when you're the most exhausted. When COVID fatigue is really setting in, that's when you got to push it really, really hard, get the vaccines out, make sure things are coming together, be disciplined with the mask wearing and the social distancing. And if we do all that, I have no doubt that we will see these trends keep continuing in a positive direction and we can get out of this.

I have a question about broadband. Senator Shaheen has been fighting for more money. But there was some money, I believe, that went unused in the last round.

Governor Sununu:

Of CARES Act?

Of CARES Act.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, sure.

Could you foresee the same problem if we get more money from whatever may be passed?

Governor Sununu:

No, so, I think more money for expanded broadband is a huge opportunity. Most States didn't even try to expand broadband. We were one of the few States that did. We originally allocated \$50 million, because we weren't sure how many projects would come in. There's about \$15 million of that money got used, and we've expanded broadband to thousands of homes.

The main reason we couldn't go beyond that was because every project by Federal Rule had to be finished by the end of December. And a lot of projects that applied said, we can't finish by December. And so, therefore, we weren't allowed to give them the money.

Now, two things have happened. CARES Act has been extended to use those dollars beyond. Now, we spent all the CARES Act money. But we are getting some remitted back. So we can look at that opportunity, so we can maybe try those projects with old CARES Act dollars that are being remitted back to the State. We could potentially try that opportunity.

But I think the Federal Government also understands, if they provide money for this, which is a very smart thing to do -- I'm very for that -- they just need to make sure they're giving us the timeline to complete the construction. That's all. And I think they will. I think they understand that any of this revenue relief, or infrastructure money, they can't expect every State to spend it on infrastructure projects over the next six months. They're probably going to have to give us a little extra time. And because of that, I feel confident that whatever they give, we should be able to expend.

We've already done it once. Other States are going to have to try to scramble and figure it out. We've already done it. We have a formula for success. We can dust off some of those applications and go almost right away with some of these shovel-ready projects. So I think we will be able to move very quickly.

Could I have one more?

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

Might as well; so, this week, the number of folks who have made allegations of abuse dating back years at the Youth Detention Center rose to 230 people.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah.

Three Democratic Lawmakers have sent you a letter asking you to shut down the Youth Decent -- excuse me, the Youth Detention Center. Your response to that, and then you have...

Governor Sununu:

Sure; well, so, I have a couple different responses. Number 1: when I came into office, the census at the Youth Detention Center was somewhere around 50 or 60 kids. And from the very beginning, we've worked very hard to get more community services to the point where it isn't just a one centralized system. I think we only have maybe a dozen-or-so youth in that Center right now. The rest of the kids have been placed in more community-based settings.

So we've been working on the idea of allowing kids better programming in a community-based setting, which I think we can all agree is likely a better result for that individual. We've been working on that for the past few years, and we've had a lot of success. And we're going to keep doing it.

When it comes to the -- not just the allegations, but what I think a lot of people understand was clear abuse over decades, going back to the '60s, look, other Administrations didn't want to jump into it. We jumped right in.

And one thing I told the Team was, we're not going to look at a single time period. We're not going to look at a single case. We're going to open this thing completely and make sure that anybody that we can verify may have been abused in any way, justice is going to be served. And we're going to stand there and make sure that those individuals have the justice that they deserve.

And so, I think that's why the span and the number of potential allegations is so large, because I've insisted that the Team turn over every single stone. And so, there's still a little ways to go in that process. But I think they're doing a great job. It spans, again, all the way back to 1963, I mean, literally almost 50 years.

So, as part of the next phase, if you want to look at just shutting down the Youth Detention Center, the only problem with that -- I love the idea of more community programs. And we've been getting closer and closer to that all the time.

But you do have individuals, youth in that Detention Center, that are a clear danger to themselves and others. And if you don't have the appropriate facilities in the community to protect themselves and the public, that could be -- that's going to be creating a much worse and much more dangerous situation.

So, right now, our system says that this one facility, it can be secure. It can provide safety for those individuals and those that come in contact with them, still provide some programming for them, which is, I think, very, very positive. But obviously it would be great to get more community programming.

So it isn't the type of situation where we can just lock the door and walk away. We have to have those community programs. We've been doing a great job expanding them. It probably takes a little more time. And if the Legislature -- the Legislature in the last session, the Democrat-led Legislature in the

last session didn't propose anything. So, if the Legislature in this session wants to take it up, I'm all ears for it.

Governor, the Speedway event, any issues with staffing there? Are you confident you're going to have enough people to make that work?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, absolutely. I think we're doing really well in staffing. So we've had a lot of volunteers step up, State Employees, National Guard.

Commissioner Plummer:

Yeah, we have about 300. We have 300 people and it's all...

Perry, do you mind if you'd step -- thanks.

Commissioner Plummer:

Yeah, it'll take about some 300 people to run the site each day. And almost all those spots are filled. And we're filling them pretty effectively. Great outpouring from the hospitals, the local communities, and keep in mind we're still running all our fixed sites at the same time. So the National Guard is really running the fixed sites, while we're doing the super sites.

Governor Sununu:

Do we have some questions on the phone? Don't go too far, brother.

Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:

Hi, following up on your comments about the Sununu Youth Service Center, you said you're confident that the criminal investigation will get to the bottom of it. At the same time, the State is seeking to dismiss the civil lawsuit in part by arguing that the Lead Plaintiff waited too long to come forward. So, my question is: what message does that send to victims? And do you think victims will continue to come forward and cooperate with a criminal investigation if that's what they're hearing?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, we're encouraging everyone to come forward. Anyone who might have an allegation or been a witness to anything, of course we want everyone to come forward and be part of the investigation.

Paula Tracy with InDepthNH:

Good afternoon, Governor. I have a question about Mask Mandates. The States of Texas and Mississippi have lifted their Mandates this week. And I wondered if you would consider doing that, and what metrics you would use to make that decision.

Governor Sununu:

So, again, it's something we keep talking about. What Texas or Mississippi, or Massachusetts, or New York do, they're all -- every State is different. So we don't look at what other States do. We look at our data.

And as I said earlier, we're going to look at kind of the trends we see with hospitalization, fatality, the speed at which we are administering vaccine to individuals. Those are like the key variables. There's always other things that we look at, as well. But it's really looking at the trends and making sure that all those trends stay in a positive direction and really marry together to ensure that any loosening of restrictions doesn't result in significant surges in hospitalizations and fatalities.

Michael Graham with the New Hampshire Journal:

Two quick questions; one for Dr. Chan: have you run into vaccine resistance, as the number of the supply of the doses increase and we get to the point where a significant percentage of people 65-and-over have access to it? And then, for the Government, you've talked several times this week about efforts in the Legislature to limit your emergency powers. You say that you've done a good job and therefore there's no need for change. But as a political conservative who believes in limited government, do you agree in principle that there should be a limiting factor, such as legislative control, legislative time limits? Some States allow the Governor to declare emergency, but then he has to come back and reauthorize it with permission from the Legislature. Wouldn't that be more inline with your conservative political world view?

Governor Sununu:

Well, so, let me correct you a little bit. I haven't said that the emergency powers are good because I did a good job. That is not why the emergency powers are important. They're important because, in a crisis moment, the Chief Executive needs to have complete flexibility in terms of how to administer everything from a vaccine, how to buy PPE. I mean, these are just the examples out of COVID.

But the examples could extend to a variety of different emergencies. If the Governor and the Chief Executive have to keep going to the Legislature every time to get a decision in an emergency, the definition of an emergency is you have to move quickly. You have to respond. You can't let bureaucracy hold that up.

So it really has nothing to do with the job that we've done. I think we have done a very good job. But the ability to have that and my promotion of that -- and I think every Governor would agree with me. Every Governor that was actually on the frontlines managing this top-to-bottom understands that you have to have that kind of flexibility.

So, that's why you call it emergency powers. It's not fulltime. It isn't long-term. It isn't built into the Constitution to last for indefinite years and years on end. There's a fixed time. That's why you have to keep reupping it.

Technically, the Legislature could get rid of the emergency powers, the state of emergency altogether. That would be a terrible thing to do, given that we would lose all ability to apply for FEMA funding, all ability to get funding for our National Guard. I mean, the domino effect of negative repercussions there is huge, and would ultimately cost the State hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, never mind just create a bureaucratic mess and not get people the relief, the vaccination, the testing that they need and deserve through the pandemic. Oh, and Dr. Chan, sorry, yeah, on the vaccine resistance, sure.

Dr. Chan:

So, good question about resistance to vaccination or what we've sometimes referred to as vaccine hesitancy. I don't have exact numbers of the people in New Hampshire, or the percentage of people, or the number of people in New Hampshire that might be hesitant or concerned about receiving one of the three available COVID-19 vaccines.

Certainly, we know that there are people out there, and there will always be people out there, that are hesitant or resistant to getting a vaccine. There are some national numbers that have been put on this through surveys that have been conducted over the course of the pandemic, one of which was conducted as recently as in December, which showed that there are potentially 20%, 30% of people in a population who have some hesitancy or resistance to receiving one of the available COVID-19 vaccines.

We continue to stress the importance of the vaccine. We continue to stress the very high effectiveness, or efficacy, of these vaccines, all three of them: preventing disease; severe disease, hospitalizations, deaths, and the importance of people getting the vaccine, because this is how we are going to bring the pandemic under control and be able to, long-term, loosen restrictions that everybody, myself included, are getting tired of dealing with.

We know that the vaccines are safe. We know that the vaccines are effective. And so, we continue to stress the importance of everybody taking the vaccine when it's offered to them, and taking the first available vaccine, so that we can get more and more people vaccinated as quickly as possible.

Again, as you hear us week after week stress, and as you've heard the Governor talk about the more we can get people vaccinated, the more people take the vaccine, the more quickly we can built up population-level protection and immunity, and the more likely we are to be able to more quickly relax restrictions in the future. Thanks.

Allie V. with New Hampshire Public Radio:

Thank you. And good afternoon, Governor. So, at least twice in the last two weeks, the States has notified Regional Health Public Network about large quantities of vaccines about to expire, asking them to distribute those shots on short notice. So I'm wondering if you can explain just why there were so many extra doses, and why such short notice for the folks who were being asked to distribute them?

Governor Sununu:

Sure; so I'm going to have Perry come up and talk about some of the details. But I'll say this. The State does a fantastic job. If there's ever any extra vaccine, whether it's on a day or a weekly basis, we move it very quickly. We do not let anything go to waste. In fact, I think we have one of the lowest waste rates of vaccine in the country, well-below 1% at this point.

So, the Team does a great job. And they don't just get it out to anywhere. We have a system in place that Perry will talk about a little bit about moving people up and actually having a go-to list to get folks in on very short notice.

So the great news is that nothing goes to waste. We're always willing and able, is the important part, to move people up, even on very short notice. But I'll have Perry talk about some of the dynamics over the past couple weeks.

Commissioner Plummer:

So, I think if you go back about a month, we had a Sunday where we opened up on Sundays and put a lot of vaccine through so-called last-minute, within a few days, because the vaccine is fragile. And the numbers that we are putting through our sites, we have some cancellations. In this past round, we had a lot of bad weather. So we had some cancellations there that left vaccine unused, and we wanted to get it in arms.

The whole what we call plus-one or bring your spouse, the numbers were lower than anticipated. They're starting to level out. So that added some vaccine that was available. And a lot of these hospitals and Regional Public Health Networks have said if you get vaccine last-minute, let us know. We will run a clinic last-minute for our patients. And that's what we did.

So we have a waste-reduction program. These build up over a few days or a week. And then, we push them back into the communities. We could certainly push them through our fixed sites, but we wanted to give the opportunity for a lot of these other partners to get them to some of the other areas of the community.

So it worked out really well. There was -- we did build up a couple thousand. I think the first time was, like, 1800 that we pushed out in a day. We pushed out about 2,000 with 0 waste in this last round. And that'll continue to happen every few weeks. And the people that got moved -- and that's part of the strategy of why we're where we are today with these numbers that the Governor displayed today, is because we're able to move those people up when that vaccine is out there.

But the vaccine's very fragile. So if it ends up out of a freezer, because of anticipated people coming, we have to get it in arms pretty quickly. So, we've done a great job of doing that, and for zero waste, or very, very little waste. And that's why we're ahead of schedule.

Governor Sununu:

Great, thank you, Perry. Great job, great job. Okay. Adam, yeah.

Either Commissioner Shibinette or I'm not sure if maybe somebody else describe the idea behind the homebound vaccinations and who's actually doing those.

Governor Sununu:

Oh, sure. I'll have Commissioner Shibinette come up.

Commissioner Shibinette:

So the homebound program is being done through a collaborative effort: homecare Agencies, the Regional Public Health Network, some contracted entities are helping us, and some mobile clinics for vaccination, in general. So, what we've done is each Homecare Agency has reached out proactively to find which clients have not received the vaccine and want the vaccine.

So what we found initially, we had estimated the number of homebound people to be about 50,000. When we started reaching out to those people, we found out that number was very much lower than that, because they've had family members bring them through vaccination clinics, or they live in elderly housing. And we've held a mobile clinic there. So that number ended up being much smaller.

So we take our CFI number, which is our Choices for Independent Living, which is our Medicaid program. We marry that with the Agency list. And you have a general list of everybody that's homebound that is receiving services in the community.

So, what we're opening up tomorrow, which is our 211 option, is for those that do not receive services from anybody -- maybe they have a family member, or maybe they're living by themselves -- to self-select into that program. Regional Public Health Networks will clean that data and they've already started vaccinating. They've been vaccinating. They piloted it a couple weeks ago. They've been vaccinating this week small amounts. We expect those amounts to grow exponentially over the next couple of days.

Do we have a ballpark number on what is that group that's not affiliated with any Homecare Agency but is homebound? Is it 2,000?

Commissioner Shibinette:

We don't know, because they're unknown to us, right? But we're reaching out to a variety of different people, advocacy organizations, to try to get those names so that we reach everybody. But what we started out with, which was that 50,000 number, we now think is actually between 7,000 and 10,000. So it's much, much less than what we anticipated.

And as you can imagine, building a program to vaccinate 50,000 in the home is much different than building a program to vaccinate 7,000 in a home. So, we've pivoted a couple times on this and we're going to make it work.

Governor Sununu:

And the only thing I would add to that is, again, it takes a lot of times. Sometimes, as Commissioner Shibinette outlined earlier, you might be taking a half-hour to get to each individual home. It really is a one-on-one thing. And then, after they administer the vaccine, then they wait and make sure there's no adverse effects or anything like that. So, it really is a one-on-one process. And that could go for weeks and weeks, and weeks, for quite some time. But we're just going to make sure that everybody who wants to get into the system, if they can call 211, we will make sure that they get into the system. They're identified.

So I think that the takeaway from today is, again, because of the success of moving folks up so quickly into the super site that's going to be happening this weekend, up to 12,000 people getting

vaccinated, that's allowed us to kind of have 1B, 2A, and now even 2B, towards the end of the month. It's all going to kind of mesh together, because it isn't that one group stops and the other starts again. They'll all kind of overlap a little bit.

But, we've gotten through the vast majority of Group 1B much, much faster than we thought. 2A and Teachers will start as early as -- with closed pods -- as early as late-next week. And then, hopefully with 2B starting by the end of the month, which is really awesome; I didn't think we were going to get to 2B until, like, May. But the fact that we're actually doing it in March, I think, is a huge opportunity. And that will be 50-and-up. It will be with our new scheduling system, the new VMS system. And maybe next week we will make sure that everyone has the website for that and whatnot, so they know that.

Again, we will remind folks of the dates. We will remind them where to go so that they can sign up. But it's more of a one-stop shop, instead of the old VAM System. But, no, we feel, I think, very excited that things are moving so quickly. And we're just going to keep going as fast as the Federal Government will give it to us. So, yes, Adam?

Kind of a news question here; all through the last year, in the LEACT Commission there was all this talk about, we need the data. We need to be able to see the racial and ethnic breakdown of some of these arrests. And there's this Report out now that the State has been collecting some of this information on an obscure website. How did that happen? And why did nobody know about this, at least when we were talking about this last year?

Governor Sununu:

I apologize. I don't know the Report that you're referring to. So, the State does have some data. I think we collect it from a variety of different sites. I mean, I can go back and work with the Attorney General and the folks at the Department of Safety that have been leading these efforts.

So, I'm not sure exactly where they're -- what those sites are, off the top of my head, and how they're amalgamating all that data. But, we can get you some more information. I don't have a great answer for you there. Is that something that just came out, or...

Yeah.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, sorry. I don't have an answer for you. But we can get you one later today, get you a little more detail, to be sure.

Great; I mean, with things speeding up, do you know when -- do you have a projection of when every Granite Stater who wants to get a vaccine can get a vaccine?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, that's a great question. So, when is it that everyone will be offered a vaccine? So, first thing is to remember kids are not authorized yet. And hopefully one of these vaccines will be authorized for kids at some point, or down the road maybe another one comes online. So, kids are still one of the

sensitive touchpoints, especially for those who have comorbidities, because we really don't have a way to directly vaccinate them yet. So that's something of great concern for us.

I know that the President said that everybody who wants a vaccine will get it by the end of May. I hope that's possible. I don't know. That sounds pretty bold, if you're talking about 16 to 65 in the next three months. Maybe, that would be great. That would really be great.

So I don't know. I think late-spring/early-summer is a good, general guess. But I think there'll be potentially enough vaccine. It's just a matter of, can they get it to us and how will it go out? And what nobody really knows -- we've seen a lot of different data, or at least I have -- what will the uptake be? Will the 20-somethings -- is it going to be 20% or 75% that take the vaccine? We're not really sure. But that, in itself, would really vary the timescale of what we're talking about greatly. And so, we just kind of have to wait and see to see at what rate those populations take it up.

But, everybody should get it. I mean, it works. It's safe. They all work. They are all safe. And so, any opportunity you have to get the vaccine, please do so, because it protects not just you but the loved ones around you, as well.

Okay, so a lot happening. We will come back next week. We will remind folks of all these dates again next week. We will have some more information. Things are moving very, very quickly all for very good reasons. The State continues to do a great job. Perry and his Team, and Dr. Daly, Dr. Chan, all their Teams are doing just a phenomenal job.

Maintain wearing the masks. Maintain the social distancing. If we stay disciplined a little longer, there's no reason to think we won't be really out of this and with great flexibility as we enter the summer very, very soon. Thank you, guys.