



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu  
Press Conference  
Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

---

**Governor Sununu:**

Hey, David, how are you? Good to see you. I love it when I come out and I always say hi to David. He goes, looking good. So, he's not commenting on the COVID 10 that I've gained. I appreciate that. A bunch of really good things to talk about today, so let's first kick it off with Dr. Chan and an update from Public Health.

**Dr. Chan:**

Good afternoon, just a quick numbers update for today, we are reporting 515 new people diagnosed with COVID-19 in the State. So now, in the last week, we are averaging over 400 new infections each day. And the number of people with active infection, or active COVID-19, is 3,585.

Our test-positivity rate continues to slowly creep up. And the average percentage of all of our tests that are positive for COVID-19 currently is at 5.0%. Hospitalizations are starting to increase and there are 102 people statewide now hospitalized with COVID-19, which is also an increase from last week. And then, one new person who has died from COVID-19 in the State, this is not somebody associated with a long-term care facility, bringing the total number of people that have died during this pandemic from COVID-19 to 1,251.

So, the numbers point still to the fact that community spread of COVID-19 is increasing. The number of new infections, the test-positivity rate continue to increase. And now, over the last week, the number of hospitalizations due to COVID-19 is also starting to increase.

We continue to rely on a combination of both vaccination and the typically-recommended community mitigation measures, including facemask use and social distancing. Continue to stress both of these points as important to bring community transmission of COVID-19 back down and continue to encourage and strongly recommend that people get vaccinated at the earliest available appointment. With that, I will hand things over to Dr. Daly for a vaccine update. Thanks.

**Dr. Daly:**

Good afternoon, just a few quick updates from me on vaccination in New Hampshire. To-date, 754,000 doses of vaccine have been administered in our State. This includes 496,000 people that have received their first dose, which is 36% of New Hampshire's population. Of those, 276,000 have been fully vaccinated, which is 20% of the population. In the last week, we administered over 65,000 doses of vaccine in our State.

This week, New Hampshire received 89,000 first doses of vaccine, between the doses that are allocated to the State and the doses that are allocated to the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program. So there are now around 100 different sites in New Hampshire where you can get vaccinated all across the State.

In addition to our State- and hospital-run public vaccination sites, there are 86 pharmacy locations currently administering vaccine, with an additional 41 pharmacies set to begin offering vaccine in the next week-or-two.

To register for vaccination at any of these sites, including these pharmacies, you still do register and schedule through VINI. There continues to be plenty of appointments available. So we encourage everyone in New Hampshire who is eligible for vaccination to get vaccinated.

In fact, more than 200,000 people have registered for vaccination since Phase 3 opened last week. And so, between those individuals who have registered and are scheduled for appointments, as well as those who have already been vaccinated, around 60% of people in New Hampshire who are 16 and older have made the choice to get vaccinated. If you haven't signed up yet, please do. These vaccines are safe and highly effective. And they're the best way to prevent COVID-19. Thank you.

### **Commissioner Shibinette:**

Good afternoon, just a quick outbreak update. We are closing one outbreak today. The Granite Recovery Center is closed, effective today. We have no new outbreaks to announce. That leaves our total of institutional outbreaks in New Hampshire at four. We have two long-term care facilities and two correctional facilities that are in still outbreak status. Thank you.

### **Governor Sununu:**

Great, thank you, Commissioner and Dr. Daly, and Dr. Chan. Couple things to talk about and then we will open it up for questions; first, as a lot of folks know, last Friday, our State opened vaccine availability to all New Hampshire residents over the age of 16. And since then, we've seen a little over 100,000 new registrants into VINI, which is absolutely terrific. That's 16-and-up, anyone can register. And even for the 16- and 17-year-olds, we identify, if you need the Pfizer vaccine for those younger individuals, where to get it. So that whole system seems to be going very well.

And new registrations keep coming in daily, at an average of about 5,000 or 6,000 per day. And I think right now, we have about 240,000 first-dose appointments still available. So a quarter million first-dose appointments still available between now and Memorial Day, so there's still an immense amount of opportunity for folks to come into the system.

We've made sure that obviously New Hampshire residents have first shot at it. We're limited, as everyone knows, by the amount of vaccine that the Federal Government gives us. But, given that we've opened it up to everyone, all New Hampshire residents have really have had a shot and will continue to have a shot for the next week-or-so to be first in line.

But, today, we are announcing that, on Monday, April 19th, so that's a week from this Monday, about 10 days from now, New Hampshire will expand eligibility for vaccine to all individuals 16-and-older regardless of residency. With all States expanding their eligibility per, I think, President Biden talked about all States having the ability for 16-and-up to be eligible for vaccine, on that same date of April 19th, we're clearly well-ahead of that game and we have a lot of confidence that, again, allowing New Hampshire residents a few weeks to make sure that they have the best shot at the most recent and up-to-date availability of appointments, we just have so much more availability. We're going to have a lot of vaccine here. So we want to get it out to anyone who might actually be here in the State.

And so, there's plenty of time between now and April 19th for additional New Hampshire residents to make sure that they get their appointment. But after the 19th, it really is opened up to everyone. And that's really a testament to Perry Plummer and his Team. We are one of the fastest States to get the vaccine out, which is terrific. But that's allowed us to make this opportunity availability.

And we are off to the races yet again. As a lot of folks know, this weekend we have another supersite. We were asked some questions earlier. Saturday and Sunday, over 10,000, I think maybe closer to 12,000 actually doses of Johnson & Johnson will be administered for folks who wanted to move up in the system. They're going to be up there Saturday and Sunday. I will be there, as well, as well a few other folks in the room that are going to be coming with me, but just a huge opportunity.

On top of that, earlier today we opened up additional opportunity to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine this Sunday in three different parts of the State: Salem, Concord, and Newington. And those, I think, have all filled up, believe it or not.

So, the good news is people are going into VINI. They're staying on top of it. They're moving themselves up, which we really encourage folks to do. It's such an easy process to do. And that's just allowing us to get the vaccine out that much faster and open up opportunity for everyone else, whether you're a resident of New Hampshire or not, beginning on the 19th.

I was going to announce that we had spots available. You can go on. I just don't know if we have many of those spots available. I think about two hours ago, there were still a few left. But, you can go on and check on VINI right now to see if there's any of those spots available for the supersite, or for those three additional J&J sites. They are identified. But I think they may all be filled up. So, you go in and check. You never know what might be available. But we've gotten a huge influx of Johnson & Johnson vaccine in this past week. And we don't want to hold it, right? We're going to get it out very, very quickly.

And the last thing I guess that really leads me to a little bit in terms of future Johnson & Johnson allocations, we are going to be cut back. We were told by the White House that they kind of set an expectation that unfortunately they cannot meet over the next few weeks, for a variety of reasons.

So, what we anticipated to get over the next couple weeks for Johnson & Johnson vaccine is probably not going to come through, we've been told. That's okay. We're still well-ahead of the game. And whatever we do get, we will add to our mix and get out as fast as we possibly can.

But, we have been cut back for a variety of reasons, as all States across the country have. We're being told our allocation will drop from about 2500 next week to 900 the weeks following, unfortunately. We were hoping for a lot more than that, as a lot of folks were. So there's various reasons why people may prefer the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. It's a one-shot and done. There could be medical reasons, as well, potentially. So we just obviously want to get that out as fast as we can. But, we just have to be patient and hopefully they'll keep sending us more and more.

I'm realizing this. Someone said, boy, you're one of the fastest States in the country to get the vaccine out. And I said, yeah, it's not a race, so to say. Every year, I do a drag race with school buses. You guys see that, where we do a drag race with school buses for charity? I always lose that race against my friend, Scott, on the bus. But remember, those buses only go -- you can push the gas as hard as you want, but it's still only going 75 miles an hour, because it's a school bus.

So, we're going fast, but we can really only go as fast as the Federal Government provides the vaccine. The Team has done a phenomenal, phenomenal job. We've definitely stayed ahead the game, and that's opened a lot of opportunity for us, and, again, allows us to look at flexibility, looking at restrictions and the Mask Order, and the timing of all that. It's really hinged on the vaccine distribution and allocation at this point. And we're doing really, really well.

So I think a lot of folks know that the end is really near for a lot of those restrictions. And it's just more flexibility and it guarantees a bigger and better summer, as we move forward. Okay. With that, we can open it up for questions for anyone in the room who's got something. Hi, how are you?

### Q&A Session

*Hi, Governor. With cases now up and variants showing up in greater numbers, do you have any concerns about pushing the fact of sending kids back on the 19th, when Teachers won't be fully-vaccinated yet, and at a time when we're just starting to get everything going?*

#### **Governor Sununu:**

Yeah, we will reiterate what we said for months, what the CD [sic] said and the Biden Administration have said. You do not need a vaccine to get schools back up-and-running. Most schools in the State have been up-and-running without being fully-vaccinated, or even vaccinated at all, if you look back in the fall. You can do it safely.

The few schools and school districts who have asked for waivers in terms of our push to get everyone back five days a week on the 19th, they've submitted something like over 60 questions. We answered those. We got those back. I know Dr. Chan and Dr. Talbot, and their Team were on the -- and Dr. Daly -- were on the phone with a lot of those folks yesterday helping answer those questions and allay some of those concerns.

So, we feel very, very confident that all schools can open. And sure, we're seeing more variants and all that. But there's no evidence right now that the vaccine doesn't work against variants. There's no evidence right now that, again, this can't be done successfully.

Are we going to have variants? Absolutely. Are we going to have high case counts? We've always said we're going to have this spring surge, absolutely. We could have another fall surge this fall. It's not so much about the case counts. It's really about, are we protecting the most vulnerable, getting that fatality rate way down? And we've done very, very well with that. Having the number of folks in a hospital that is manageable, doesn't overwhelm the system, we've really been able to achieve that, as well.

So, we look at all those variables. But, yeah, nothing really changes just because there's a variant out there. Again, the CDC wants kids back. Everybody wants kids back. And the parents are just itching to get those kids back, which I think is a huge opportunity for those families.

*The CDC did actually say today that States should be limiting youth sports to curtail the spread. Are we considering that at all in New Hampshire or...*

#### **Governor Sununu:**

No, not really. I haven't looked at that, in particular. A lot of schools managed the Youth Sports Programs very successfully. We gave them flexibility to do that: how they were going to manage masking and how they're going to manage cohorts and all that. By giving schools flexibility, I think they did a very, very good job of it over the fall, during the fall surge. And we will continue to encourage them to do that, if they choose to have those sports.

But we're not looking at curtailing sports or anything like that. If your kids want to play Little League and it's available, go out there and play Little League. Be out there in the fresh air. Enjoy spring. Remember, we're also talking about our children who are far and away the least impacted. They can get COVID, of course. We know that, very asymptomatic. But, when you talk about the ultimate risk level of fatality and hospitalization, they are the lowest risk population. So we want to minimize that spready primarily because we don't want kids to bring it back to grandma and grandpa, or someone else in their family, that might have a condition.

If there are those risks that still exist, families can manage to that, of course. But, again, because we've been so aggressive about providing the vaccine to that 60-and-up vulnerable population, they've all had a chance to be in the system for a couple months now, get their shots, move up in the system, whatever it might be. That's the key, protecting that vulnerable population. And we've done very well with that, which allows all these other flexibilities to flow throughout the community.

*Governor, is there a concern that there might be a mixed message for people, because, on the one hand, people are going back to school, things are opening back up? But then, on the other hand, we're seeing north of 500 cases now, hospitalizations creeping up, variants. And is there a concern that there might be a mixed message there?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, not at all, because we've -- again, we've always known cases were going up. They're going up. We've always know that the key to this is vaccine and getting the fatality rate down, and protecting the most vulnerable. That message has been absolutely rock solid, crystal clear from day 1. And that's still our message very much today.

So, if there's -- I mean, we kind of go ad nauseum at this a little bit. But I understand you have to sometimes. It's not about getting COVID to zero. That's not -- we hope that could happen someday. But obviously we know that that's not really practical in the short-term, of course.

So, it's really about being able to manage this, manage that vulnerable population, manage the fatality rate. We've just done a phenomenal job with that. And that allows folks to be more flexible and allow some of these what are the few restrictions that we do have to talk about maybe best practices or things like that, as we move forward in the future.

*Is there something that is front in your mind as we enter the summer months that maybe concerns you more than anything else with more people are getting vaccinated, obviously, but the numbers just are going up?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Yeah. So, look. As we talk about making things a little looser, or coming off restrictions, the Reopen Committee looking at things, we're looking at a variety of different things statewide. Obviously, we still want folks to take those best practices for themselves, right? I know this sounds silly, as it probably did last year. But the idea that, are we washing our hands as much as we should? Are we maintaining social distancing, when we can? If we can, why not? Are we wearing a mask when we can, being respectful of that? Why not do that?

So, even as we loosen some of these restrictions, there is that aspect of personal responsibility, I think, in all aspects of our lives. New Hampshire handles personal responsibility really, really well. And so, that gives me a lot of confidence.

But, of course, we've been in this a year. Like we've almost gotten so accustomed to living this way. I guess my fear or hesitation is, let's remember what getting back to normal is. When we talk about reopening schools, for example, we're asking folks to go back on full-day, five days a week, on April 19th, because that's the norm, right? We're not asking folks to make an exception. We're asking folks to go back to the norm. We're getting rid of the exception, because we have that flexibility.

We know so much more about this virus than we did a year ago: who it affects; how it affects; and the populations we need to protect. And because we've been able to do that, it just gives, I think, a lot of confidence moving forward.

*Public Health Experts have said, in order to reach that herd immunity level, we need 70% to 80% of people to be vaccinated. Is that statewide or is that nationwide, and...*

**Governor Sununu:**

I could let Dr. Chan talk to that. Herd immunity is about a given community, right? That's not necessarily bounded by borders, because we cross the borders. So, in any given population or community, he could put a lot more scientific wording onto this than I can.

But the practical reality is we're probably not going to get 70% or 80%, unfortunately, vaccinated, at least in the short-term here in New Hampshire. I don't think you're going to find that anywhere in the country. We will probably have higher percentage of vaccinated in New Hampshire I think at the end of the day probably more than anywhere else in the country. I'm just guessing, because I think people take that responsibility very seriously.

But we're likely not going to see 70% or 80% in the near future. So I don't worry about -- I don't want to say worry. Our goal isn't to get to herd immunity right now. It would be wonderful if we got there. I have to manage with, I think, the realities of what we have.

If we wait until we get to herd immunity, we may never get there, right? And then, we will be stuck with these restrictions and the Mask Order, and all this kind of stuff into perpetuity with no endgame.

You always need an endgame here. And I think we've always set the goals and the data that we look at. We look at the exact same data. We have the exact same goals. And we're really getting there. It just gives us a lot of confidence not just going forward, but Dr. Chan and his Team, I mean, they did some great work at modeling and understanding this at a very detailed level early on. And so, we haven't had to flipflop or change our strategy. Our strategy's been consistent throughout.

*And do you or Dr. Chan have a hope or an expectation of what percentage we could -- what is attainable in New Hampshire?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, let's do quick math. So we have 596,000 folks that have received their first shot, right? We have about another 150,000 to 200,000 that are in the system ready to get their first shot. I think you could see over the next few months let's call it another 100,000 people maybe. Maybe that's a little high. 50,000 more people come into the system, something like that. So we're talking 750,000 out of 1.3 million, 1.4 million.

You got to take out the 16-and-unders [ph], because they kind of don't count, right? But they count in terms of the percentage of the overall population. So you can run the math right there. You're looking at 55%, 60% maybe at the end of the day, something like that. I'm really just roughing the numbers here. But that's what we tentatively see. It'll be interesting.

We are seeing the number people that are asking for it just really peter down. And so, that's why, again, we can open it up to everyone after April 19th, whether you live in Boston, Maine, New York, Vermont, doesn't matter. Come on in. Get your vaccine. We're open for business. I don't know. Maybe other States are doing that. I don't think they are. But, we just -- these guys have just done such a phenomenal job. It makes it a lot easier for everybody.

*What are your expectations in the coming months, say, with regard to the volume of Pfizer and Moderna that the State should get? Is it likely, if people have a second-dose appointment a month away, six weeks away, that, in the coming weeks, they could move that second dose up, that appointment up, with the volume that's coming in?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure; so Pfizer and Moderna have been very consistent. I think those companies have been kind of meeting their goals. We get a little more each week at a pretty consistent basis. So that's been very reliable for us.

Moving the second-dose appointment, again you still have to stay in the 21- or 28-day window to get that appointment. So those will stay, I think, pretty consistent. And ever since we started booking people's second appointments for them, the system has run, I think, very, very smoothly, for the most part.

Now, what you will see over the next few weeks and into the next couple months really is a transition, right, away from State sites. We're doing much more with the Pharmacy Programs. We're trying to get much more into hospitals or your local Providers, just your general Doctor. That's ultimately where we want to go, have enough vaccine that everybody can just order it just like they order the flu vaccine. And you can go see your Doctor or just go to the pharmacy to get it. That's where Perry and his Team will start transitioning the whole program through May and into June.

But, I mean, by Memorial Day, everyone who wants a shot -- more than everyone that wants a shot in New Hampshire is going to be able to have both their first and likely their second shot. And we will make that smooth transition as we hit summer. I think, by then, the numbers, the caseload that you see now, will be going down.

I think you're going to see cases keep tricking up, or be elevated for the next couple weeks. We saw that all through April last year until early-May. And I think I'm just guessing that that'll be a similar trend this year.

*And Governor, I have a quick...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure.

*Why rush with the schools? And why not wait until after vacation or...*

**Governor Sununu:**

Rush with the schools?

*Rush to open schools?*

**Governor Sununu:**

These schools -- there are school districts that have been open since September. These schools have not been open since September. We're not rushing. They're behind. Let's be very clear. I'm putting the mandate out there, because these schools haven't caught up to where everybody else is. They haven't been willing to make the changes or do whatever.

The model is there for that success. So we're not rushing. Some of these final districts are a little bit behind and we're working with them to get them to the 19th. We didn't surprise this on anybody. We gave them 2 1/2 weeks' notice after two months of talking about it, right? We were talking, hey, get ready for five days. Get ready for five days.

The importance of getting kids back by the 19th, there's a couple reasons. We don't want to wait until September to assess all the kids that might have fallen through the cracks. Remote learning was adequate in an emergency, but it did not meet the needs of the kids fully, when it comes to the educational opportunity. Teachers did their best and kids did their best. And everyone worked really hard at it. Don't misunderstand; but that lack of connection through a screen had real detrimental effects.

We want the kids in earlier to be able to put those eyes on them. Have those Teachers really engage one-on-one so that they can ask questions, so that they can really make sure we're getting them caught up before the schoolyear ends, and have the Teachers assess, gee, these kids over here need a little extra help in this. These kids over here need some extra help in this. These special ed kids didn't get their assessments done on-time.

So, the earlier you get them in, the faster you get kids caught up to where they need to be. And you hit September ground running, as opposed to just trying to figure it out. Welcome back to school after a year and a half. No, you want kids to finish the year strong so they'll go into September even stronger.



*What if districts don't meet that deadline?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Well, look. If a district doesn't meet the deadline, if they're still trying to remote learning after the 19th, those hours don't count, right, I mean, just as they wouldn't pre-pandemic. It's just like pre-pandemic. If you're remote learning, doesn't count towards your hours that schools have to meet as part of the qualifications for kids. So, those hours just wouldn't count. They'd either have to make them up, or if they've already exceeded their requirement in terms of hours, they'd be okay. But, as of the 19th, it's just going back to the same old rules and the same old implications if you don't meet certain hour requirements. It's very simple.

*How many schools have asked for waivers? And do they fit a certain characteristic?*

**Governor Sununu:**

20 to 30 waiver requests, I would say. They're a little bit all over, in terms of the requests. Some are because of staffing and that's a serious need. Like I said, a lot of them had questions. Well, what if we can't meet the 3- to 6-foot recommendations? Again, as was explained, we want them to try. But it's not a mandate. If, during certain times of the day, kids might be within 3 feet of each other, not preferable, but we're not going to shut down schools because of that, either, given the low-risk population that we're talking about.

If kids or families don't feel comfortable, they still have the option to ask for remote learning from their schools. So the parents can still request that. But, for the vast majority of students who are just dying to go back, I don't know. I mean, the number of phone calls I have received, literally hundreds into my office saying, hey, thank you for pushing it. And I know my district's asking for a waiver. Can you call them and make sure they do it? We're going to keep working with them, of course. But every parent is so excited about getting their kids back to fulltime learning on the 19th. That should tell you a lot about the importance of doing that.

So we've always provided a lot of flexibility, since day 1. We're not adding any more flexibility. We're just reminding them that they've always had that flexibility and to make sure that it works. That's why it's worked for over the half the schools in the State to-date.

*Kind of a health question here: after people are vaccinated and maybe they have some side-effects, what's the guidance on when people should be getting testing for COVID, even if they think it might just be the side-effects from the vaccine?*

**Governor Sununu:**

I'm going to have Dr. Chan talk about that one.

**Dr. Chan:**

Great; thank you for that question about side-effects after COVID-19 vaccination. And just to be clear that the same types of side-effects can be expected with any of the vaccines: the Pfizer vaccine; the Moderna vaccine; the J&J or Janssen vaccine. All of them have similar side-effects. And those can include local side-effects, like pain, redness, swelling at the site of the injection; or even systemic, whole-body symptoms, which could include fever, muscle aches, body aches, people just generally not feeling well.

Most of the time, those symptoms are going to be more mild and self-limited. So, if somebody has the typical symptoms like I just described, or the symptoms that could be expected after vaccination, and those occur within a day or two after receiving the vaccine and resolve on their own within one, two, maybe three days after the onset of the symptoms and they go away on their own, and their time to -- in that window where we would expect symptoms to occur, then there's not a need for somebody to think they might have COVID and go get testing, right? Certainly, if they're not feeling well, they should stay home.

But if there's any question about whether somebody's concerned they might have COVID, if their symptoms last longer than a few days, if their symptoms are getting worse and not going away, then it's always appropriate for somebody to reach out and contact their Healthcare Provider. Maybe have an assessment done; and if there's any question about whether somebody has COVID-19 or not because of their symptoms, it's never wrong to recommend and have that person go in and get testing. Testing still remains widely available throughout the State. People can be vaccinated but have been exposed just before vaccination, and so still develop COVID-19.

But, I think the bottom-line message is that people can and should expect some symptoms after getting the vaccine. If those are the typical symptoms that have been described and they occur within a time window that's consistent with the vaccine reaction, and those symptoms go away on their own, there's not necessarily a need for somebody to go in and get tested.

Again, if there's any question, they should talk to their Healthcare Provider. They can certainly consider testing. This may be one of the areas where like a rapid antigen test may be appropriate, if somebody thinks they're maybe lower risk but they're having symptoms. They can go in and get a nasal swab, a nose swab, have a response in 15 or 20 minutes, if there's concern about it being COVID-19.

*One more guidance question, and I don't think we've talked about this in this setting. There's a growing number of people who are getting their COVID-19 vaccine cards laminated. But at the same time, they might have to get a booster shot down the road. Where do you guys fall on, should people get these things laminated?*

**Dr. Chan:**

So that's a good question. We haven't actually been asked that before. Should you get your COVID-19 vaccine record card laminated? I've seen this in the news and I've seen this discussed in the news.

Let me first say that the most important thing is for people to keep those vaccine record cards. We've heard reports about people coming back for a second dose of the vaccine and not having their record card. The most important thing here is that people keep that card.

Certainly, once they've gotten their full series, or their full dose of the vaccine, they could consider getting it laminated. I don't think we have a position on whether or not they should do that. If, in the future, there needs to be another dose down the road, then they can always get another card, for example.

So, I think the more important messaging point here is that people keep the card and don't lose it. And there are strategies of people taking pictures of their card to store, in case they lose their card. But we do discourage people from sharing their information publicly online, because of the issues of identity theft that are out there. So keep your card; take a picture of it for electronic recordkeeping. Don't share it publicly; if people want to get it laminated, they can, but they don't have to. Thanks.

**Governor Sununu:**

I'm going to get mine laminated. I got to show my grandkids.

*Frame it?*

**Governor Sununu:**

The craziness of COVID, right, if anything, as a memento. I think we will go to the phone. WHEB, do we have any questions from WHE [sic]?

*I'm good.*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, oh, you're good? Okay, great. No worry.

***Annmarie Timmins with the New Hampshire Bulletin:***

*Thank you. I had a question about two populations in particular that might be harder to reach, either because they're homebound or they've had some hesitancy. The second part I'm thinking about, we've heard there's hesitancy in Healthcare Workers and among Republicans, according to polls. So I'm wondering, what is the vaccination rate for homebound? I know the State's been working on that. And then, second, are there messaging that you can do and are doing to those reluctant or hesitant populations? Thank you.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure; so I think that, if I may, the question was, what's the vaccination rate within homebound and what's the messaging that we do around that population? I think those were the two specific questions. I'm going to have Commissioner Shibinette talk about that.

**Commissioner Shibinette:**

Thank you. So we've been actively working on the homebound population now for three or four weeks. And we did a little bit before that time. But we identified probably about 2500 people that were homebound that qualified to have their homebound vaccination. There was a variety of reasons why they needed special attention. Some of it was transportation and some of it was they just couldn't get out.

To-date, I don't have an exact number with me. But I know that we are over 1,000 people receiving their homebound vaccination. That type of program takes much, much longer. You can't send 1,000 people to one site. We are literally going door-to-door for the homebound population to vaccinate. So we do expect that that's going to take several months to complete, but we are well on our way.

For vaccine-hesitant people, regardless of who they're affiliated with, it's one of the reasons why we want to send vaccine back to the Primary Care Physician. The Primary Care Physician has more time to sit with their patients and help them understand the risks and benefits around vaccination. And that's where you can overcome some of that hesitancy is with your Primary Care Physician who you have a long, therapeutic, trusting relationship with. So it is one of the reasons why we hope to move the vaccine administration into the healthcare system and to your Primary Providers in the next couple of months. Thank you.

**Holly Ramer with the Associated Press:**

*Hi, thanks. I have two questions: one COVID-related and one not. The first one, Governor, can you just clarify? You said you'll be at the Speedway this weekend. Which day will you be there? And does that mean that's when you'll be getting your shot? And then, my second question is the off-topic question. There was a seventh arrest today in connection with the investigation at the Youth Development Center. Can you comment on that? And beyond that, looking ahead, all of those who've been charged so far are accused of either abusing kids or being accomplices. Do you anticipate charges against others who weren't perpetrators or witnesses, but somehow allowed it to happen?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure; so, the first question about the vaccine, I will be at the Speedway at least on Saturday. And that is when I planned -- I've moved myself up in VINI. And that is when I plan to get my vaccine. Yes, so the answer is yes.

YDC, we made a seventh arrest today with these seven individuals that committed some horribly heinous crimes. And we're not messing around. I don't know a better way to say it. Anyone who was involved in perpetrating these crimes, these abuse on these kids, looks like from 1995 up until about 2016/2017, I can't speak for other Administrations. I can't speak for any of that other than to say that we're going after all of them and we're going to charge every last one of them. And this first seven is probably just a first seven. I imagine more charges will come.

The Attorney General's Office really handles that. I think they've done a phenomenal job. But we gave them a dictate early on. And former Attorney General Gordon MacDonald championed it incredibly well. And I said, you leave no stone unturned. You press charges are hard as you possibly can against every last individual that was involved. And we're just not going to stop. We're not going to stop until we make sure that justice is served to each one of these individuals.

I don't know if there'll be more charges. I suspect there will, because my sense is a lot more folks were involved. These first seven, I think, were only involved up to about 2001 or the early-2000s. If you remember, YDC wasn't even under the care and charge of Health and Human Services at that time. At that time, it reported directly to the Governor's Office.

So, we're providing as many files and Reports. I know Commissioner ShibiNette has done just a phenomenal job just going to the nth level to make sure that they can provide all the information we can, because everybody's onboard with ensuring that justice is served. And we're going to press charges as hard as we possibly can. I just can't say it any -- my blood gets a little boiled over the whole issue. And it should boil everybody's blood in this State. But we're just going after all of them.

***Paula Tracy with InDepthNH:***

*Good afternoon, Governor. I have two questions. One of them is for Dr. Chan and the other is for you. Do you have any estimate of the number of people that may come into New Hampshire to get vaccinations, now that you're opening it up? And is that a model that's been used in other States? And then, my question for Dr. Chan is: as college and prep schools have their kids return home in many cases before they can fully be vaccinated, and they also return to New Hampshire from other schools, we get weddings going and graduations, and travel gets back, do you expect that you're going to have new metrics on when you want to shut things down again, if there is? And would we be going back?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Okay. I'll answer the first question and I'll throw my two cents in on the second, before Dr. Chan comes up. No, we don't have any estimates on number of individuals that would potentially want to come in and get vaccine from other States. I think we're just way ahead of the game in that. And we just have enough vaccine. And so, it's kind of a first come, first serve for anyone from out-of-state. It doesn't matter to us. As long as you're 16-and-up, you can come get the vaccine for any reason you want. We're just -- that's just the process.

So I don't know what the model is. I don't know how many. I mean, we -- Perry and his Team offer as many slots as we know vaccine will be available. And again, New Hampshire residents always have to have priority on that. But now that New Hampshire residents have had that priority all the way up-and-down the age spectrum, it's just an appropriate time to do that. And we don't want to be holding onto vaccine unnecessarily, if we know, especially here in New England, that there can be so much cross-border opportunity. So it'll be interesting. It'll be interesting to see how many come over.

In terms of your question on new metrics to shut things down, I'll have Dr. Chan add his two cents here. But just we've had weddings happen in New Hampshire. We've had events. We've had gatherings in New Hampshire. Folks, I think, have taken those responsibilities very well. Our Contact Tracing Team has done a phenomenal job if there are outbreaks or clusters of illness in any of those venues. We can trace them and actually work with them very, very well.

But, again, the shutdown metrics, the metrics we use in terms of -- by the way, we've never shut things down. The metrics we use with any of the restrictions or the guidelines that we've put into place have always been about protecting that vulnerable population.

So it's not just about caseload, by any means. It's not just about the events that are happening. It's about, will those events trigger a large number of outbreaks within the vulnerable population that are at

highest risk for fatality? So I can tell you that those are my metrics I use. And obviously, everything we do is in consultation with Public Health. But I'll have Dr. Chan put his scientific piece on it.

**Dr. Chan:**

Yeah, thanks for the question about shutting things down. And let me first say that the goal is not to have to shut anything down, because of COVID, right? These are steps that we took early in the pandemic. There were a lot of reasons for that. We were still learning about the virus and how it spread. We were still understanding how best to control the virus. Resources early in the pandemic were limited, in terms of testing resources and even personal protective equipment.

And so, as I think we've seen through the second surge of this pandemic, there are ways to manage and control spread of this virus without shutting things down. And so, the goal is to not have to shut things down, and to control the spread of the pandemic and balance operation of normal life, events, activities with controlling spread of the virus. This is the balancing act that we've been in for the last number of months.

And so, we're obviously watching the numbers very closely. We want to see the community spread of COVID-19 go back down. I think that by the time we hit summer, we're going to have many more people vaccinated. It's going to be warmer. People will be conducting more outdoor activities. The hope is that community spread will go back down as we vaccinate more and more people.

So, there are no specific metrics for shutting things down. The goal is not to shut things down again. The goal is to balance control of the pandemic with addressing the other -- being able to conduct normal societal, life functions, and limit the impact that COVID-19 has on vulnerable individuals and communities. And so, obviously we're watching very closely the numbers, and certainly remain open to making adjustments, as necessary.

But let me emphasize at the end here that we know how this virus spread. Spread through close contact, it's spread through close contact with somebody's respiratory droplets and secretions who's infected. And so, we know how to control this: facemask use; physical distancing; avoiding large gatherings where people are in close contact, which is how this virus spreads most easily.

And we know that the vaccine is highly effective at preventing disease. There's evidence emerging that it's effective at preventing asymptomatic infection. That's infection where people don't develop symptoms. And so, there's every expectation that, as we increase the level of vaccination in our population, we will only better be able to control spread of this virus in our communities. Thanks.

**Governor Sununu:**

Great job, love that guy, COVID high five.

***Alli Fam with New Hampshire Public Radio:***

*Hi, I'm wondering a little bit more about the process of people signing up after the 19th. So, for example, if someone was signing up from Maine, are they going to just sign up on VINI, too? And will the State stop checking identification for everyone after that point? And then, continuing with that Maine example, let's say this Maine resident comes and gets their first shot of Moderna in New Hampshire, I mean, then are they going to have to come back to the State for that second dose?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure; so, couple things. Great question, by the way. So, yes, everyone needs to still sign up in VINI, at least in the foreseeable future. VINI is just a great system. It helps us manage the expectations in making sure we're going to have enough vaccine there. So you have to go through VINI. Please do not show up at just some random site and say, hey, I'm here for my vaccine. We hear it's open to everyone. It will be open to everyone. But you still have to work through VINI and register.

If you come, we still will likely ask for some type of identification or your confirmation, right? We still need to confirm that you have an appointment for that day and kind of just show who you are. But the whole point is we won't be limiting it to individuals with a New Hampshire resident or ID identification. So you still should bring some type of identification: either your confirmation that you print out on your phone, an ID, something, just to confirm that you do have the appointment, because the appointments are very necessary. I think, as we kind of transition things through May, we will have a better understanding and expectation of how we flow things back out to pharmacies and your Doctors, and the hospitals who really will take the lead on this long-term.

*Governor, just a quick clarification. We were talking about schools and the April 19th deadline. When you said they'd have to make up the days, are you talking about sort of the 180-day calendar and then after that, it would push the closing date of the school year?*

**Governor Sununu:**

So the law currently looks at either hours or days. Those hours and days are reported to the Department of Education by each school. And so, the students still have to meet -- the waiver that we gave originally allowed for remote learning and allowed those hours or days to go against -- to count, right? That's effectively all we did with allowing hybrid and remote learning.

So we're simply saying we're not allowing the hybrid and remote learning anymore, unless it's requested by the individual, the student, themselves. And if schools are insisting on doing that beyond the 19th, it's just not going to count. It's just like the old system. And so, they'll either have to fit it within the days or the hours, or whatever. They just have to find a way to make it happen. So we're not adding anything. We're not changing anything. We're going back to the way it was originally and saying they just need to continue on with the original formula of days or hours required. Tony, you bet.

**Tony Schinella with Patch:**

*Oh, thank you so much. First, two quick questions please. First, on the Windham Recount Bill, SB-43, it's been approved by both the House and the Senate. Do you have any concerns with it? Or are you still planning on signing it? I asked you about it a number of weeks ago. And second, on the Divisive Concepts Bill and -- which you've said you would veto, there's a Bill. And they added the Bill to the budget. In your mind, you worked on a lot of complicated things since the George Floyd incident. You got the Civil Rights Group at the AG's Office. Is there any middle ground with this, where, especially with Employee training and Contracts, and even with the way we teach history in school? And I ask this because, in light of what the Representation from Salem said yesterday, who is Arabic and Muslim and said his multiethnic son should not be told in the classroom that his mother is racist, just because she's Caucasian. I mean, have you thought about this beyond just vetoing it? These are really complicated issues. And it seems like when we come to*

*training with Employees in schools, there should be some amount of middle ground about what we teach and how we teach it, and things like that. Thank you.*

**Governor Sununu:**

Sure; so the quick answer on SB-43, it's an audit of that one, the system in Windham. And yeah, I think they designed the Bill very well. And I fully intend on signing it and moving that forward as soon as we can.

The Divisive Concepts Bill, look. I'm going to do my best to be brief, but the ideas of critical race theory and all of this stuff, I personally don't think there's any place for that in schools. I think once you start going down the path -- I can't comment on the individual from Salem. I don't know all the details there. But once you start going down the path of talking about race and what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad in a way that can effectively discriminate in a classroom, we don't allow that already. We don't allow discrimination in a classroom. So we already have Civil Rights protections for students in the classroom.

I understand what this Bill talks about. I don't like critical race theory and some of these concepts as much as anyone. But I got to tell you, when you start down the path of banning what we're going to talk about, starting down the path of Government banning things, I think that's a very slippery slope. What we consider a divisive comment on one side of the aisle today is going to open up the door to another divisive comment on the other side of the aisle tomorrow. And next thing you know, over the next few years, all we're doing is banning what we can and cannot be talking about.

I don't like it as much as anybody. But for a variety of different reasons, number 1, you start banning what Republicans want to ban today, something else the Democrats will want to ban tomorrow as a divisive concept. It's a very slippery slope for Government to head down.

Number 2, we already have protections in place for discrimination in classrooms. You cannot discriminate against a student regardless of their race, whether it's a person of color, whether it's a white or Caucasian student. Teachers cannot be up there dictating who is better than another and who did wrong, simply because of the color of their skin. We already have those Civil Rights protections built in with enforcement and all of that.

So, the negatives that this Bill would -- negative doors that this Bill would potentially open up far outweigh, I think, the short-term emotional benefits. I don't like this concept as much as anybody. As a parent, if that was happening in my kids' school, I would go talk to the school, local control, making sure they had a voice of the parent, what is appropriate and what isn't. And if there was true discrimination happening in that classroom, I would take action against it, as any parent could or should. So we already have a lot of these protections in place. I think this Bill just opens up a door, which is why I still plan on vetoing it.

*And the Windham recount?*

**Governor Sununu:**

Oh, yeah, Windham recount. Yeah, I'll sign that Bill, SB-43. That's an easy one, you bet. Okay, okay, great. What else we got?



*Governor, any thoughts about the legislation the House just passed earlier to move the State primary from September -- we're one of the States that have one of the latest primaries in the country -- to June?*

**Governor Sununu:**

No, look. We have a very unique system here in New Hampshire. I'm not for moving the primary. Again, you start down a slippery slope. If you move the primary, you can't move it to August or July. That's not necessarily a good move, because people are vacationing. They're in summer. It's hard to get folks engaged.

We engage very carefully and I think thoughtfully on a local and personal level with our politics here, whether it's running for the Planning Board and voting for the folks who are going to represent you at the town, which, in many ways, is far more important than what happens in Washington, or otherwise. And if you start pushing it way out to June, we kind of become a little bit like everybody else. It makes the summers a little more contentious and a little more challenging, and difficult. It's hard to do that retail politicking sometimes.

I think the primary -- that we want good primaries. We want folks to really battle it out and have a strong primary system. And then, people still are allowed and able to see where candidates stand through that process. And then, you really hit the ground running and you kind of close your campaign hard. All candidates can close their campaigns very hard from September to November.

I think the system we have in place has been phenomenal. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. We have incredibly high voter turnout with some of the highest in the country. We have a system of voting where our population of folks in New Hampshire have -- believe in the integrity of our system more than almost any other State, right? We're the model of how to do it right. And so, I think our system just works really, really well. People understand it. They approve of it and I do, too.

All good? Good, great. Well, hey, before 4:00, we're doing better. That's a good sign that we really are getting out of COVID when I can end my press conferences before 4:00 p.m. I just want to thank everybody again.

Vaccine registration through VINI will be open to everybody, regardless of where you live or what you do for a job, or anything like that, as of April 19th. So New Hampshire citizens still have about 10 days to make sure that they are prioritized. Keep looking back to VINI; as we get more vaccine, Perry and his Team will keep loading more vaccine opportunities into the system. So keep checking back and moving yourself up into the system. It just allows us all to get out of this so much faster. As Dr. Chan talked about getting that vaccine out quickly is really the best tool we have into getting back to the flexibilities that we all can really appreciate.

It's why I just know we're going to have a great summer. It's going to be a phenomenal summer. Plan big. Plan strong. I have a barbecue. I've been using a really cheap barbecue for three years, and I'm excited to get a new one this year. I didn't get the stimulus check like everyone else got. But that's okay. I'm going to -- we will invest in our barbecue, have a great summer, and really just take advantage of everything that New Hampshire has to offer. So I'm excited. As you can tell, I'm excited, lot of good stuff. Thank you, guys. We will be back next Thursday at the same time, same Bat channel. See you.