



Office of Governor Christopher T. Sununu
Press Conference
Friday, May 22, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Governor Sununu:

Well, good afternoon. Thanks, everyone, for joining us. A lot of very interesting things to talk about today, so we're going to jump right into it with a public health update from Dr. Chan.

Dr. Chan:

Great, good afternoon, everybody. And happy Friday. So, quick public health update for today, there's more than 5.1 million cases of COVID-19 globally now, including more than 1.5 million cases in the United States.

We are announcing an additional 81 New Hampshire residents with confirmed COVID-19 today, bringing the total to 4,014 people in New Hampshire who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 over the course of this outbreak in New Hampshire. There are an additional 15 people who have been hospitalized, bringing the total to 408 people now that have been hospitalized over the course of this outbreak in New Hampshire; and then five additional individuals, sadly, who have died from COVID-19, bringing the total to 204 people who have died from COVID-19 directly, or because of complications related to COVID-19. Four out of these five new individuals we're announcing today have been residents of long-term care facilities, which, again, I think, highlights the burden that COVID-19 is placing on our more vulnerable populations in our long-term care facilities.

So, we've tested over 52,000 people for active COVID-19 infection. We're averaging over 2,000 PCR-based tests per day. So we're certainly ramping up testing to try and more rapidly identify infections, so we can put people under isolation and quarantine, and try and slow the spread of COVID-19 within our communities.

Unfortunately, I'm in the position today to announce our first identification of a New Hampshire resident with the multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children, which is abbreviated MISC, formerly and briefly called pediatric multi-system inflammatory syndrome. This was in a child under the age of 20 from Hillsborough County who was hospitalized with this syndrome, with symptoms consistent with the national case criteria and the national case definition that has been recently created and put out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, so that we can start to identify children that are affected by this syndrome, so we can learn more about the way that this presents in some of our younger population, and why some people and some children may be at-risk for this and others are not.

So, we will be working with the CDC to investigate patients with this multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. As I'm sure many of you are aware, we put out a Health Alert Network message a week ago to Healthcare Providers, asking for increased vigilance in reporting to Public Health, so that we can more rapidly identify and work with the CDC to investigate these types of cases, so we can learn more about what causes it and what the underlying risk factors are.

I just want to mention that, today, we've had about 200 children under the age of 20 confirmed with COVID-19 in New Hampshire. That's about 5% of all the confirmed COVID-19 cases. Only about 3% of all of these children under the age of 20 have required hospitalization; thankfully, no deaths. So we do believe that severe illness in children, severe illness in children requiring hospitalization, and MISC, this multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children is uncommon.

But, again, we're still learning about the virus, as it spreads around the globe. And so, hopefully, there will be more information coming on this new syndrome, as we work with other States and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to investigate.

We still believe that a majority of people will only develop mild symptoms, when infected with this Novel Coronavirus that causes COVID-19. But we do want everybody who is symptomatic to look for testing, so that we can rapidly identify and help prevent spread of COVID-19 within our communities. There's various options for testing that are out there.

But I also want to stress that testing is only one tool to help limit and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. And so, we need to be continuing with social distancing, when we are out in public places.

We continue to recommend cloth face coverings for people when they are in public places. You'll see cloth face coverings incorporated into much of the reopening guidance that is now online. Again, a cloth face mask or a cloth face covering is intended to protect other people surrounding the person wearing the cloth face mask, to prevent transmission and spread, or other people from coming into contact with the person's respiratory droplets. And so, we encourage cloth face mask use when people are in public places and businesses, where social distancing may be difficult.

We will continue to provide updated and helpful information, as this outbreak unfolds. And I think that this unfortunate announcement of the new resident with multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children is unfortunate, but not unexpected, as we look more for the syndrome. Thankfully, let me say that I believe this person, last report that we've had, is hospitalized but recovering. And so, that is some potential good news. Thank you.

Commissioner Shibinette:

Thank you, just a quick update on a couple of areas. So, our recovered numbers, you'll see that we had a significant jump in our recovered numbers over the last couple of days. What that really relates to is, if you'll notice, two or three weeks ago, we had a lot of high numbers in our daily case counts, so a lot of good follow-up with those clients this week.

And our recovery system remains a very manual process. So, a lot of times, we do batch reporting when it comes to recovery. So, a lot of people asking questions about what's going on with the recovery numbers, and that's what's going on.

Just an update on long-term care, we have two new facility outbreaks to announce today: Bedford Nursing and Rehab Center, and they have 13 residents and four staff; and Greystone Farm at Salem, they have five residents and four staff. Please know that these numbers, they're not always exactly the same as the numbers that the facilities have. So if you are a staff member in a facility, or you have a family member in one of those facilities, and you can say, well, we know that they have more cases than that, or one or two more, or three more, a lot of times it takes a day or two for us to get the test result back and then do that case investigation. So it doesn't enter into our case counts for a day or two after the facility receives it, because we'd need to do that contact investigation. So that's really important.

The nursing home testing project, all the nursing home test kits have been sent. Over the next several days, we should receive the remainder. And at that point, we will have received specimen collection for all nursing home residents across the State. In addition, looking at our latest numbers for long-term care staff tested since the beginning of COVID-19, we have tested approximately 8,000 long-term care staff members in the State of New Hampshire.

As Dr. Chan said, we're averaging a little over 2100 tests per day for PCR testing, and over 550 tests per day for antibody testing. Our expanding testing criteria starts on Monday. That includes household family members of vulnerable citizens and childcare workers in childcare centers. Hopefully coming next week, we will have some additional guidance to help our business partners, as they get back to work and we see more types of businesses reopen. That's all I have. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Thank you, Commissioner. Well, thank you, Commissioner, very much. We have a variety of different areas we do want to touch upon, some things that we're going to be flexing open, and some things that we are just kind of expanding an announcement on, as we take additional steps and clarification.

The first area I want to talk about is childcare. So there were a lot of questions, given the new childcare guidance that had come out, I believe, earlier this week, in terms of the potential conflicts, or some of the changes that had gone on.

We want to make sure that childcare is available, especially for our First Responders and those who want to make sure, or have the availability to be back in the workforce. And we want to make it flexible for folks while also maintaining a solid sense of public safety for both the employees as well as the children.

So, when we first began the process, we knew there'd be some areas where there would be changes that would have to be made. And obviously, we listened to folks. I think, over the last couple days, we had a lot of direct input from Childcare Providers, themselves, people that own the facilities, parents, a lot of stakeholder input.

And I really want to commend the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education, as well, really taking combined effort in terms of making sure that a new guidance is released. It's available on the website now, and simply provides a little more flexibility for the Instructors, in terms of mask wearing, a little more flexibility in terms of making sure that kids are in groups of less than 10, because we know that that's safer, but allowing some flexibility there in terms of how those groups are managed, offsetting eating times, and things of that nature. So we just want to thank everyone for being, I think, a very strong part of that process.

We also know that the crisis has been hard on kids in other ways, and they've had to forego in-person school with remote learning, often playdates and the birthday parties. And I'm still writing my birthday cards. So if anyone's interested, they can still ask for the birthday card online. But sports and sports practice, as well, youth athletics or amateur athletics, and it's been really affected across the State, especially in springtime, when a lot of these sports opportunities really start opening up again for kids.

So, today, we're here to offer first guidance to allow for small group youth and amateur sports practices, trainings, and other sessions to resume, starting immediately. And under these first steps, noncontact practices and training sessions can resume in small groups, providing that everyone is maintaining good social distancing.

We've put forward guidance for parents, players, and coaches on our website, at [nh.gov](https://www.nh.gov), and again where you can click on the Stay-at-Home 2.0 button to get access to those guidance documents. So we want to allow that to move forward in a safe and reasonable manner. It may mean more practices with less amounts of kids to ensure that social distancing in a noncontact way. But there's a variety of different opportunities in there that we think that that guidance does allow for, and at least get the process rolling for those youth sports and amateur teams.

The next areas that we're announcing to be able to open in what I think is a very smart phase, data-driven approach, beginning on Monday, June 1st, so the next things we're talking about really revolve around an opening date of Monday, June 1st. And again, so we're announcing it today, because we want some of these businesses to be able to re-staff up, get their products or supplies, whatever it might need to make sure that they kind of really can hit the ground running under these new guidance documents.

And obviously, we'd like to thank the Governor's Reopening Task Force who unanimously approved all of these guidance documents; the team at Public Health that Dr. Chan, his team, who worked diligently, sometimes all hours of the day right up until today on some of these guidance documents, just making sure that we are getting it right for our citizens.

The decisions aren't going to make everyone happy, per se, in that maybe the guidance works for certain businesses and maybe they don't. And we tried to really make it accommodating for as many of the businesses as we could. We really had a stakeholder-driven process, and we continue to do so. We take that role very seriously here.

So we do apologize for some folks, if these guidance documents don't work for everybody. And we're going to keep listening to individuals, seeing how we can expand the opportunities, but also realizing that we do have still a lot of cases of COVID here in New Hampshire. We have a significant issue with our friends to the south in Massachusetts, which are still a very significant hotspot for the entire country, just a few miles south of our border. So all those are very important variables that come into play, when we set these guidance documents up.

So, first, what we are classifying as small group fitness classes and personal one-on-one training, starting on June 1st, fitness centers may open to small group fitness classes, like yoga, Zumba, spin classes, karate, or other organized small group classes only, where social distancing can be allowed and appropriately provided for, with distances between 8 and 10 feet between individuals. So, this is really those fitness classes that we've heard a lot about that can provide a structured atmosphere, can provide a lot of the sanitary and hygiene guidelines that come as part of this process.

The guidance does not allow for general use of gym equipment outside of a class setting. We are simply not there right now, in which each piece of equipment may be thoroughly cleaned after each individual use. Again, we're not there, in terms of the general use of gym equipment. Hopefully, we can get there in the next few weeks. But, as Dr. Chan always says, and I think he's absolutely right, in that we can look at the data, make sure we're not opening things up too fast, and creating more of a longer-term problem for ourselves. So we believe it's a good first step to get fitness back up-and-running in some form. And again, the guidance is on the homepage at [nh.gov](https://www.nh.gov).

Other areas that we're announcing today that we can open, again, on June 1st, 2020, are businesses that we're kind of classifying within the personal care industries. So, on June 1st, businesses such as Acupuncturists, massage therapy centers, tattoo shops, tanning, and nail salons may choose to voluntarily reopen in a safe and phased approach.

The guidance calls for strict social distancing practice, thorough sanitation guidelines, and other mandatory business process adaptations for each of those. So there are guidance documents created for each of those areas of acupuncture, massage therapy, tattoos, tanning, and nail salons, again, that can all be seen at [nh.gov](https://www.nh.gov).

As a reminder, the guidance is mandatory. There is a bare minimum that each business must meet. The guidelines have had industry input, stakeholder input, and the buy-in from the entire team at Public Health. So, at the end of the day, we just know that we have to keep customers and employees safe.

And most importantly, while we appreciate these are just -- I know it sounds like I'm repeating all the time. But it's so important that these are just first steps. And while they hopefully work for some, we know they might not be able to work for all. The more these guidelines are adhered to, the more that we can maintain the physical distancing and the good hygiene practices that really should encourage folks, as that data comes back, to take other steps.

If the data isn't there, if folks aren't practicing to the guidelines, then, unfortunately, we could, potentially, have to take steps backwards. Nobody wants that. We all want to keep moving forward. And so, there's a great self-incentive to make sure that we're doing it right and doing it safely.

Also, there's been quite a few questions about beaches. So, on June 1st, State beaches along our seacoast will open to active recreation in a measured, safe approach, according to the guidance developed, again, very much in conjunction with all the different local towns along the seacoast, the Department of Public Health, and the Open New Hampshire Committee.

People can go out to our beaches to engage in recreational activities, like running, walking, swimming, and surfing. Sitting, lounging, and sports will be prohibited. So we're really staying away from just lounging on the beach, active beach sports, so to say, or just conglomerating on the beach. That's not what we really want to be enticing at this time. It's really about active recreation and just being able to get out there in some form. And hopefully, down the line, when we see some data and the data keeps getting better, we can take additional steps.

But, State parking lots will be limited to 50-percent capacity. And currently, there's no prohibition on the private lots. And then, there are town lots, as well. But what the towns choose to do with those lots, we're going to leave up to the local authorities to make those decisions.

So parking will be limited, to be sure. And that's something that folks need to be made very much aware of, that there's some additional steps we're going to take to also help ensure physical distancing within the entire area, specifically around Hampton Beach. We know that's one of our big areas. It's a gem for us on our seacoast, which also means that it can have traditionally some of the largest crowds.

So, aside from the capacity issue that we're going to help manage through our parking situation, we will also be closing down Ocean Boulevard, known as Route 1A, between June 1st and Labor Day, so for the bulk of the summer, in an effort to increase social distancing practices. We realize that beaches will not be open here this weekend. I know I'm giving a press conference and it's about 85°, 90° outside. And unfortunately, the beaches will not be open this weekend.

But, again, we really need folks at the town level and the State, folks at DOT, given the new driving and the one-way street access that we're going to be providing, all that's going to be finalized in the next couple days. And this will allow folks to really get the plan underway before the beaches actually open up on June 1st. Again, we're just taking a very measured approach, and we just want to thank all the stakeholders.

So, a little more detail on the closure of Ocean Boulevard, the traditional northbound one-way traffic will be closed between A Street at the north down to O Street at the bottom. Some of these lower, the south beach lots, will be available to folks, or the State Park lot that you can reserve will be available to folks, but, again, only at 50-percent capacity on the stateside.

And Ashworth Avenue, for those who know the seacoast, which is traditionally a one-way road to the south, will now become effectively a two-way road for the most part. We will be diverting traffic back onto Ashworth Avenue for two-way traffic.

That will allow at least three full lanes, if you will, that are traditionally on-street parking, and the two lanes of one-way traffic, to now become open area for pedestrians to walk. We're effectively making Ocean Boulevard a giant sidewalk, if you will. It will allow businesses to expand some of their opportunities for restaurants, if they want to do open-air seating for outside, they can expand further out into the sidewalk, as well as making sure that folks aren't being jammed on those sidewalks, or jammed onto the beach. There's really a lot of opportunity for physical distancing, which we know is one of the most important aspects.

All the other aspects of how restaurants operate or food establishments operate, those have all been established guidelines with open-air seating. And we, again, are going to make sure that all those businesses adhere to those guidelines, as well. Same with retail, if there's any retail shops along the Boulevard that may be open, again, they'll have to adhere to all of those guidelines, as well.

But I think this is a great first-step approach, help ensuring that some of those businesses can open. The beach can open for active recreation, but still help ensure a lot of physical distancing that is going to be required to make sure that we're not spreading COVID at an accelerated rate.

Also, couple other items, and then we will open it up for questions, going into this Labor [sic] Day, we know that, as folks go outdoors, maybe it's on a home hike challenge, but a lot of folks like to go up to the lakes. So, earlier today, I did sign an Emergency Order that modifies our State Laws to allow for safe boater education courses that are usually administrated in person to now be taken online. And that will be operational next week. So you technically can't do it today.

But we're announcing that, next week, you can do your safe boater education course, so you can rent a boat or drive a boat of your own. You can do that online, as opposed to the usual in-person process. And we just want to thank the folks at the DMV and Department of Safety for helping get that program up-and-running.

It'll be sometime next week. There's not a definitive date, but it'll be sometime Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of next week. But we wanted to give people a heads up that we heard them loud and clear. It was a request made by individuals. And it seemed like something that other States had done, we had done in the past, and something that we can do safely and still help ensure that people are getting their Boater Licenses in a safe and responsible way, to make sure they're going to be safe, not just for COVID but while they're out on the lake.

Yard sales, it's Memorial Day weekend. And it's kind of the kickoff of yard sale season in the State. And again, it's sometimes these things you don't think of. They don't necessarily take the highlight when you think of businesses closing, or whatever it might be.

But we know a lot of folks may be out looking for yard sales. And so, that we know that, right now, residents are safer at home. We know that, as much as possible. But, when individuals do head out, we want to remind them to practice good hygiene and social distancing. And we believe that private retail sales, like a yard sale in someone's driveway, that is typically likely less than 10 people at a time, should be allowed to move forward.

And again, we'd just ask that those putting on those yard sales, or that are organizing them, are ensuring that social distancing, ensuring good hygiene practices, within their homes, usually, or on their property. But yard sales will be open for business as of this weekend.

Finally, is there a couple things? We got a couple more things here. We want to give an update on masks. So, a few weeks ago, the State set up the online portal that businesses could go to that were planning to reopen to request masks from the State. And to-date, the State has received over 15,000 orders for masks, totaling over 7 million masks. And luckily, we've been very good about being able to bring that PPE into the State. And we've been able to provide it at no cost to individuals, as we really start flexing things open. So, millions and millions of masks have been given out by the Department of Health and Human Services all across the State, which is just a great opportunity and one of the tools we have to help ensure the mitigation of the spread of the COVID virus.

This week, the New Hampshire Liquor Commission started selling boxes of masks to customers at all of their outlets across the State. The masks are being passed onto customers at cost, meaning the State is not profiting from these masks.

And effective immediately, the online portal for businesses requesting masks will be closing. And businesses interested in purchasing masks for their business can now buy them at any of the State liquor stores. Eighty different stores across the State are now going to be making those masks available to residents, customers, businesses, whoever might want them, and buy them at cost, which is far less than what you see a lot of them out there in the traditional market for. So we want to make it available to everyone at a reasonable rate.

And finally, before we close out, I wanted to provide a brief update on the Main Street Relief Fund. We've received a lot of questions over just this past week. The \$400 million Main Street Relief Fund to help small businesses had had some great response.

The initial Pre-Grant Application, which is required and, again, this is half an advertisement just for small businesses who are interested in possibly receiving a grant out of the Main Street Relief Fund, they can go to revenue.nh.gov, R-E-V-E-N-U-E.nh.gov. And they still have another week. The application time runs out on May 29th. So they have one more week to get the application in.

To-date, we've received over 6500 applications, and we want small businesses to apply. We want to make sure we're getting this money out to as many businesses who may be experiencing financial losses from COVID.

Again, the fund is not designed to make people whole. It isn't designed just to fill all those gaps. But it is really positioned to help folks pay their taxes, pay their bills, keep the utilities going, keep the lights on, make sure they don't default or go into foreclosure, as they kind of ramp up, as we get businesses going back in New Hampshire and across New England. We just want to make sure they have as much economic opportunity as possible.

One more week for the Pre-Grant Application process, then there'll be a formal grant process, and then checks go out. So we're going to be very, very streamlined and quick about this, and get the relief. The money sitting in the coffers of the Government isn't helping anybody. So that's part of getting this \$1.25 billion out as quickly as possible, not just to the Main Street Relief Fund, but the hospitals, long-term care facilities, individuals with stipends. That's why we've been moving very, very quickly. And so far, I think a lot of it has been received very well.

So, that Pre-Grant Application is still available until Friday, May 29th. We hope everybody applies. It's a very, very simple process. I think the whole thing is literally two pages, not even. I think it's the

shortest application. I think I made the joke, but it's true. It's the shortest Application the Department of Revenue Administration or the IRS has ever created. So, we're very proud of that, I guess.

With that, we can open it up for a variety of questions. I know there was a lot there. Yes, sir.

Q&A Session

Governor, can you describe your outlook for the Stay-at-Home Order? Once the holiday weekend ends, it's going to be less than a week until June 1st. Do you anticipate making any changes? And what will the meaning of the order really be, once we have all of this full month of openings here in May?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so the Stay-at-Home Order 2.0 is -- and we will kind of in the middle of that phase right now, where we slowly start flexing businesses open. That's what the 2.0 is all about, looking at all the various businesses.

There's still a lot of businesses that cannot flex open. We hope to talk about maybe lodging in the future, or additional positions we can take with restaurants, or additional positions we can take with more flexibility with some of the ones we've already opened.

So, as we go through that process, we still are in a Stay-at-Home Order. We still anticipate being in one, definitely in the short-term, if not the medium range to long-term. We just don't know, frankly. One thing we always do, we're always looking the data all the time, multiple times a day, frankly. We're bringing that data in, and tracking it, and making sure we're on a good track. And so, that allows us to open more things. And as we open more things, we get closer and closer to hopefully ending that Stay-at-Home Order, which everyone would love to do at some point.

But, we have to be very cognizant. We had how many cases today? Sorry, 80 -- no, 79? Eighty-one new cases today, okay? We're not at zero, or one, or 10, or even five, or anything like that. We got 81 cases today. We had 150 the other day. We still have a lot of issues in the State in terms of dealing with COVID. But we have the tools to allow us to do it.

So, we're definitely not at the point where we can get rid of the Stay-at-Home Order and say we're going to have groups larger than 10, or large group gatherings. Those are what I call the super cluster events. You have another term that you use? Super-spreader events, that's another term for it that, again, in just an hour, you could infect 100 people, 200 people. We've seen that happen across the country. That's exactly what we cannot let happen here. And we want to try to mitigate as much as possible.

What do you think of the President's comments today that churches should be allowed to reopen, are essential?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so I heard some of the President's comments. So, I believe there was also a piece to that where the CDC is supposedly going to put out some guidance. And again, we will wait to see what the guidance looks like. And obviously would love to get to the point where we can get those open, but we

will look at the guidance document and try to make some decisions, I think, fairly quickly, depending on what it might say.

Governor, you mentioned lodging. That included Airbnb rentals. And would you consider allowing out-of-staters to come to New Hampshire for rental properties?

Governor Sununu:

So, we're looking at a variety of different models for lodging. I can tell you this. When we kind of make that decision, and hopefully it's sooner than later, my goal is to lump all of lodging into one, whether it be Airbnb, small lodging, large lodging, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, whatever it might be. So, I think it's only fair, long-term rentals, short-term rentals. I think it's only fair to, when you look at lodging, to look at all the different aspects and not single out any one subsector of that industry.

But, I'm not sure when that will come. We hope it's soon. We do. We know they're already looking at lodging opportunities in Maine and Vermont. Massachusetts, as well, might have announced early June or maybe second, third week in June for their lodging. I'm not 100% sure. So, we're on a path. And again, we want to get it right. We're not there to open it today. But we want to get it right. And hopefully, there'll be announcements shortly.

Just to follow up on the question regarding houses of worship, the President also said, if Governors don't do this this weekend, he's going to override the decision. Whose decision is it in New Hampshire, President Trump's or yours?

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, it's the Governor's decision. Yeah, it's the Governor's decision, of course. And that's why I think he said, look, when the CDC guidance comes out, take a look at the guidance and see what might be possible. That's the approach we're going to take.

Question for Dr. Chan, on the multi-system syndrome, could you be any more specific about the person who is dealing with it? You mentioned someone under the age of 20. That could still be an adult, though, if they're 18, 19. Could you be any more specific on the age, how that person's doing?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, so if you look at the case definition that's been put out nationally in terms of who's being asked to be reported to Public Health, they actually use an age cutoff, I think, of 21 or under to try and be more inclusive. I think I said under the age of 20. I mean, the person is under the age of 19.

But, we don't release much personal information for protection of the individual. So they're in the pediatric age range. They're from Hillsborough County and they're hospitalized and recovering. And that's the extent of the information that I can release.

Can you describe for parents what symptoms they should be looking for in a child?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, that's a good question. So, the question is, what are the symptoms of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children? And just to actually take a step back, we believe that the syndrome is likely related to infection with the Novel Coronavirus. And it's a pretty heterogenous syndrome, meaning there's multiple different ways it can present.

But one of the underlying features of it is that there's whole-body-type inflammation that causes multiple different types of symptoms. So I believe most people have presented with fever. And then, the other symptoms have varied.

It can present with skin rashes. It can present with gastrointestinal symptoms. It's not just respiratory symptoms. In fact, not all the children that have been reported in other States and in other countries have clearly had respiratory symptoms as a primary cause.

But, what has been, I think, one of the common features is that there's evidence of multiple organ systems involved, multiple different parts of the body. People are pretty sick: low blood pressure; hospitalized. And there's evidence of what we call systemic inflammation, right?

So it's not just a mild illness. It's fever combined with multiple different organ systems involved, evidence of whole-body inflammation. Usually, people are pretty sick, requiring hospitalization. And I'll reiterate again that the individual, the New Hampshire resident, thankfully is, from what we've least heard, is recovering in the hospital.

And is it likely there are other cases? Or is this so unique and the symptoms so pointed, I guess, that it's unlikely that there are others that you don't know about yet? Or is it possible there are a few others out there, just by the number?

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, I mean, it's certainly possible that other children have or will develop this multi-system inflammatory syndrome. That's part of the reason we've asked Clinicians to report cases, either suspect cases or confirmed cases, to us.

Part of the difficulty is that this can look like other different types of less common childhood ailments. So this has also been termed a Kawasaki-like illness. But one of the criteria for calling this multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children is that there needs to be either a diagnosis of acute infection, new infection with COVID-19, evidence of past infection of COVID-19, like with antibody testing, or some what we call epidemiologic link, meaning the child needs to have some clearly identified exposure to COVID-19 from someone with confirmed COVID-19 in the community, or in a family, for example, in order for this to be classified as multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children, related to COVID-19.

Do you know how infectious it could be? Of course, we know COVID-19, you can pretty easily get infected with this.

Dr. Chan:

Yeah, so the question is, how infectious is this? And that's a good question. And it's probably good to clarify that this is a clinical syndrome, symptoms that develop from infection with the new Coronavirus, the Coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

And so, we know that the new Coronavirus is very infectious. It can cause infection not only in adults, but we know it can cause infection in children, and can spread very easily person-to-person. A lot of what we have talked about, in terms of serious illness, has been largely focused on older adults, people with multiple underlying chronic medical conditions, because those are the individuals that are at highest risk for severe complications from COVID-19, such as hospitalization and sadly even dying from the infection.

But, this is yet another syndrome that we're learning about for how people's bodies react to the Coronavirus infection, right? So it's a syndrome that is caused by the Coronavirus infection. We don't believe it's very common, based on some of the numbers I reported, right? I mean, around 200 children under the age of 20 in this State diagnosed with confirmed COVID-19, only about 5% of those have required hospitalization. And this is the first individual in our State that we've identified that has been reported to us as having this multi-system inflammatory syndrome. Thanks.

Governor Sununu:

Do we have some questions on the phone?

Paula Tracy with InDepth:

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm interested. I have two questions. One has to do with billboards on the State. I haven't got down to the state line yet. But when I was on the highway today, I saw signs that say Stay Local as the message, while Massachusetts cars were flying by me. I'm wondering what the sign does say down there. And what message do you have to Massachusetts residents who are coming to New Hampshire this weekend for this weekend only? And also, I have a question about masks and wearing of masks. Some studies have shown that there's a reduction in COVID-19 of up to 70% if masks are used indoors. Is this something that you would be willing to endorse, Governor?

Governor Sununu:

So, the first question is about the billboards and the messaging on the billboards. I believe you said it says Stay Local. And if the question is, what's the message? It's stay local. It's just that. We have a Stay-at-Home Order in place here. Massachusetts has one in there. We can't ban people from coming up. We know a lot of folks from Massachusetts may be coming up for this weekend. If they're here for a long-term stay, we do require that they -- or asking, I should say, that they do a 14-day quarantine.

And again, we want to really encourage folks from Massachusetts, or Connecticut, or New York, or New Jersey, that's where they are and that's where they should stay. We're just not at a position yet which we'd start overly encouraging folks from out-of-state to come up and partake.

We're talking about opening the beaches on June 1st. And that's really a plan being designed so folks in New Hampshire can take advantage of that opportunity. Or our trails system, we want folks in New Hampshire to take advantage of that opportunity.

We always talk about the home hike challenge and the opportunities for people in New Hampshire to kind of explore their communities and the outdoor recreation opportunities that they may have locally. And we want to keep encouraging that.

In terms of the masking, I don't know the study you're referring to. But, again, I'll just say that, in New Hampshire, we're not at a point where -- and thank goodness the numbers keep getting better, in that we are going to mandate masks be worn in public, or indoors. I'm not sure that would be in a private setting.

We're definitely not going to mandate that they be worn in people's homes. I mean, we're not there yet, to be sure. And thank goodness for that. Our numbers don't bear that out. We're on the positive side, if you will, of seeing our numbers come down and the infection rate being mitigated here.

No, I don't know a better way to answer that other than to say we don't have a mandated mask wearing effort. I mean, some businesses, or employees of businesses, there is a mandate there, but not for folks in their private homes, or even in public spaces.

I got to say, I was at the grocery store at about 8:30 last night. And literally everybody was wearing a mask. I mean, it doesn't always happen. I know some people might not. But literally everyone in that store was wearing a mask. There weren't that many at 8:30 at night. But I think people take it very responsibly. And because of that, I think that has allowed us to keep our numbers low. And we're in a position where we don't have to mandate it.

Holly Ramer with Associated Press:

Hi, regarding the newly announced deaths from long-term care facilities, can you say which facilities those were?

Governor Sununu:

Sure, I'm going to ask Commissioner Shihinette to talk about that. Which facilities in long-term care had the outbreak?

Commissioner Shihinette:

Thank you. For the new deaths announced today were in our outbreak facilities. One was at Crestwood Center in Milford. One was at Greenbriar in Nashua. One was at Hillsborough County Nursing Home. And one was at Mountain Ridge in Franklin.

Michael Graham with Inside Sources:

Yeah, quick question for Dr. Chan and for the Governor. Dr. Chan, you know Colorado just rereleased numbers on fatalities. They broke out the deaths of people who died who were COVID-positive, but did not die because of that disease. And that reduced their death rate by 25%. You just gave an interesting description of the death numbers here. Can you confirm that all of the deaths that are being reported are, in fact, caused by COVID, and not simply people who died who also happened to be COVID-positive? And then, Governor, we're just getting a lot of questions about people who feel like the rules seem arbitrary. They

don't see the difference between five people working out in a class versus people on ellipticals 8 feet apart, shopping in a boutique, which is banned, but shopping at a yard sale, which is allowed. What's the data that shows that the decisions you're making are, in fact, going to reduce infections, as oppose to the people who complain that they seem arbitrary?

Dr. Chan:

So, let me respond first to the question about the deaths. All of the deaths related to COVID-19 that we announce require that the person who passed away has a Death Certificate or a Provider that has verified, or confirmed, that the death was either directly, or related, to COVID-19, right? So we rely on the Clinician's assessment of the cause of death. And largely that's what is recorded on a Death Certificate as the cause of death, or contributing causes of death for why someone passed away.

Governor Sununu:

As to your question about individuals that might be commenting that this seems arbitrary, nothing we do is arbitrary. Let's be very clear about that. We look at data. We look at CDC guidelines. We look at the data here in New Hampshire. We look at what's happening in other States with their models that they seem to be using with some level of success. And we look at just the variables that are here, in terms of our demographics or our densities in our populations. All of that comes into play.

So, the example you gave is, what's the difference between a fitness class and a bunch of people coming in working on machines? Well, the difference is that a fitness class has an Instructor. There's strict guidelines that that Instructor is responsible for, in terms of hygiene, wiping down the equipment, cleaning that facility before the next class might come in.

So, there's a clear difference between just allowing lots of folks in the general public to come in, versus having a structured class atmosphere, again, whether it's in a fitness center or a karate class, or a yoga class. It's also done with the physical distancing that can be monitored very clearly in that structure.

You asked about a yard sale. Well, yard sales are very similar to retail, if you will. So we looked at the retail. It's not exactly. But we looked at the retail guidelines. And again, allowing folks to come into a retail shop and shop around without a mask requirement is very similar to what you would do in a yard sale. The crowds actually might be substantially less. And those are outdoors. So that's another variable that comes into play. So there's nothing arbitrary about that decision going forward.

No, everything is done very data-driven. I mean, we can talk about any example you like. But, to be honest, there's a lot of data out there. That's what we do. Let's also remember, these are completely uncharted waters. No one has ever been in the position to have to make these kind of decisions before. And hats off to the team for finding ways to use data to actually put some reason behind the decisions that are being made.

There's other parts of the country where they can -- I'll just use the term -- rip the Band-Aid off, open everything up. And they kind of hope for the best. A lot of those parts of the country don't have the density issues. They're not backed up in the northeast here, where we are ground zero for COVID, whether it be out of New York and Massachusetts.

There are just different variables in different parts of the country. So I understand someone might say, well, look what they're doing in North Dakota. Well, that's great. I think it's great that North Dakota can open up a little faster than we can, great for them. But North Dakota isn't 1 mile north of the north

shore of Massachusetts, where there's 10 times the rate of COVID that we have right here over our border. That's just something we have to be very, very cognizant of, as we make these decisions.

Jason Moon with New Hampshire Public Radio:

Thank you. Good afternoon. I have a couple of questions. One, could you confirm whether any state liquor store employees have tested positive for COVID, and if any store closures have been related to that? I also wonder, back to the President's comments about reopening churches, the President specifically cited States that have allowed liquor stores to remain open, but had closed churches. And he called that an injustice. So I wonder if you could respond and weigh in on whether or not you've been perpetrating an injustice upon the people of New Hampshire for that decision. And then, finally, we're getting a lot of questions from folk about Memorial Day cookouts and barbecues in their backyards, and whether or not they should be inviting people over, if we could get some advice from the Public Health Officials about that? Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Sure, so let me take you through these questions. The first one revolves around liquor stores and cases of COVID in liquor stores. We do have one recent liquor store employee that did test positive. It was in a liquor store in Manchester, I believe. That liquor store has been closed. It's being cleaned and disinfected. And we're doing contact tracing with that individual, as well as the other employees there. So I think we've taken the right precautions. But there was one individual that we know of. And that store's been closed.

Second question, I apologize. The second part of the question was churches versus liquor stores. Yeah. There is no comparison of a church and a liquor store. I hope that is pretty self-explanatory. A liquor store is part of our retail operations. It would open and abide by a lot of the retail rules, or the rules behind the food and beverage, like grocery stores, not restaurants. But a grocery store is considered that, because it does sell drinks and even some food items, as well.

So, both under the retail guidance as well as the guidance we give for grocery stores, those are completely different situations than a church situation where 200 people might come in and sit down in a close atmosphere for maybe an hour at a time, shaking hands. I mean, it's completely different situations. I don't know a better way to explain that one. I hope it doesn't require more explanation. And then, the fact that is a liquor store being open and a church not being open an injustice? No, again, they are two completely different situations.

Tony Schinella with Patch:

Thank you so much, Governor. I know that you've asked for the public to have patience on the beach reopening. And we're all trying to adjust. But I'm kind of speaking from the sun-worshiper part of me, as well as readers. Not everybody who's going to want to access the beach after June 1st is going to want to walk or surf, or even play sports. In Central Park, they're circling off 8-foot circles for people to be able to hang out in Central Park. The reopening plan -- and I know you're trying to let it all come out slowly at a period of time -- it kind of doesn't seem logical to say, we can't have any lounging at all. Why not pivot a little bit and say, Hampton State Park can be reserved to a limited amount of patrons who want to lounge and agree to be in 8- or 10-foot circles, so at least some people could get to the beach? Not unlike how campgrounds are reserved in the White Mountains, only 30 people can use campground at X site, and you

have to reserve ahead of time. And I mean, at least that way it opens up to more people who are not just residents of the immediate area and not just surfers, too. Thank you.

Governor Sununu:

Yeah, so the question is why can't we essentially cordon off circles, or squares, on the beach and allow people to come in and stay in their square, and lounge there? To be honest, I've heard that before. I think they started doing that in Spain, and now you brought up Central Park. That's a model that folks did discuss. And I believe the stakeholders had a discussion about it. But that's not just the path we're taking. I think that path can be fraught with problems, frankly.

What we're really trying to do is take these first steps to allow people to come out, enjoy the beach, walk on the beach, put their feet in the water, whatever it might be. Allow some of the restaurants to also have the opportunity to expand their outdoor seating capacity on the beach. That's obviously a great opportunity.

Limiting the amount of parking, there's going to be parking constraints. So I hope people don't think that we're going to let thousands and thousands of cars come in. There's going to be traffic. There's going to be parking constraints.

If you're looking to just lounge out, there's other ways to do that. You can do that at your home, or in your backyard, or whatever. So there are other opportunities there. We're just trying to take some initial safe first steps, similar to what you see in Massachusetts or Maine, or other parts of New England that are opening up.

Frankly, we're taking a more conservative approach, because those places are opening up on Monday. And we're taking a much more conservative approach by waiting another week, by trying to get the model right. And a lot of the aspects of our models are the same. But, at the same time, we're also giving ourselves another week to look at the data.

And again, it's really in everyone's interest to make sure they're following the rules, to make sure that they're taking these initial steps, allowing this opportunity to happen in the right, sensible way, because, by doing that, it allows us to take another step forward. There's a great self-incentive of following those guidelines.

So, I appreciate you want to be on the beach just lounging out for hours at a time. We're not there yet. We're really not. This is an approach and a model that was proposed by the seacoast towns, themselves. And again, both myself and the Department of Public Health thought it was a sensible way to go.

If I may follow-up, on behalf of Mr. Schinella?

Governor Sununu:

Sure.

Where do you draw the line between activity and lounging? What's the minimum amount of movement necessary to be...

Governor Sununu:

What's the line in the sand? Is that what you're saying? Where do I draw the line? Yeah, look, this is not a time to go drop your blanket and just sit around. We want people to be moving, because we don't want folks to be -- the more you're moving, the more fresh air you're getting. You're not congregating with a small or even a large group for an extended period of time. That's just what we're trying to avoid at this point. And we're trying to just encourage that physical distancing.

So, by keeping people moving with active recreation, that's one way to do that. Other parts of the country have seen it work fairly work. I've seen some photos of stuff in Florida, where they were doing a similar model early on, and there were a lot of people on the beach. But very rarely were people right next to each other.

I also look at our trails system. And I get a hiking trail's different than the beach. But we've done things where we've flown over the top of Mt. Major, for example, on a busy day. And there's might be a lot of people up there. But they're separated. They really are separated. And they go to the top. They spend a few moments, and then they keep moving. So people really are doing it right. And that's a similar-type model that we're trying to encourage here.

At some point, I'd love to get to the point where we can drop a blanket and just lounge around, and go to 100% parking, and just open everything up. We're really just not there yet. Maybe at some point, hope so.

I think we skipped a question on the guidance for cookouts.

Governor Sununu:

Oh, the guidance for cookouts, okay. Well, look. I mean, the Stay-at-Home Order is in place. I know everyone's tired of hearing me say it. But it is true. Gatherings of greater than 10 people are not encouraged by any means.

I mean, if people want to have -- the cookout police is not going to come to your house if you have family over for a cookout, or anything like that, over the weekend. We just want people to be smart and be safe about what they do. Encourage even amongst your family, even have that physical distancing when you can. Why not, right? If you can do it, do it. It just makes things easier, makes everyone a little safer.

And I had another question also about the nursing home testing. And this may be a question for you, Commissioner. But are we testing residents of skilled nursing facilities, or everyone in long-term care homes, or...

Commissioner Shibinette:

So, the question was what residents are we testing. In our current baseline testing, we are doing all nursing home residents. And we are also doing nursing home staff.

So, is that all 226 in New Hampshire? Is that just the 75 or 76?

Commissioner Shibinette:

That's the 75 nursing homes in New Hampshire, or about 75, and those staff. Our testing that we've been doing, cluster testing and the widespread testing Convenient MD had been doing, they were doing assisted livings.

Manchester Public Health is doing a great job. They are doing elderly housing complexes in the city and setting up testing centers inside those apartment complexes to get testing done for seniors that live there.

So we're starting with nursing homes and nursing home staff, because that is where our frailest most elderly people live, the people with the most underlying health conditions, and typically the ones that need the most care. Once we get that done, we will, then, next explore other residential facilities. We will look at assisted livings. We will look at residential facilities for those that have disabilities, things like that.

So we're going to start a sentinel surveillance project for nursing homes, nursing home staff. We will be looking at a sentinel surveillance project for homeless shelters and people that frequent homeless shelters.

So really what that means is that you're taking a percentage of that population and you're testing it every week to see if there is some underlying COVID infection that is not presenting as illness to try to prevent that spread rate from the get-go. So there's a variety of groups of people that we will be looking at surveillance programs for, once we finish the nursing home.

And in nursing homes, the sentinel surveillance, is that just the residents? Or will that be staff, as well?

Commissioner Shibinette:

They're both. Yeah, so right now we're doing baseline testing on all residents, all staff. The surveillance program will be a percentage of the residents every week, in every nursing home, and then a testing of the staff.

So, the facilities, themselves, will have the decision to make on whether they're going to test every single staff every week. You can't force people to get tested, if staff refuse to get tested. But, the ability will be there for them to test every single staff every 10 days.

Commissioner, can you give us an update on the outbreak at the Hillsborough County Nursing Home, sort of where they are and sort of scope of their outbreak? Are they on the uptick? Are we going to see more deaths there? And how is the staffing situation?

Commissioner Shibinette:

So, Hillsborough County Nursing Home, a very big facility, as you know, probably close to 300 beds at Hillsborough County Nursing Home. So those numbers are relative, right? Their last onset of illness was May 20th, so a couple days ago. So that's good. Doesn't mean it's over, but it certainly is encouraging that they're not seeing new numbers every single day.

They currently have 42 residents that have tested positive, and 15 staff members, and one that's still under investigation. So, having four and five days that you don't see new active onset of symptoms is good. Before we close an outbreak, we have to see 14 days of no new onset of symptoms. So they have a ways to go. But it is encouraging, when you see multiple days without new onset of illness.

Governor Sununu:

Great, okay. Well, look, it is Memorial Day. I think I almost declared Memorial Day last weekend. But I think this weekend actually is Memorial Day weekend. So we want everyone to have a good weekend, be safe. The beaches are not open yet. But come a week from Monday, we really are going to get there.

Also, big thanks to the folks at Parks and DOT for helping make that happen. It was a great team effort. And a lot of new opportunities for businesses being announced today, but, again, we just want to encourage people, follow those guidelines. Follow the rules, for lack of a better term. It really does allow us to make those additional steps in the future without having to step backwards. And I've always said, we're kind of slow and steady in this one. And if we do that, if we have that discipline, we're going to come out, I think, in a very, very strong position in the long run.

It's only May. It's not July 4th, thank goodness. But July 4th will be upon us soon enough. So we will keep making steps forward. And we just everyone to be safe, as we get there. Thank you, guys, very much. Have a good weekend.