

STATE OF VERMONT

Office of Governor Phil Scott

SEARCH

[CONTACT](#)

[PRESS RELEASE \(/WEB/20210911204412/HTTPS://GOVERNOR.VERMONT.GOV/PRESS_RELEASES\)](#)

TRANSCRIPT: GOVERNOR PHIL SCOTT DISCUSSES START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, VACCINES AND VERMONT DATA AT WEEKLY COVID-19 BRIEFING

31 AUGUST 2021

Montpelier, Vt. – At a press conference Tuesday, Governor Phil Scott and members of his Administration discussed the start of the school year, the latest COVID-19 trends in Vermont, and continued to encourage Vermonters to get vaccinated.

A full transcript of the Governor's remarks is embedded below. [Click here to view the full press conference \(http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvJuwmbg_a8\)](http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvJuwmbg_a8), including remarks from Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, Secretary of Education Dan French, Human Services Secretary Mike Smith, Deputy Health Commissioner Kelly Dougherty and the state's [weekly data and modeling presentation \(http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://dfr.vermont.gov/sites/finreg/files/doc_library/dfr-covid19-modeling-083121.pdf\)](http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://dfr.vermont.gov/sites/finreg/files/doc_library/dfr-covid19-modeling-083121.pdf) from Commissioner Michael Pieciak.

To find out where to get a free, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine today, visit [healthvermont.gov/myvaccine \(http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://healthvermont.gov/myvaccine\)](http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://healthvermont.gov/myvaccine).

Transcript:

I'd like to start this week by acknowledging that today is International Overdose Awareness Day. For 18 months, so much of our focus has been on the pandemic. But it is critical to remember, long before COVID, and to this day, we are still confronted with the impacts of overdoses and the deaths that follow.

Unfortunately, there is no denying that over the last year and a half, overdoses have increased. With all the stresses from COVID, barriers to treatment, businesses closing and the uncertainty of the past 18 months, people with substance use disorder have been impacted significantly.

To those who suffer from addiction, I want you to know that help is waiting for you. There is currently no waitlist for Medically Assisted Treatment (M.A.T) and we have many dedicated Vermonters who are here to help you overcome these challenges. Additionally, we have 163 distribution sites for Narcan, through

community programs, which can be found at VT Help Link (<https://vthelplink.org/> (<http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://vthelplink.org/>)).

I also want to thank our EMS professionals who are key to our efforts. So far this year, they have helped distribute over 17,000 doses of Narcan, which saves lives.

Vermont has been a national model in working to overcome the opioid epidemic, but we know we need to refocus in this area because there is clearly much more to do. My team will continue to focus on getting Vermonters the support and stability they need. In a few minutes, Secretary Smith and Deputy Commissioner Dougherty will talk more about some of the work being done in this area.

Next, Vermont just passed another important milestone: 75% of children between the ages of 12 and 17 have received at least one dose – the first state in the nation to get there. And we are eagerly awaiting FDA approval of the vaccine for kids under 12, and hope that will happen within the next month or two.

It is important to acknowledge that the medical experts are telling us: That COVID-19 is here to stay, but hopefully it will be a future where COVID-19 could be another cold or flu we have to deal with because vaccines have proven to be safe and effective and doing their job. So, I am confident Vermont parents will step up when it's time.

Next, I want to spend a few minutes putting Vermont's current situation into context because despite what you might see on Twitter, we are in a much better place than perhaps any other state because, again, vaccines have proven to be very effective at preventing cases and even more effective in preventing hospitalizations and deaths.

More specifically, as you know, over 85% of those eligible and 75% of our total population has at least one dose. Over 68% of our total population is fully vaccinated – and that number is increasing every day. As a result, we are better protected than any other state from Delta, and the data shows it.

Also, we are hearing a lot about the CDC transmission map, which has all Vermont counties – and the vast majority of counties across the country – in a “High” or “Substantial” transmission category. But as I pointed out last week, the one-size-fits-all policy doesn't always paint an accurate picture for our rural state. So, here is what the CDC map looks like in Vermont, using the numbers:

In the last 14 days – during what we expect is nearly the peak of the Delta surge – the daily average for Essex County, which has been orange or red on the CDC map, has been 0.9 cases per day, which is less than one case per day. Here's the daily case number, on average, in our other counties:

- Grand Isle = 2.1 cases per day
- Orange = 3.4 cases per day
- Lamoille = 4 cases per day

- Addison = 4.2 cases per day
- Caledonia = 4.7 cases per day
- Orleans = 6.8 cases per day
- Franklin = 7.1 cases per day
- Windham = 7.5 cases per day
- Windsor = 9.2 cases per day
- Rutland = 10.2 cases per day
- Bennington = 10.6 cases per day
- Washington = 17.4 cases per day

And by far the largest per day number is in our most populated county with our biggest city, with 40.5 cases per day in Chittenden County.

Now, keep in mind, these counties are in the same CDC category as counties in Florida with a per capita case rate that is *10 times* higher than the highest case rate in Vermont.

Most importantly, Vermont continues to have the lowest hospitalization rate in the United States. Again, if we had Florida's hospitalization rates, we would have around 500 Vermonters hospitalized instead of 28. But it is not just Florida. If we had Connecticut's hospitalization rate, for example, which has the 5th lowest rate in the nation, we would be talking about over 75 hospitalized instead of 28.

So, the message here is clear: **Get vaccinated!** Because we have proven they work.

Unfortunately, the message that vaccines are doing exactly what they need to do seems to be getting lost, and some are not seeing how vital they are to making COVID-19 just another cold or flu that is circulating.

So, I hope folks hear loud and clear: vaccines are still changing the game and we need people to keep stepping up to get their shot and to get the booster when the time comes.

Speaking of vaccines, as you recall, a few weeks ago I announced my team was moving forward with a vaccine requirement for State employees, including in Corrections, the Veterans' Home and the State Psychiatric Hospital.

At the end of last week, we were pleased to reach an agreement with the Corrections employees, which will become effective September 1. Across the impacted areas, this will affect about 1,000 employees who will have to attest that they are fully vaccinated, or they will be required to test for COVID weekly and wear a mask while at work.

We are now also considering expanding this requirement across State government and we will have those discussions in the near future.

Lastly, in a few minutes Secretary French will provide an update on schools as the new year gets underway. But I wanted to take a moment to address the contention at some school board meetings over the last several weeks.

The school boards and superintendents who are implementing masking policies are simply doing what the State – at my direction – is recommending. The attacks towards them are absolutely unacceptable, and if they want to blame someone, they can blame me.

Now, it is good news – and a reason for optimism – that the data does not justify a State of Emergency. But the fact remains that without one, the State cannot unilaterally mandate these policies, which is exactly why we provided [the advisory recommendations for schools to implement these mandates](http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/education-memo-french-levine-advisory-covid19-prevention-measures-fall-2021.pdf) (<http://web.archive.org/web/20210911204412/https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/education-memo-french-levine-advisory-covid19-prevention-measures-fall-2021.pdf>). Because this is what we believe schools should be doing at this point.

So, again, I want to be very clear to those who are upset at their school district: They are simply following the State's advice.

###

Contact Information

Office of Governor Phil Scott
109 State Street, Pavilion
Montpelier, VT 05609
Phone: 802 828-3333 (TTY: 800 649-6825)
Fax: 802 828-3339

[Public Records Database and Agency Records Officer or Liaison Contact Information](#)

Connect with us



[Write the Governor](#)



[Apply for an Internship](#)



[Request a Proclamation](#)