

NEW JERSEY COVID-19 UPDATE

Governor Murphy's COVID-19 Mitigation Press Conference, January 15th, 2021

Governor Phil Murphy

Vaccine Eligibility

- There is a false narrative that we're prioritizing vaccinating smokers over other groups, but this is not true. Our priority is to vaccinate those who are at higher risk due to age and other health factors.
 - Smoking puts someone at a higher risk of a more severe case of COVID, the CDC says.
- We are stuck in a position where we have to prioritize our limited vaccine doses on medical fact and not political want.
 - We have only roughly 100,000 doses coming in per week.
- What we need to end this unproductive debate is an increase in our vaccine supply.

Department of Labor

- 21,833 New Jerseyans filed initial unemployment claims last week.
- The department continues to push forward to implement the \$300 additional weekly benefit.

The Numbers

Total vaccinations: 310,595

New Positive PCR tests: 5,490

Total Positive PCR Tests: 555,299

New Positive Antigen tests: 1,042

Total Positive Antigen Tests: 60,787

Rate of transmission 1/13: 1.11

NJ spot positivity rate 1/11: 9.63%

Currently Hospitalized: 3,545

COVID-positive hospitalized in the last 24 hours: 427

Patient discharges in the last 24 hours: 452

Requiring intensive care: 626

Require ventilators: 438

New deaths: 67

New statewide total deaths: 18,229

Total additional probable deaths: 2,091

Some individuals lost to COVID-19 honored today

- We remember Kenneth Warner. For the past 22 years, Ken worked for NJ Department of Transportation. In his community, he served with the DeCou Fire Company for 32 years, rising in the ranks from volunteer firefighter to Fire Police Captain, and serving as a Fire Commissioner.
- We remember Tammy Medzadourian. Tammy was a longtime and dedicated member of the Paramus Ambulance Corps. She was a Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen fan who loved to attend her daughter's dance events. She is survived by her husband and four children.
- We remember Dr. Doris Carpenter. Doris was a music teacher, an assistant principal, a supervisor of arts and world languages curriculum, and a principal. She was the founder of Lion of Judah Restoration Ministries.

Department of Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli

Vaccines

- Two new vaccine mega sites were open today, and so 4/6 state supported mega sites are open, and we expect the others to open next week.
 - These sites will serve as vaccination hubs as we continue to expand capacity.
- With the expansion of eligibility, there are now many more people who can be vaccinated, but the supply is still extremely limited and will be for some time.
 - We urge everyone to be patient.
- The NJ vaccine scheduling system will notify those who have pre-registered in batches to schedule appointments.
 - Residents can visit covid19.nj.gov/vaccine to pre-register.

Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children

- We now have 75 cases. No new cases since last briefing.
 - The ages are between 1 – 18.
 - 1 child is currently hospitalized.
 - All have either tested positive for covid19 or had positive antibody tests.
 - There have been no deaths.

Long term care facilities

- Numbers remain the same.

Testing and Hospital Data

- 70% of those in critical care are on ventilators.
- January 11th positivity rate 9.63%,
 - North – 9.28%
 - Central – 9.85%
 - South – 10.13%.

Superintendent Pat Callahan

EO Compliance

- 1 compliance issue in Paterson.

Preparation for this weekend

- There have been several briefings and phone calls with federal, state and local bodies to brief people on the preparation for this weekend's possible protests.
- At this time there is no specific or credible threat to our state.

Questions from the media

Do New York and Pennsylvania have the same rules as NJ when it comes to the vaccine and residency requirements?

Murphy: There is no evidence that it is easier to get a vaccine anywhere else.

Why hasn't the state rolled out a phone number for older residents or those without internet can pre-register?

Murphy: Not a bad idea. We will come back to you on that.

Persichilli: There are people in training to launch this likely next week.

What is your comment on the racial disparity surrounding vaccinations?

Persichilli: It's a big issue. We have a team just working on what we call specific and vulnerable populations. That is a pretty in-depth plan that includes mobile vans going into underserved communities with information and vaccines. That plan will be rolled out as soon as we have enough vaccines to move into broader dissemination.

What would be the figure you would need to meet the demand for vaccines?

Murphy: There is such a significant demand we could open up the flood gates if we had the supply. There are distribution limitations to safely administer the vaccine. We will get there based on the discussions we are having with the Biden team, but it won't be something that happens next week.

Persichilli: We could take 470,000 doses a week and handle that.

What decides if someone goes to a mega site?

Persichilli: There are a number of counties that have put up their own sites and they will give priority to county residents first, but mega sites will vaccinate anyone.

What is to stop anyone from saying they are a smoker to cut the line and get the vaccine?

Murphy: People can lie. Unfortunately, they can, but we can't be overly bureaucratic here. We need to get as many shots into as many arms as possible. We just hope people will do the right thing.

Will the state make it mandatory for those at long term care facilities to get vaccinated?

Persichilli: We are not making it mandatory at this point in time. Whether an employer decides to mandate it, that is their own decision, but at this point we are not.

Is there a risk that the doses for those who need second doses will not be available?

Murphy: The system has to work for both doses. As Judy and the team allocate doses as they come in, they are making sure that is paramount.

What are your thoughts on the MVC approving drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants starting May 1st?

Murphy: I'm not shocked by that date. I join the folks who are outside pleading with this to become a reality. This is a point we've made a lot; this is safer for everyone. I wish it was sooner, but MVC was clobbered because of the pandemic so it had to slip a little bit, but I don't want it to slip any more than it has to.

Is it accurate that Salem county only received 100 doses for the vaccine?

Murphy: I don't have any specifics, but we can get back to you on that. We have spoken to the county about it.

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