

2/03/22 Municipal & First Responder Call Notes

I. Welcome and Introduction: VEM Director Erica Bornemann

- Welcome participants on the call.
- This is the weekly call for first responders, EMDs, RPCs, and municipal officials.
- We will be updating the VEM webpage where the Call Notes are currently posted and keeping the survey link used to ask questions active. You can submit your questions there and we will post questions and answers to that VEM webpage as appropriate. That page can be found at: vem.vermont.gov/covid19firstresponders.
- On today's call we will be joined by DEPRIP Director Dan Batsie. We will be providing you all an overview of the State's response to COVID-19, and we will have time for additional questions at the end of the call.
- A reminder to folks that participants are on mute and will remain on mute until questions at end of the call. If you have an issue unmuting through the app, please use the chat window to ask your question.

AGENDA:

- I. Intro/call format
- II. COVID-19/VDH overview
- III. SEOC overview/VEM comments
- IV. Q&A with participants

II. COVID-19 Overview/VDH Comments: HOC Incident Commander and DEPRIP Director Dan Batsie

- **Overall update on COVID-19 in Vermont**
 - Current Modeling and Cases
 - Vermont is averaging 562 cases per day in the last 7-days.
 - There has been a 47% decrease in the last 7-days and 62% decrease in the last 14-days.
 - 7-day percent positivity now down to 9.2% (first time single digits since 1/3)
 - VT Deaths are at 548 to date. January had 64 deaths, which was the second highest month of the entire pandemic. 0.5% of all COVID-19 cases have resulted in death.
 - Hospitalization rates are still the largest concern. 91 individuals are hospitalized with COVID-19; with 23 in the ICU.
 - There was a 8% decrease for hospitals over the past 7 days, with a 1% increase over past 7 days for the ICU.
 - Hospitalization numbers typically go up about 2 weeks after cases go up.
 - Modeling for the Next 1-2 Months
 - UK and S. Africa have continued on a downward trend after their omicron peak. These were the first places to be hit with omicron. Trending to lower levels a bit ahead of US.
 - The modeling for the next couple of months is optimistic, however COVID-19 has proven to be unpredictable on a number of occasions.
 - Hospital Data Break-Down
 - This week 3 hospitals reported data on 96 COVID-19 patients admitted to the hospital. Of those 96, 69% of the patients were in the hospital due to COVID-19 and associated symptoms. The remaining 31% had been admitted to the hospital for other reasons and then tested positive for COVID-19. All COVID-19 positive patients require additional hospital resources.
 - More COVID-19 statistics are available on the [Department of Health's website](#).
- **Testing updates**
 - The next population of 6 month to 4-year-olds are anticipated to be eligible for vaccination in the near future. This vaccination is awaiting authorization from the FDA for Emergency Use. Once that vaccine receives Emergency Use Authorization, vaccination clinics will be established to distribute to the additional population.

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- In addition to testing for schools, testing is important in all circumstances, particularly when any close contact occurs, a person feels ill, or if they have been in a large public setting where they may be at risk.
 - 20 testing clinics are open throughout Vermont today.
 - **Masking**
 - After two years, many of us are exhausted by the COVID-19 pandemic. But the surge in cases due to the highly contagious Omicron variant means we can't let our guard down. Using our basic tools to slow the spread of the virus now can help get us to a place where we can live with the virus more safely.
 - We must remember compassion and empathy as people make their own choices to manage risk and recognize that people have different opinions and circumstances (family member who is immunocompromised).
 - Improving the quality of your mask will offer greater protection against getting or spreading the virus. You can use an N95 or KN95, or layer up, such as with a disposable mask under a cloth mask. Or wear a well-fitting mask with at least two layers of tightly woven fabric.
 - **Vaccination updates**
 - Getting anyone age 5 or older vaccinated still is the best way to protect them from the worst effects of COVID-19. If you are age 12 or older, you need a booster shot to get that full protection.
 - Vaccine appointments can be made by visiting the [Vermont Department of Health website](#) or by calling (855) 722-7878.
 - More COVID-19 vaccination statistics are available on the [Department of Health's website](#).
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III. SEOC Overview/VEM Comments: VEM Director Erica Bornemann

- **SEOC status:** The SEOC remains partially activated every weekday from 0800 until 1600. On weekends the SEOC is in monitoring status, meaning the watch officer is the point of contact for any resource needs that arise. The SEOC is entirely virtual.
- **PPE/Mask Updates:**
 - Procedural masks
 - Approximately 160,000 procedural masks have been distributed to the public so far.
 - 139 towns have responded to the survey requesting masks.
 - 133,000 are being delivered to ski areas.
 - 5,000 have been delivered directly to community partners.
 - 25,000 masks are being delivered to 4 pilot testing sites next week, with potential to expand to 23 other testing sites.
 - KN95 Masks
 - About 225,000 KN96 masks distributed.
 - 100,000 masks to schools in progress.
 - 12,000 masks to daycare in progress
 - 17,000 masks to critical infrastructure.
 - Emergency services can still order KN95 masks via the order form https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=O5O0IK26PEOcAnDtzHVZxnYHsES1qh9Hs2EGYmw_c2tBURDVPSDJDS1hUTzdJMFixVDZHQ1JHS1cxViQIQCN0PWcu

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- There are still procedural masks available for municipalities to request <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=O500IK26PEOcAnDtzHVZxj-wKmD8VIFEk5hkkkERsmNUM1RSNThMSig5VjMzTjkyNFRHQ0paV0tXVi4u> (for municipalities only)
- **Funding Updates**
 - **FEMA:** Towns can submit eligible costs incurred since the beginning of the pandemic. The incident period currently extends through March. Any questions about how to submit through the FEMA Grants Portal should be directed to Public Assistance Officer Kim Canarecci (Kim.Canarecci@vermont.gov).
 - **ARPA:** Final rule released. <https://www.vlct.org/news/arpa-treasury-issues-final-rule-%E2%80%93take-moment-pause>
 - **Other funding**
- **Hospital Operations Support**
 - **Staffing support**
 - Staff are deployed to many hospitals throughout the state.
 - Contributing to staffing issues are Covid 19 absenteeism's due to positive cases as well as patient load.
 - **Case Rates and Needs:** Hospitalization rates are going in the right direction and staffing support needs may begin to change.
- **Future Calls:** We will assess the need and frequency for these calls going forward.
- **COVID-19 Resiliency Training:** The Vermont Center for Responder Wellness and the Institute for Trauma, Recovery, and Resiliency will be hosting a series of COVID-19 resiliency trainings for healthcare workers, first responders, social workers, educators, and mental health providers starting February 14th, 2022. There will be virtual and in-person sessions. More information will be provided with the notes from this meeting. Register online at <https://www.vtresponderwellness.com/>

IV. Questions from Call Participants

- ***Do you have an indication of the timeline between distribution of masks with when they get put into use? To date, Teachers in Rutland have not received KN95 masks.*** Distribution to Schools is beginning this week. The masks are being delivered along with testing kits. As re-supply orders for test kits are made, masks are being added. Schools should see masks this week going into rotation.
- ***At school board meeting a teacher asked about test kits and the change in testing to not require PCR tests, moving towards use of antigen tests. We are hearing numbers are dropping, are numbers dropping or are we just not capturing data anymore?*** We certainly know there is a measure of missing data. However, when looking at other concurrent markers in addition to tests we are seeing reductions. We are still testing with PCR tests in the state of Vermont. PCR numbers have dropped since immediately before the holidays, but PCR testing volume was lower pre-holidays. There are other tests in use such as testing wastewater. A methodology used shows presence of COVID in wastewater and we are seeing a drop. There is a potential that covid is being under reported, but there are other optimistic outlooks. Compared to the all-time high COVID-19 is down, but compared to pre-omicron, rates are still up.
- ***Any update on municipalities being able to order antigen tests through BGS?*** We are aware that BGS issued an amendment for one contract and others are in process of execution, therefore we hope in the next couple of days antigen tests can be ordered from those contracts.
- ***Do we know the Delta/Omicron split in hospitals?*** 99% of our current cases are Omicron. Many of the January deaths were due to the Delta variant, not Omicron.

COVID-19 Resiliency Training

What Type of Training?

- Support Circles: 2 hours each week for 10 weeks
- Traumatic Stress Relief Training: 40 hours
- Peer Support Training: 40 hours
- Psycho-education: 4 hours
- Yoga/Mindfulness/Meditation Classes

Who is the Training for?

- Healthcare workers
- First Responders
- Social Workers
- Educators
- Mental Health Providers

FREE

When are the Trainings?

- The trainings will be ongoing all year, starting February 14, 2022
- They will be both virtual and in-person (depending on Covid)
- You can find a complete schedule on our website:
- www.vtresponderwellness.com



Where are the Trainings?

- Support Circle trainings held in February and March will be virtual. When you register you will receive a zoom link for the training.
- March 14-18, 2022 in-person Peer Support/Traumatic Stress Relief (TSR) for First Responders; 40 hours. Location: Chittenden County
- Other in-person trainings will be held in various locations around the state