

VCHIP CHAMP VDH COVID-19

September 11, 2020 | 12:15-12:45pm Call Questions and Answers*

Wendy Davis, MD, FAAP, Vermont Child Health Improvement Program, UVM

Breana Holmes, MD, FAAP, Physician Advisor, Maternal & Child Health, Vermont Department of Health (VDH), VCHIP Senior Faculty

In the News: Burlington High School (BHS)

Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: BHS planned to start their learning with a hybrid model. After one day of new student orientation and one day of virtual learning, the school is now moving to remote-only classes until at least Monday, September 21. This move has to do with air quality testing conducted last week for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)/other hazardous materials as part of a \$70 million renovation project. The results indicated a higher level of PCBs than recommended by the EPA. BHS is currently awaiting test results from all campus buildings.

Breana Holmes, MD, VDH: Unfortunately, there is no way to prognosticate when in-person instruction can return.

VDH Updates

Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: The COVID-19 in Pediatric Patients (Pre-K through Grade 12) Algorithm is being finalized with the latest edits. The early feedback includes a lack of confidence in “alternative diagnoses” in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please let us know if you have ideas about how to improve confidence in that. For the school nurse “disposition” document, we are hoping you will try it out with school nurses and provide feedback.

Dr. Holmes is participating in a work group to create an adult algorithm to support teachers returning to work. The first meeting was held September 10, 2020. Many adults don't have an established medical home, which is less of an issue in the pediatric community. Breana is seeking adult primary care physicians to review the algorithm. Additionally, the Scientific Advisory Group is looking at testing in general and specifically at readily accessible antigen testing in unique settings.

Guidance on Mask Exemptions for Children and Adolescents

by Jill Rinehart, MD; L E Faricy, MD; Mike D'Amico, MD; Beth Forbes, MD; Stephanie Winters; Logan Hegg, PsyD; Breana Holmes, MD; Primary Care Providers at UVMCH Primary Care Pediatrics

Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: The guidance states all children should wear a mask at school unless physical, developmental or behavioral impairments make wearing a mask unsafe. Masks should not be worn by anyone who is having trouble breathing, is unconscious or incapacitated. If a student desires a mask to attend school and is unable to remove the mask on their own, s/he should be supervised by a caregiver who is able to immediately assist if needed. The physical, developmental and behavioral conditions that may make wearing a mask unsafe for children are very rare and include the following: developmental delays, limited physical mobility, severe autism, structural abnormalities of the head or neck (some of these children may be able to wear bandanna-style coverings). In most cases, a child who is unable to wear a mask safely for medical reasons should not attend school in person. The document also includes guidance for the following specific conditions: Allergies, anxiety, asthma, communication differences, cardiology,

*Note: This is a paraphrased synopsis of the call and is not a word-for-word transcription.

developmental pediatrics, ent, hematology/oncology, neurology, physical medicine and rehabilitation, pulmonology. There are no pulmonology conditions that make wearing a mask unsafe for children who are well enough to attend school.

Hubs for Remote Learning (Vermont Afterschool)

Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: Childcare referral specialists are a landing point for all parent/family inquiries, including existing system and all childcare options in a community. The cost to families varies by hub, but DCF grants cover the 1st month's operating expenses plus start-up costs and assume families will contribute to paying for care from the outset. Hubs will stay open beyond the grant through December if remote learning days continue. Daily fees for hubs were approved by DCF from \$0-60 per day, with affordability varying by community. DCF is working to ensure families who qualify can access the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) to help cover participant fees. The first 17 hubs have officially been named and listed on Vermont Afterschool website: <http://www.vermontafterschool.org/hub-locations/>. Another 13-15 hubs are in the works that will hopefully be added to the active list shortly.

Questions/Discussion

Q: Are the recent positive cases at a Stowe high school age party over the weekend?

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VDH: I tried to get the accurate information before this call but it's still forthcoming. There is nothing official at this time. There are a lot of rumors but nothing from the epidemiological team at the health department. 96% of people who end up with COVID get a phone call from VDH within 24 hours via contact tracing. Any articles published at this point are getting out ahead of the public health team.

A: Stephanie Winters, Vermont Medical Society: This is what the public is hearing, so we need to know and know how to message.

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: Please do continue to bring this issue to these calls because you may be hearing things that we are not hearing. We can then follow up and get back to you with additional information.

Q: Could you share a link to the school nurse disposition document?

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: Yes, we will share the link to the nurse disposition document and we will send it out again in tonight's email, so it's easily accessible.

Q: Has there been outreach to our family physician colleagues? I hear through the grapevine that schools get a lot of mask exemptions for students and can't help but wonder if family practices, and maybe their associate clinicians whom might even be harder to reach with information, might be responsible? It would be great to reach out to them with some of the excellent education you have provided to us!

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: We've talked with Stephanie Winters about continuing to help promote our calls.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VDH: I see a role for pediatricians to call your family medicine colleagues and share documents on mask exceptions, algorithms, how we're talking to schools about students, and so on.

A: Alex Bannach, MD, North Country Pediatrics: I have tried to share pertinent information with my colleagues over the past 6 months. Sometimes information may be received better when coming from you.

Q: What about naturopaths?

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VDH: This connection would be important. VCHIP has done a nice job with outreach to our naturopathic colleagues over the past couple of years. If there's any way for you all to make a connection at the local level and the district offices could play that role as well.

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VDHIP: We have naturopaths as part of the CHAMP network and they have been great champions. Let's take this to our naturopathic colleagues and see if they will disseminate.

Q: Have the return to school guidelines, or any/all of the above resources, been shared with the urgent care centers? I'm more concerned about Clear Choice. I just think without a VCHIP or hospital connection, the information simply does not get to the chain urgent care centers.

A: Sharonlee Trefry, RN, VDH: School nurses have expressed concern in the past that many families use urgent care as their primary health care site, so we are always concerned about preventive care.

A: Karen Nelson, RN, VDH: When we held our first meeting of SNs and PCPs, our Medical Home colleagues helped me loop in the ED and Urgent Care folks.

A: Ashley Miller, MD, South Royalton Health Center: Messaging the importance of annual well visits to everyone is always appreciated. Yes, my local schools aren't happy with me for not clearing kids if they haven't had a well visit in the past year.

Q: I have a sport clearance update. I talked to Jay Nichols, who is the head of VPA. It was not guidance, just acknowledgement that schools may need to be flexible with the waivers this year, and that's okay. The advocacy about not waiving well exams is made at the local level.

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: I wonder if we could work with Jay, who is such a good, collaborative partner, to come up with some clarifying language.

Q: Was the updated algorithm sent out? I recall Wednesday there was a mention of some small changes being made. I did not see it in Wednesday night's email.

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: I apologize that it did not go out on the Wednesday night email. We are working on the in-depth graphic update now. One of the updates was just adding in nausea and vomiting where we say diarrhea. That's the magnitude of the change. I think folks can really proceed with the version you have and if you have questions send them to the VCHIP.CHAMP@med.uvm.edu.