

## VCHIP CHAMP VDH COVID-19

September 25, 2020 | 12:15-12:45pm Call Questions and Answers\*

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### **VDH Updates**

Please complete Asthma Action Plans. In terms of the algorithm and school guidance:

1. There are currently a huge number of kids with congestion and/or runny noses. We are going to try to work that through.
2. We are trying to figure out how and whether or not to continue temperature checks as part of the daily symptom check in the context of the impact of cold weather on thermometer use. A subgroup of the Strong and Healthy Schools Task Force is going to meet and look at options for the temperature check observation when the recommendations of manufacturers is not to use them when it's cold.
3. We are getting a ton of calls from school nurses that our medical homes are not communicating with them, just plain and simple. Probably not the folks on this call. That's the hard part of my perch. How do we communicate with folks who aren't in our mix? I do love the idea that you carry forth guidance to your colleagues, including urgent care. That's come up in this call, and I think you're school liaisons are very willing in your VDH District Offices to think about the people who deliver health in your community and how to bring best practice forward, including the algorithm.

You are going to really like the new parent handout for return to school. We are going to make one for childcare. We think childcare providers can use it as well. It's an easier to comprehend version of the algorithm. See what you think about that, and see if it's helpful.

### **WIC Re-Opening**

Many months ago, we addressed some of the changes for WIC. The USDA has extended the majority of approved waivers until 30 days after the end of the nationally-declared public health emergency under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d). That wasn't clear at the outset. The current public health emergency ends 10/23/20, but will likely be extended for 90 more days. If not extended, a return to in-person for WIC will be required as of November 22.

The Vermont approved waivers include:

- Physical presence (waiver allows for remote/telephone WIC appointments)
- Expanded food options (such as bread sizes and milk types)
- Remote management of evaluations at the local WIC office

WIC's re-opening workgroup continues to meet to move preparations forward and follows national and federal guidance with updates as needed. We have some history of the WIC program not being taken full advantage of, even pre-COVID. Really try to continue to work on that. Referrals are welcome any time. The WIC Online Referral Form has been updated with measurement fields. If folks have questions, please email Dr. Davis or Holmes, who will forward your questions.

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

### **Child Care Hub Update**

*Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP:* The featured speaker on the Governor's media briefing today was Holly Morehosue, the Executive Director of Vermont Afterschool who we have heard from on this call. She has been instrumental in setting up the child care hubs around the state to support parents who need additional care on remote learning days. Holly detailed the many many agencies and organizations who collaborated in this. Clearly, Vermont Afterschool was in the lead. They now have an interactive map (<http://www.vermontafterschool.org/hubs-map/>) on their web site, which is terrific. It shows you where the 35 hubs, which ultimately serve 87 different sites and have capacity for well over 5,071 students, are located. You can use this interactive map to see what is available in your area, and you can direct parents to this map. She lauded the local adaptation and creativity of many of the local after school programs and childcare providers to get this up and running. Vermont Afterschool continues to provide support through technical assistance and training. They are tracking the needs geographically around the state. They do expect the needs will change as the school schedules change.

*Breana Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH:* Holly continues to be one of my heroes. It's such a strange story that we have to create this parallel system, but I'm just so grateful that she is.

### **Agency of Education Moving to Step III for Vermont Schools effective Saturday, September 26, 2020**

*Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP:* As we said on Tuesday, Agency of Education Secretary Dan French confirmed they are moving to Step III effective tomorrow with an intentional connection to interscholastic sports, but certainly not stepping away from any of the daily mitigation strategies. As I mentioned, schools may not consider the use of common areas, such as caegerias and gymnasiums, but they are not required to do so. If they do, there are some additional mitigation strategies that they must continue to have in place. AOE has put out a new FAQ on the differences between Step II and Step III. This also does not necessarily require school districts to move to additional in-person instruction, but we had been pleased, and heard this earlier in the week, the great news out of Essex-Westford school district from Nate Waite. That district is moving pre-K through grade 5 schools to in-person learning 5 days per week starting October 5, 2020, so that was good news.

*Breana Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH:* There are so many questions between Step II and Step III, and these FAQs do address them.

*Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP:* Snow days won't have to be made up if attendance requirements have been satisfied. While the work to date on reopening schools has been focused on logistics and operations, they are moving to a more intense focus on actually meeting learning needs and identifying and disseminating strategies for that.

### **Update: PCB Contamination at Burlington High School**

*Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP:* This issue is likely to not only be a problem at Burlington High School. As you know about the PCB Contamination, it was identified by the Burlington School District as they prepared for an extensive renovation at Burlington High School. They found very high levels in air and soil, and so the school had to close quite abruptly. The renovation consultants found toxins throughout the property In August 2020, the findings were reported to the VT Department of Environmental Conservation and to VDH. This was a possible violation of state law, as any release of contaminants in the environment must be reported "immediately" to DEC (with risk of financial penalties attached). In September 2020, BSDVT air quality

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testing results across campus for airborne PCBs showed high levels. One room was 400x over the VT health standard (15 nanograms of PCDs/cubic meter).

There was a report in VT Digger (<https://vtdigger.org/2020/09/24/burlington-schools-knew-about-pcbs-in-soil-for-13-months-before-reporting-the-problem/>) noting that at least some were aware of these findings going several months back. I don't have personal confirmation of that. For now, they remain closed and are still seeking alternative sites for particularly the Tech Center students who, of course, need to do a lot of hands-on learning.

### **Questions/Discussion**

**Q: Question that has come up: school screeners are wearing gloves as directed, however, they are touching car door handles, seatbelts, etc., and not changing between families. SRNs think it would be easier to teach them to sanitize between families and not wear gloves, thoughts?**

*A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & Larner COM Dept. of Pediatrics: I am not all that concerned about the door handles. I think sanitizing between every family for the screeners is going to make their hands fall off, but we can perhaps encourage the families to do the best they can to try to make it so the screeners don't have to open and close the doors.*

*A: Sharonlee Trefry, RN, VDH: The guidance does say the screener did not have physical contact with a child, gloves do not need to be changed before the next check. Guidance on gloves could be spelled out.*

*A: Ashley Miller, MD, South Royalton Health Center: Our schools have multiple screeners, so max they are probably doing is 25 kids. I sanitize probably 4 times/patient, if not more, and my hands are fine.*

**Q: Can you use hand sanitizer on gloves?**

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH: No hand sanitizer on gloves.*

**Q: So, just looking for some insight from others with regards to quarantine requirements for returning from business travel. Our office referred to 2-1-1 for further clarification, but I'm wondering what everyone else's thoughts were.**

*A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: They obviously need to check the travel map, but I'm guessing they've done that and know they are traveling to a place where they would need to quarantine upon return. Would this be considered essential travel? This has been an area of some concern in some parts of the state that if people are returning from travel and are asymptomatic there has been a little bit of a challenge with where to test.*

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH: There is very little work travel that would allow you not to quarantine. You can drill down for the specifics, but those people have to quarantine. We will follow up though. I am still hearing that capacity of testing is fine to get out of quarantine, but if you are hearing differently, then I need to know.*

*A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & Larner COM Dept. of Pediatrics: I agree that VDH input would be helpful but, in my mind, quarantine would be appropriate. Their children are not traveling for essential business. I don't think we should extend essential travel vs. not to the children.*

*A: Monica Ogelby, Clinical Services Director, VDH: They will definitely need to quarantine if traveling to a yellow or red zone, as will the parents, unless it's for essential travel.*

**Q: I have a question regarding use of school equipment, like balls in gyms. If we are in step 3 opening, is there a reason why kids can't use balls and run around in the gym? Kids wash their hands before and after gym so equipment could be cleaned in between or at the end of the day? The schools are opening**

**in step 3 but have said little about gym. For example, kids using same basketball or several to pass back forth and shot the ball, this seems like it could easily be done safely if hands are washed before usage?**

*A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: Gymnasium use is permitted, but not required.*

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH: This falls into “do the best you can.” There is nothing overstated about this. We grappled with this about playground equipment as well. It’s a couple of times a day for cleaning.*

*A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children’s Hospital & Larner COM Dept. of Pediatrics: I am fine with gym balls. The step 3 guidance does allow for gyms to be used.*

*A: Nathaniel Waite, RN, VDH: FAQ about PE <https://education.vermont.gov/documents/health-and-safety-faq-7-physical-education> Q3: What types of equipment can be used for physical education*

*instruction? No-equipment games and activities in physical education need to be considered when planning physical education instruction. According to SHAPE America’s considerations for reopening schools, if physical educators use equipment for instruction, it needs to be non-porous and easily and effectively sanitized between uses in accordance with the Vermont Health and Safety guidance. Students should be assigned their own piece of equipment for a class period and the teacher should have extra materials available in case a piece of equipment being use by a student becomes dirty or unsanitary during a lesson or activity. Properly clean and disinfect equipment between classes. If there is not equitable access to equipment for all students or if equipment cannot be properly cleaned and disinfected between classes, avoid the use of equipment altogether.*

**Q: Does anyone know if the Vermont Agency of Education has been spoken with regarding the information we are talking about with kids and safety, use of equipment, low infection rate, etc.?**

*A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: The Strong and Heathy School Reopening Task Force will reconvene with a couple of meetings next week. They have been tracking ongoing issues like the temperature checks and the impact of colder weather on thermometer use. Secretary French said they do expect an update to be published in October.*

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH: The guidance Nate typed in that appears to be quite extensive is just guidance. Common sense, wash hands and wipe down equipment when possible is the way we talk about this. Are you asking for the AOE to loosen that?*

**Q: Any updates about an algorithm or protocols for adults with symptoms of possible COVID-19 and timing for return to work with URI symptoms? Has VDH helped with guidance for teachers and school staff?**

*A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: This continues to be in development. We have worked with some adult colleagues and infectious disease.*

*A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH: I had trouble getting people to react to it this week. It’s moving slowly.*

*A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children’s Hospital & Larner COM Dept. of Pediatrics: I don’t have any updates on the adult algorithm, not sure if anyone else might.*

**Q: I had a school nurse reach out to our office indicating they want a completed form so a child can go back to school after travel. Do we really need to be involved in that? If the family just stays home for 14 days after travel, do they really need a note from the physician’s office?**

*A: Leah Flore, FNP, Shelburne Pediatrics: School nurses are asking providers to please fax those communication forms back when completed. Several have said they have faxed them to the peds office but have not received them back saying the plan or when kids can return to school.*

*A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP: We are trying to minimize administrative burden to document where you landed on the algorithm and what the plan was, so we do encourage your collaboration with that. If folks have questions about that, please let us know.*