

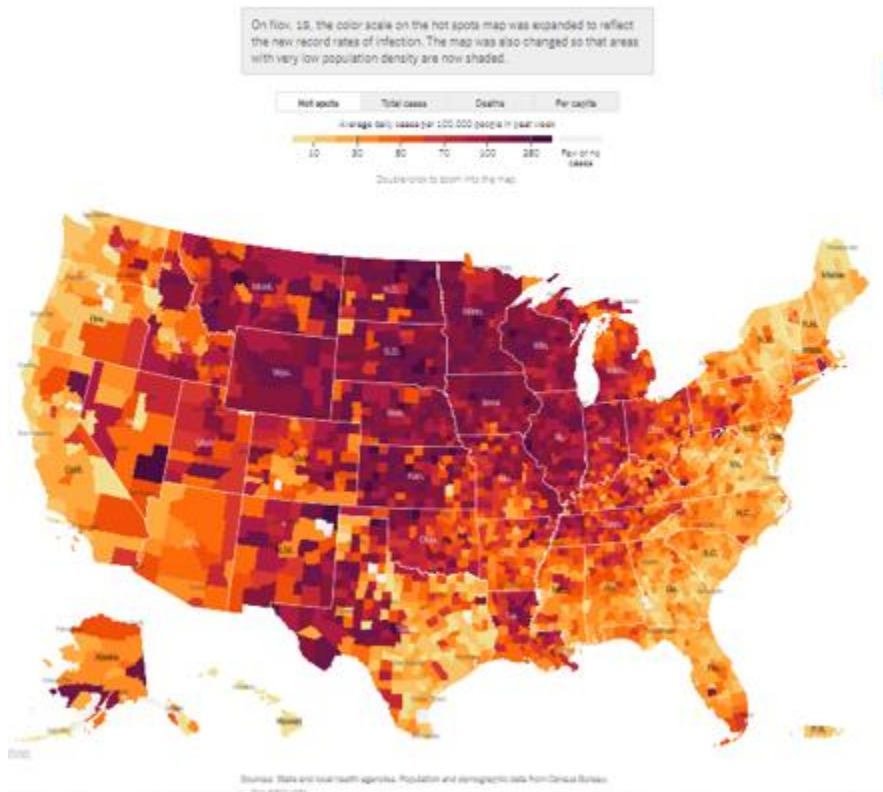
VCHIP CHAMP VDH COVID-19

November 20, 2020 | 12:15-12:45pm Call Questions and Answers*

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

In the News: *New York Times* Hot Spots Map

Dr. Wendy Davis: One of the sources we follow is the *New York Times* coronavirus tracking of cases both globally and in the United States. They break it down by much smaller jurisdictions, and they noted two days ago that they had to change the color scale on their hot spots map to reflect the new record rates of infection. The scale shows the average daily cases per 100,000 population in each jurisdiction over the preceding week. Interesting to look at, but very discouraging.



VDH Update: Expanded Testing via CIC Sites Launching Now

The CIC sites are launching in five communities this week and will run seven days per week, 25 to 35 hours per week per site. Two-thirds of Vermonters will be within a 30-minute drive to a testing center. All are walk-in, except for Porter in Middlebury, which is drive-through. Anterior nares testing with a lower age limit of one-year-old will be offered with results available in VITL.

- Brattleboro: Brattleboro Memorial Hospital

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- Burlington: Garnet Care, 108 Cherry Street (VDH Central Office)
- Middlebury: Garnet Care, Porter Medical Center (DRIVE THROUGH)
- Rutland: Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC)
- Waterbury: Waterbury Ambulance Service at their site, Guptil Road.

Dr. Wendy Davis: The Health Department is finalizing the process of blending these new sites, that reflect the partnership with CIC, and the VDH pop-up sites, which they are phasing out. What we were used to as the traditional Health Department run pop-up sites are morphing into these more predictable, seven-day-a-week, CIC-affiliated testing sites.

Dr. Breena Holmes: I would encourage you all to continue to check the web site every day under the section for COVID-19 in Vermont. You can scroll down to the Where to Get Tested tab, and then it's right there. It's a little confusing this week, but, as we continue to add more and more, they're calling them "on-demand" sites. They're noted on the web site as CIC for the vendor, and they're listed that way. We will continue to maintain pop-up sites run by the Health Department, but those are really for outbreaks or areas where there are specific situations leading to the need for a certain community to have even more testing than the on-demand they're providing. Today they are planning to populate next week's on-demand sites. There will hopefully be a huge capacity increase today and over the weekend. There is an on-going push to test just about everyone who has been in a situation that had some risk with or without symptoms. Let's just work on this together. I give a lot of feedback from this call to the testing people at the Health Department, and they continue to improve this process. I've asked them to take away the word "full," but they're not sure what to do about that. While they do encourage walk-ins, they don't know that they can meet that capacity, so they'd rather add a second site if it is truly full. I'll be interested to see how this looks in the next few days. Stay tuned.

Q: Just to be clear, these on demand sites and other popup sites do not charge, correct?

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): Yes, they are absolutely free.

Q: Are there thoughts to get an on-demand near White River Junction?

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP (verbally): Originally, when these were rolled out, the goal was really covering space in all geographic regions.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): They are working very hard on White River Junction for true geographic representation.

Q: Are they for symptomatic and asymptomatic people?

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP (verbally): They do both.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): They are for all and any symptomatic and asymptomatic people.

Q: Is turn-around time for results 48 hours?

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (chat): They are promising 48-hour turn-around.

In the News: School Advocacy

Dr. Wendy Davis: Dr. Leah Costello translated what started out as a letter from her own experience and musings to a commentary that appeared in the Digger on Wednesday, November 18. I've provided some

language here, but really wrapping together her gratitude to the teachers, staff, and administrators and asking parents and guardians to step up and show the same level of commitment to keep COVID-19 out of schools. She also reiterates the latest guidance, the mitigation steps that we think will help with that. She provides really terrific language.

VTDigger Commentary by Leah Costello, MD: https://vtdigger.org/2020/11/18/leah-costello-keeping-schools-open-is-more-important-than-ever/?fbclid=IwAR2et2NRfLkm5kJDERAM-fn0KnnLuhAQG8eP_vY1x_Z-YUm5kgnU5PIOw

"I'm amazed at how teachers/staff/administrators are bending over backwards to keep our children safe at school – that is incredible; thank you, schools! Parents/ guardians: now it's our turn to step up and show the same level of commitment...it's our job to keep COVID-19 out of schools. It's clear that social gatherings, not schools, are causing the surge in cases. We need to seriously think about upcoming holidays and how we keep children/teachers/schools safe and healthy. That means not traveling or having extended family gatherings for holidays."

Dr. Wendy Davis: The AAP-Vermont took the lead on school advocacy along with the Vermont AAFP and the Vermont Medical in a press release yesterday, ***Vermont Physician Groups Call on Vermonters to Prioritize Their Communities and Protect Schools for our Children***. It states, "Pods which have already been established for the education and care of children are allowable, including car-pooling and formal/informal child care. Keeping schools open is crucial because kids need consistent in-person learning. Schools are not a main driver in transmission of the virus. Please do your part to keep COVID-19 out of schools so we can keep our kids in school and our communities healthy."

Thank you to Dr. Rebecca Bell and all who contributed to this. The VTDigger picked that up very quickly and ran it yesterday (https://vtdigger.org/liveblog/doctors-encourage-vermont-families-to-socially-isolate/?fbclid=IwAR1l_Y3KHQEYGF3sE15FEu-FiTOZq2NyuM4zlfESvse4mgLcJaYMB-Jip3o).

Drs. Monica Fiorenza and Julie Vieth wrote a letter to their Christ the King School community with very similar background and encouragement. We got a letter forwarded today from the principle at Winfield School to his school community. Lots of folks are picking up on this type of encouragement and also referencing the latest restrictions and what communities can do to try and keep schools open.

In Other News...

Dr. Wendy Davis: You've likely heard the Canada/U.S. border and the Mexico/U.S. border closures to non-essential travel have now been extended at least until December 21, 2020. The Vermont National Guard is rebuilding the field hospital at the Champlain Valley Expo site. They can accommodate 250 patients in 50 bed pods. Each individual pod is equipped with a nursing station and supplies. There is a pod that isolated for COVID-19 patients, and these others are for non-COVID patients. That includes 50 ICU beds. The Department of Public Safety Commissioner Schirling said this is a precautionary step, but certainly in collaboration with the UVM Medical Center and Health Network to assure they are ready for a surge. I think it's fair to say, based on some of the communications from UVMHC/HN, they are, of course, appropriately worried and concerned, but also do feel better prepared than they were for the surge in March. They are incorporating that experience into what's happening now.

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Pfizer is expected to file for their emergency use authorization (EUA) for their COVID-19 vaccine by the end of today. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) meets on Monday, but we understand that will be for information only. They will probably not make a vote on recommendations at that point. The Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC – FDA advisory) meets the second week of December. The ACIP will then meet again after that. The VDH Commissioner noted in the briefing today that the earliest we would expect any limited doses of vaccines coming into Vermont would be around mid-December, but that is predicated on many steps happening in an appropriate and sequential manner.

Vermont Community Foundation Con Hogan Award 2020

Dr. Wendy Davis: We really want to recognize our Vermont Department of Health colleagues. Luckily, the Vermont Community Foundation, which annually gives out the Con Hogan award for creative, entrepreneurial community leadership, suspended the usual process and cash prize this year. The award committee will recognize the Vermont Department of Health: “for their commitment to Vermonter’s safety in this perilous time; their steady, data-driven leadership; and their tenacity in the face of chaos and their exemplary performance during this pandemic.” A virtual award ceremony will take place on Wednesday, December 9, from 12:00 – 12:45 pm: <https://vermontcf.wufoo.com/forms/zkevw581octi91/>

AAP Updates

Dr. Wendy Davis: From the Wisconsin AAP chapter, the Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health has put together flyers and powers describing healthy activities during the holidays despite the restrictions on social activities during the pandemic. We received permission to use and redesign these materials, as long as we do not reference their office or logo. You can find the JPEG files and PDF version for download on their website at: <https://children.wi.gov/Pages/DifferentSafeHolidays2020.aspx>.

The AAP nationally is continuing to update the pediatric data in collaboration with the Children's Hospital Association. Those numbers are not good either, and we've surpassed one million cases in U.S. children. We continue to advocate that when the Academy publicizes this data, we remind folks to look at their local community transmission, which is so important in the decisions around schools. You'll see those numbers, but please continue to remind your friends and neighbors of how they translate at the Vermont level.

Governor’s Media Briefing – Friday (11/20/20)

Dr. Wendy Davis: The Governor clarified the restrictions against social gatherings. If an individual is in a dangerous or unhealthy situation, then they may take shelter with another household. Individuals who live alone may gather with one other household, but both households should limit other contacts. Outdoor fitness activities are allowed with a maximum of two people, as long as they maintain distance and wear a mask. In other words, you can go for a walk outdoors with one other person not in your household. Recreational sports are still on hold, and all other actions remain in place.

Two high school students on the State Education Board, Sabina Brochu from CVU and Angelita Pena from MAUHS, discussed why they are grateful to be in school and the results of the survey they conducted between October 5 and October 15. They received 1077 responses from several Vermont high schools. They made an effort to have geographic representation. They noted that at the time of the survey, there was an average of 11 new cases per day versus 104 this past week, so the information reflects a different time in

terms of community transmission. Over half of the student who completed the survey said they feel protected at school. These students noted that their fellow students are wearing masks and using hand sanitizer. They appreciate the cleaning being done in schools. They use outdoor classrooms when possible. For those students who felt only somewhat protected, if they did so, it was because they saw fellow students not following social distancing and mask guidelines properly. They noted that fall online learning has been better than the spring, but it's still not the same as in-person. They saw great variability in how students perceive their current workload in this hybrid environment. They also notice that they are facing challenges in accessing both formal and informal guidance from folks who would normally provide that in the schools, the adults who would provide that in schools. They're very clear to us as communities, "if you go without a mask or you attend an unsafe gathering, you're putting your kids at risk. To the people who say 'we just want to be with our families,' we say we just want to be in school in person. One expressed concern about going back after the break because she's hearing that folks are still planning to travel for the holiday, despite the restrictions.

Agency of Education Secretary Don French said schools continue to operate safely and gave a shout-out to Dr. Bill Raszka who he continues to communicate with about the data. Secretary French appreciates that the data that we're seeing, both in the U.S. and Europe, supports keeping schools open and also acknowledged the AAP Vermont press statement from yesterday and a statement from the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth. This statement also contains very strong language recommending to keep schools open, even as the case counts are increasing. We're grateful to our New Hampshire colleagues, and we know that impacts some of your patients as well.

Secretary French then recapped about the first round of surveillance testing among teachers and staff and about 45% of all school staff statewide (about 9500 tests in the first week). They will provide an update on the results next week, and then the next phase will commence the week of November 30th. They'll be doing 25% of schools for a week with mixed geographic samples. They are also continuing to follow the monthly data on in-person learning. At the end of October, the amount of in-person instruction had doubled compared to the September data. This was before our case count increased significantly, but most of the increase in in-person instruction had occurred in elementary school. Independent schools have a little bit lower response rate (40%), but they are conducting about 50% in-person instruction. The Tech centers are continuing hybrid as well. Their academic and business classes are online to keep in-person instruction available for courses that require it, like labs or shop.

Practice Issues: Friday Potpourri

Dr. Wendy Davis: I wanted to remind everyone about the BlueCross/BlueShield VT Connectivity Care Packages Pilot Program. It is coordinated by VPQHC with over 50 organizations participating. The program supports equitable access to telehealth services, especially for those who are digitally and medically underserved. They have 20 iPads to distribute to BC/BS VT members by mid-December. The members must have access to internet service to connect them. They may keep the iPad and add other apps. To make a referral to this program, email Julie Zack, Director of Integrated Health, at zackj@bcbsvt.com. Thank you to Dr. Erica Gibson for this information.

As we discussed on Wednesday's call, the VDH Immunization program wants to hear from you regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. What are your concerns? What are you hearing about the COVID-19 vaccine? You can

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either send your responses to the VCHIP.CHAMP@med.uvm.edu inbox, and we will forward your messages, or you can contact them directly.

Questions/Discussion

Q: What do we use to test a newborn with a mom who is positive for COVID-19, since the anterior nares testing is supposed to be for over 1 year? Is the lower age limit of <1 year only applicable to CIC sites or also to the anterior nares swabs that we have in our clinics?

A: Ashley Miller, MD, South Royalton Health Center: I believe the on-demand will only do over 1 year, but we can do any age.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH: I was not aware that there was an age limit to anterior nares.

A: Alex Bannach, MD, North Country Pediatrics: We have been using it for all ages.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH: The less than one year language is about on-demand sites, as Alex notes, but not because of the test.

A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & LCOM Department of Pediatrics: Not that I am aware of. CIC may be using that as their cut-off for what they feel comfortable collecting, but I don't think this universally applies to anterior nares swabs.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): The testing sites aren't going to do babies less than one, but the anterior nares test is safe and available for infants under the age of one. A few people went back and forth, but it ended with Dr. Benjamin Lee saying that he's not aware of any restriction using it in infants under one year of age. The real cut-off was based on the comfort of the on-demand testing sites. So, go for it!

Q: Any updates on when UVMHC might start scheduling outpatient subspecialty appointments-- also CDC :-) Thanks!

A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & LCOM Department of Pediatrics: I am not aware that UVMHC was NOT scheduling appointments. Have you not been able to get patients scheduled?

A: Colleen Moran, MD, Northwestern Pediatrics: My patients have had multiple recent visits cancelled without being offered a new time to be seen.

A: L.E. Faricy, MD, UVM Medical Center: Outpatient subspecialists are seeing patients. We have had difficulty scheduling follow-up appointments with the system down, but if someone needs to be seen more urgently, please call. The electronic scheduling system won't be back up until the EHR is back up.

A: Colleen Moran, MD, Northwestern Pediatrics: Thanks, LE! I didn't want to overwhelm the system for non-urgent needs. I don't want to over refer to alternative sites, but I also don't want to overwhelm everyone

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP (verbally): I had a personal experience with an appointment being cancelled that did seem to be related to the scheduling system. The big picture there is that UVMHC IT is continuing 24/7 work to repair the effects of the cyberattack. The systems are coming back online piece by piece. It just continues to be quite different. We are grateful for your help, all of you pediatricians in the system. We'll try to keep you apprised of the progress, but it is slow.

A: Ashley Miller, MD, South Royalton Health Center: CDC isn't scheduling because they don't have a place to do visits? We had them come do one at our local church conference room.

A: Beth Forbes, MD, UVMHC: I believe that VDH CDC is not scheduling due to staff being pulled for COVID response. Timeline is not known.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): That is correct. In the Health Operations Center, we're only allowed to do Tier 1 functions currently, and the only Tier 1 function in Maternal and Child Health is newborn screening. Everyone has been deployed to Health Operations mostly for contact tracing.

A: *Beth Forbes, MD, UVMMC*: We are still taking referrals for developmental evaluations through UVMMC Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) and Vermont Center on Children, Youth and Families (VCCYF) Autism Assessment.

A: *Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & LCOM Department of Pediatrics*: I think each clinic has been trying to handle rescheduling as best they can, so it may be that they just haven't had a chance to get through to everyone yet.

A: *Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP (verbally)*: You are kindly trying to balance your prioritization of need with understanding that the system is overwhelmed, so I'm sure they appreciate that. We're hearing today that if you're concerned and there's even a slight urgency to your level of concern, then please call or ask your offices to call and check in directly.

A: *Colleen Moran, MD, Northwestern Pediatrics*: Beth, do you have an email that will go through?

A: *Beth Forbes, MD, UVMMC*: We have internal and external email now. Hooray! My address is Elizabeth.Forbes@uvmhealth.org.

Q: Am I correct that the CIC sites will take walk-ins, even if they say "full" on the website?

A: *Breana Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally)*: Yes. There's a little bit of a debate on how people want to drive the traffic to these sites, whether they are going to set up another one or just have one full site that also has tons of walk-ins. For now, yes. We'll send people even if their full.

A: *Elizabeth Hunt, MD, Timber Lane Pediatrics*: I sent many patients for testing (mainly for exposure) yesterday, and the pop-up sites handled walk-ins well. I did not hear that anyone was turned away. Fanny Allen is also handling drive through patients with paper requisitions nicely. With South Burlington and Charlotte cases and contact tracing this week, many kids were able to get through efficiently for swabs.

C: Border schools are still struggling with messaging. It's helpful to reinforce VT's guidance on no multi-family events and discouraging attending "events" with social activity.

A: *Breana Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally)*: Yeah, we have some discouraging news this morning about the New Hampshire schools talking about how you could get together with your friends.

Q: For kids who were exposed at school, if they were called as a close contact, the new recommendation is to test right away and again at 7 days if asymptomatic, correct? We had several parents who called and said that is what they were told.

A: *Colleen Moran, MD, Northwestern Pediatrics*: RE Day 0 and Day 7 is on the slides from 11/13/2020.

A: *Sarah Weidhaas, MD, Springfield Health Center*: I heard this: test right away and then again in 7 days from a family that called today. All asymptomatic.

A: *Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & LCOM Department of Pediatrics*: I had also thought they were moving to test right away and then at 7 days.

A: *Elizabeth Hunt, MD, Timber Lane Pediatrics*: Day 0 and 7 has been recommended for close contacts.

A: *Ashley Miller, MD, South Royalton Health Center*: I heard that as well.

A: *Alex Bannach, MD, North Country Pediatrics*: But new guidance from last week did say anybody thinking they were exposed to be tested at any time, didn't it?

A: *Breana Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally)*: Yes, that is the new policy. You're right. Ilisa Stalberg, MCH Director at VDH, just texted me and confirmed that all of this information about testing is accurate and finalized, so Day 0 and Day 7 is correct.

A: *Colleen Moran, MD, Northwestern Pediatrics*: It was on the slides from this call on 11/13, but I worry about supplies, and it does not change quarantine.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): Please don't worry about supplies. We've got that handled. It doesn't really change quarantine because you still can't test out of quarantine until Day 7. It's more just knowing what your exposure was if you get the Day 0 test.

Q: If the close contact is positive, but they are negative, don't they still have to stay out of school for 10 days?

A: Lisa Gannon, MA, Primary Care Health Partners: NH is advising anyone who has a family member who tests + to quarantine for 14 days after last contact with person:

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/self-quarantine-covid.pdf>

A: Wendy Davis, MD, VCHIP (verbally): Thanks for calling attention to New Hampshire because they're having surges, and their guidance is evolving also. I believe their Governor finally issued a mask mandate and is advising that anyone who has a family member who tests positive to quarantine for 14 days.

A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & LCOM Department of Pediatrics: They need to stay out for 14 days from last contact or 7 days if asymptomatic with a negative test at 7 days.

A: Ashley Miller, MD, South Royalton Health Center: Ben: our algorithm page 1, known exposure, no symptoms, exposure in home, states 14 days quarantine if remain in household.

A: Benjamin Lee, MD, UVM Children's Hospital & LCOM Department of Pediatrics: Anyone who is a close contact of a confirmed positive needs to quarantine for 14 days from the time of last infectious contact. (Remember, a positive case is considered infectious until at least 10 days from onset of symptoms.) If the contact is within a household, this might mean that the 14-day count wouldn't start until the family member's Day 10. Alternatively, if the exposed person is asymptomatic, they can get out of quarantine with a negative test on Day 7—but, again, this would be timed from the last infectious contact. Yes, Ashley, it should be written out in our algorithm.

Q: The students were fantastic! I wonder if the teachers could speak as well to the benefits of in-person instruction? My son's 3rd grade teacher said some kids regressed by 1-2 years, and they are now on the right track.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): Yeah, that would be a very compelling and interesting approach. We haven't had a lot opportunity for teachers to be the ones pushing for in-person.

A: Leah Costello, MD, Timber Lane Pediatrics, South: I asked my district if any teachers wanted to join me on the WCAX interview I did this week. I didn't get any response. The only response was that someone said they didn't feel comfortable speaking out publicly.

A: Breena Holmes, MD, VCHIP, VDH (verbally): That's too bad.

A: Leah Costello, MD, Timber Lane Pediatrics, South: It was too bad. Made me a bit worried.

A: Shannon Hogan, DO, UVM Medical Center Pediatric Primary Care, Burlington: Leah, that is concerning, but not surprising.