



## **Governor's Press Conference 05/03/2020**

Governor Desantis held a press conference today, May 3rd 2020 at Halifax Health Medical Center in Daytona (Volusia County) to highlight the safe re-opening of elective procedures this upcoming week as part of Phase I.

### **Governor DeSantis:**

- CDC had recommended the freezing of elective procedures for hospital space and lack of PPE. Hospitals have had more than enough capacity and so we are now looking at bringing the procedures back.
- With the exception of the prison, Volusia cases have been steadily trending down from peak of 10 new cases on April 24th. Maintained 1.5 - 2 % positive over past 10 days.
- They will talk to you about how they've created a separate containment unit
- Folks are staying away from the hospital and are not taking care of themselves out of fear of hospital. It is safe and it is important to take care of yourself.
- Seroprevalence testing-
  - CA, NYC, Miami-Dade antibody tests are showing prevalence
  - State just got its first 200,000 tests at 3am this morning. Will be deployed in the coming days. First providing to hospitals, may establish lane in drive thru sites, may partner with universities to do scientifically representative testing.
  - Dade County 10k confirmed tests for COVID, 160k confirmed tests for antibodies.
  - Will likely see divergences as we have seen with the epidemic overall- we don't totally know the immunity implications but it is important to know who has had it.
- Drive-through and Walk-up sites.
  - Ongoing during Phase I
  - The Drive-thru and walk-up sites are not the only testing going on. Health care providers and others are doing tests, but the idea is that the community has a place they know they can go if they are experiencing symptoms.
  - Setting up more sites - in Pensacola, etc.
- Nursing Homes-
  - Workers must have two positive tests before being allowed to come back. 50 National Guard units are going into nursing homes and have found more cases in the asymptomatic. It has allowed us to contain more cases before they become outbreaks.
  - Volusia has done great job of keeping out of nursing homes
- Mobile Lab-

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- State will have a new mobile lab inside of an RV capable of 3500 tests a week. Long-term care facilities to start. White House helped us to get the 45 minute tests for the RV lab.
- Allowing pharmacists to tests-
  - Walgreens has announced sites, including Miami, Opa-Locka, Orlando, and Jupiter.
  - CVS will be announcing plans soon.
  - Walmart plans to have five drive-through sites throughout the state
- No one knows the shape the epidemic is going to take. We have to watch the data during Phase I.
- New tech and new products coming online all the time in just the span of a few weeks.
- Regardless if we get through Phase I without issue- we will have much better health infrastructure in place for the better for it.
- A lot of these steps were taken in order to ensure hospital capacity.

**Governor Desantis opened the conference up to the panel of four medical professionals from Halifax Health to speak on elective surgeries, nursing homes, and actions they have taken.** This included the Director of Critical Care and other administrators. Highlights:

- All thanked the Governor for being data-driven and transparent and “leading on facts not fear”
- They emphasized that patients are safe to seek care at hospitals. “If you need surgery now, now is as safe as ever.” Do not stay away if you are ill. The ER use rate shows people may be staying away who need the care. Confident that Halifax is capable of handling a surge in COVID while also re-opening some procedures.
- “Elective Surgeries” are not “unnecessary” and include: Aneurysm, leg bypass, heart bypass, cancer procedures that have been delayed. Gallbladder, hernias, etc.
- Important to continue to ban visitation at nursing homes even though hard for families
- Halifax Health:
  - COVID: Has 6-7 COVID patients in a special biocontainment unit. Have had 6 deaths. Tested over a thousand at the facility itself, with priorities on symptomatic patients and workforce.
  - Have yet to have a middle age healthy person to wind up on a ventilator. Everyone with trouble has had pre-existing conditions, in 80s and 90s, nursing home patients, and already in deteriorating condition.
  - Very little hospital employees have tested positive- shows that the hospital is a safe place to be.

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- Elective Procedures:
  - Have continued to do emergent surgeries- heart bypass, trauma, appendectomies
  - Have task force that is analyzing surgeries that need to take place as procedures reopen and steps that need to be taken
  - 25 procedures will re-open this week, 40 on Thursday with likely additional 25- 30 emergency surgeries
- Biocontainment unit-
  - Prior to the first COVID patient, Halifax designed a space in the hospital on the ground floor separated from the main hospital. Turned it into a negative pressure room through strategic fans and vents. Has donning area for PPE, changing areas, lockers, considerable hallway, all come and go through separate doorways.
  - COVID patients are brought into the separate unit.
  - A cadre of nurses and environmental services employees volunteered and have been kept separate from the main staff in hospital. Only two employees are exposed daily to the virus and operate with assumption they are carriers.
  - Rewarding that we have not seen any spread in our employees not even in the COVID unit. Clearly, PPE is working and we have adequate protection in place.
  - Single digit patients but capable of handling up to 25
- On new Phase I procedures-
  - Have had the luxury of time to make our policies COVID informed.
  - Patients will be screened several days prior to visit- retooled system for risk factors related to COVID
  - All employees wearing masks and assume they are carriers
  - Hospital is expert in quarantining and isolating.

Governor:

Moving forward in smart, step-by-step way. Not a huge difference between now and Phase I. We are taking small steps, going cautiously. Some just want us to flip the switch- we've never handled a pandemic like this one. No one knows for sure the exact right way to handle, so being careful and cautious is the right approach.

## Q&A

### **Unemployment applicants are saying they are being told they are ineligible?**

- Plan to have a press conference tomorrow with Sec Satterly of DMS to review everything, walk through eligibility issues and troubleshoot
- Pushed out 700 million applications, paid 450k claimants, more over weekend.

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- Sudden abrupt change in economy, didn't have a good system, we had to make all these changes which is a 24/7 operation.
- The agency has been proactive- identifying anyone quoted in paper or on social media that is saying they are having a problem and finding out the issue.
- Some are ineligible because no SSN, out of state wages, were not working before.
- Progress given how bad the system was - people have worked hard and still have more to do.

### **Antibody tests- what company did you source from? Concerned with reports that tests are only 90% accurate?**

- We sourced through FDA approved tests. Surgeon General was adamant.
- COVID19 is not the only coronavirus - the test must be specific to this coronavirus. FDA says that this test makes that distinction.
- Also have agreement with another company that is waiting for FDA emergency use authorization

### **Concern over fast-tracking? Companies self-certify as accurate?**

- FDA has been very responsive and is working hard.
- Anything with corona has been fast-tracked by FDA (Remsdivir, Abbot lab tests)
- They are obviously reviewing and not just throwing things out willy-nilly but they recognize the urgency and have struck that balance

### **What is sample for antibodies test?**

- DOH is working with One Blood- as people give blood normally we can screen for antibodies.
- Not scientifically valid or representative sample but still good data to have.
- Also important for recovered individuals to give blood for plasma treatment that has been successful.
- Antibody test results in CA and NYC are showing that far more people have had it than knew.

### **Anything additional you think the state could do to address nursing homes? 400 more deaths?**

- Put in perspective- we have way higher population in long term care in Florida and have had way fewer deaths.
- One of the reasons we have so many National Guard teams is to identify asymptomatic and contain any outbreaks. Huge force multiplier.
- Look at the epidemic in FL outside of SE- Volusia, Brevard, and Orange- the issue is in nursing homes. It's not virulent as it is in NJ (knock on wood). Sec. Mayhew was a hawk

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on this issue early and Dir. Moskowitz has been focused on nursing homes to help our hospital capacities

- Provided over 7 million masks, 1 million gloves, .5 million face shields to long term care facilities. Effective use of our resources

### **As we move through the phases of re-opening what possible situation would push us back?**

- Continuing to monitor hospital capacity trends. If hospitals begin to start to get overburdened and if it is tied to anything in phase I.
- Am keeping Nursing homes separate.
- Will continue to expand testing. Our drive thru tests have way more capacity than demand. Do think more businesses will want more testing and private sector will be involved (like Walgreens.)
- 19,000 day before 21,000 day before that - more cases will be found as we do more testing of asymptomatic. We want to identify more cases- Media will probably spin as the case numbers go up without looking at the percent positive data point. They will say Florida has X new cases, but we tested X cases and the percent positive went down.
- Other than prison positives - Volusia hasn't been over 3% in number of days.
- Even Miami, with the bulk of cases, has 40-45% of ICU beds empty.
- Smart, Safe, Step-by-Step can get us back without taking eye off vulnerable populations.

We want to see Daytona back to the way it was before the pandemic as soon as possible.