

# Time for a Pause: A summary of the governor's November 19 press conference



Governor Gina Raimondo held her weekly press conference at The Vets at 1pm today. She began her press conference with good news about vaccine efficacy and Rhode Island's being chosen to be a pilot state in Pfizer's vaccine delivery program before she got into the data.

The RI Department of Health today announced 921 new positive COVID cases out of 15,819 tests for a percent positive rate of 5.8%. There are 298 people hospitalized and 13 people on a ventilator. Hospitals are currently at 97% of their COVID bed capacity, and current trends point to the need for the Cranston field hospital by next week. Four Rhode Islanders lost their lives to COVID yesterday.

Raimondo said that community spread has made it hard to pinpoint where the surge is coming from. She said that at-home social gatherings are crystal clear spreaders, but when people have been to 15 places in a week, you can't say which place has been the source of spread. Trends have been identified,

however, and positive cases seem to come from people hanging out with people outside of their households. Because of this, the governor announced an upcoming pause, which will last two weeks: from November 30 through December 13. “We are beyond the idea of phases. This is the last mile,” Raimondo said, referring to the vaccine on the horizon. This pause in activity is designed to get our state to the end of the year “without catastrophe” by overwhelming hospitals and forcing healthcare workers to provide crisis care.

This pause entails several changes. The only change that begins today is that social gatherings are limited to one household. Beginning on November 30, high schools will be given the choice of moving to limited, in-person learning with in-person learning provided only to students with special learning needs. Restaurants will continue their early closings, with tables limited to one household only. Retail and big box stores will have to limit the number of shoppers allowed in the stores, and houses of worship will be limited to 25% capacity.

As of November 30, colleges and universities will be closed. Offices must be closed when possible with employees working remotely. Bars, recreational venues and indoor sports facilities all will be closed through December 13.

There will be no changes made to K-8 schools, personal care services (eg, salons), childcare, manufacturing and construction and healthcare services.

“None of this is going to be easy and I wish we didn’t have to do this,” the governor said. “If you’re wondering why I’m waiting, it’s because I want people to have time to prepare.”

She urged Rhode Islanders to keep in mind that this pause is only designed to last two weeks, however, cautions that, “This is only going to work if we decide to do it. If you’re asking yourself how you’re going to get around the rules, I’ll be back in three weeks planning a full state lockdown. If you’re going to do it, then this will work and in two weeks we’ll be able to slowly turn the dial back up.” Details of pause can be found at [reopeningri.com](https://reopeningri.com).

Thanksgiving is celebrated next week, and the governor asked citizens to celebrate only with the people they live with and avoid travel. If, however, travel is unavoidable, get tested before and after you travel, and quarantine for two weeks after you return. Rapid testing will be made available at TF Green.

Governor Raimondo recognizes the difficulty people are having getting tested. As a result, new testing facilities are going to open and current testing facilities will increase their capacity. The governor’s goal is to double the daily number of tests performed before the pause begins on November 30. She urged

people who get tested to check the portal rather than wait for contact from RIDOH, and get in touch with their contacts to let them know they were tested so that they, too, can get tested.

Governor Raimondo will hold her next press conference next Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving.