

Public Generally Complying with COVID Rules: Summary of the governor's June 15 press conference



Gov. Gina Raimondo

Governor Gina Raimondo and DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott gave the Monday COVID-19 press briefing today at 1pm.

DOH reports 32 new cases today, 73 new cases on Saturday and 46 new cases on Sunday. As of today, 127 people are hospitalized for reasons related to COVID-19; 21 of those are in the ICU, and 14 are on ventilators. Dr. Alexander-Scott said the numbers were stable and low. Since the last data dump on Friday, there are 18 new deaths. One person was in their 40s, three were in their 50s, one in their 60s, two in their 70s, eight in their 80s, and three were in their 90s.

Governor Raimondo began the briefing today talking about the weekend. For the most, Rhode Island has been complying with COVID rules and restrictions. The state had to temporarily close Lincoln Woods State Park and Colt State Park over the weekend due to reaching capacity. Both are among the Ocean State's most popular parks. Beaches came close to capacity, but never had to close. Beach goers also used online ordering in advance from beach pavilions.

According to state inspections over the weekend, compliance with regulations in restaurants are good, but Raimondo noted only 80% of restaurants surveyed had COVID control plans to present to state inspectors. The Block Island Ferry was a big problem area over the weekend; the governor said her office received many complaints of it being over-crowded and not enough people were wearing masks. "What we did this weekend will show up in data in two weeks, and I really hope in two weeks we don't see any spikes so we can think about Phase 3," said the governor.

Today the state announced it was allocating \$7.5 million of money from the CARES Act to be made available to summer camps for the year. Camp operators have chiefly complained of the increased expenses from having to comply with new COVID regulations. Interested parties can apply on reopeningri.com, approved on a rolling basis. The governor advised interested parents to inquire at local municipalities for camp options, or at the private camp their children normally attend. There are sleepaway options for this year.

RI public school students can sign up for SAIL courses through RIDE this summer. It's a temporary program designed to "enhance education opportunities for students through the summer." It's open from ages pre-K through high school.

Governor Raimondo reminded students the grad 2020 ceremony is tonight at 7pm on Rhode Island PBS. The televised special will salute this year's grads, and includes appearances from Rhode Island College alumnus Viola Davis, various Patriots players, and Stephen Colbert.

Father's Day is this upcoming weekend and both the governor and Dr. Alexander-Scott advised Ocean State residents to exercise extreme caution. They reminded folks that nursing home visits were still severely restricted for the rest of the month as part of Phase 2. If your father is elderly or has an underlying health condition, Dr. Alexander-Scott recommended you make arrangements to visit digitally. The governor brought up some assisted facilities that developing drive-thru visit plans as an example of getting creative.

Motif today asked if out of the data collected by DOH throughout the COVID crisis if they could make any assumptions of how risky certain behaviors (going out to eat, attending a large protest) were in spreading the coronavirus. Dr. Alexander-Scott answered that the sample pool of RI data was far too

small to make specific generalizations about behavior, but taken nationally, some rules of thumbs hold out. Staying in enclosed areas, having close contact with other people, not wearing masks and congregating in large crowds would spread the virus.

When asked by the press if there was a spike in positive cases since the record-breaking Black Lives Matter protest 10 days ago, Dr. Alexander-Scott replied they were monitoring the data, but they had yet to see a surge. They are hoping the extensive mask-wearing they saw did its part in preventing transmission. DOH is not gathering any additional information on protesters. Protesters are advised to schedule a free test by going to portal.ri.gov, free of charge regardless of insurance or citizenship status.

DOH was asked today about a single report of a COVID-related death in the 10-19 age bracket. Dr. Scott acknowledged it was not a reporting error. DOH reports there had been the state's first fatality of someone younger than 20 years of age. They were not connected to DCYF, nor did the fatality have any connection to an inflammatory illness. Dr. Scott said the pediatric death had underlying health conditions, akin to what is seen in older citizens, and was unable to release any further information about it at this time.

The PPP loan program and the federal UI \$600 boost are sunsetting at the end of June and end of July respectively, with many workers possibly facing getting laid off again if business still hasn't improved. Asked for comment on it today, Raimondo stressed the need for federal, Congressional action. She is holding back some CARES money in case federal guidance allows its use to plug the state budget deficit. Extending both programs would greatly help Rhode Island, as a lack of any federal assistance would be devastating beyond measure.

That's it for today's press briefing. The next one is on Wednesday at 1pm. You can watch them on most major social media outlets, or live on Capitol TV. Motif will have the summary of the governor's comments up later that day.