

## Parties Connected to Virus Spread: A summary of the governor's July 29 press conference



Governor Gina Raimondo, DOH director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott and RIDE Commissioner Angelica Infante-Green gave the COVID-19 press briefing today at 1pm.

First today's COVID data: The governor announced a total of 61 new cases since yesterday. "That's holding steady," she said. "That's the kind of data we like to see." Seventy-four people are hospitalized for reasons related to COVID-19. Overall hospitalizations have remained steady, but have been trending toward a slight increase. Twelve people are in the ICU and six of those people are on ventilators.

The governor announced today Rhode Island would not be moving to the next phase of economic reopening. Instead she is lowering the social gathering limit to 15 people. "We're partying too much," she said. "Social gatherings are too large and folks aren't wearing their masks." Contact tracing has found outbreaks sourced from house parties of more than 50 people, a baby shower, a large birthday party in a backyard, one in a restaurant, pool parties and a sports banquet, among many others. Folks could also not remember all the people at a party, according to the governor, as opposed to when it was 15 and contact tracing could trace everyone.

“In each of these instances, the patterns are exactly the same,” said Raimondo. She went on to list the COVID guidance that wasn’t being followed: social distancing, mask wearing, etc. During questions today, the governor stated how surprised she was that the protests in Providence, often with hundreds of people, didn’t have any major outbreaks related to it, something the governor credits to almost universal mask-wearing.

Rhode Island’s rate of spread value has risen to 1.3, according to DOH calculations. That value indicates the number of people one person with COVID-19 spreads the virus, and a value of 1.3 is on the governor’s metrics for considering moving back a phase. Phase 3 will now continue to August 28. The governor also reiterated if Rhode Islanders found themselves in a bar or restaurant that was crowded, for people to leave immediately. “Any crowding in a restaurant is where you get sick,” she said.

School districts across the state were required to hand in COVID control plans for the upcoming school year on July 17. Finalized plans will receive RIDE feedback and be made available to the public starting this Friday. The governor today discussed the five metrics each school must have to reopen schools. Statewide COVID data must show decreasing trends in all related pandemic metrics. On a local level, municipalities must also be in good shape and have COVID plans. Statewide testing must also be able to test symptomatics within a 48 to 72 hour turnaround time. School districts must also have masks, cleaning supplies and any other COVID combatting supplies required by state regulations in place. The final metric is how ready each district is ready to execute their COVID plan. Based on these five metrics, RIDE will recommend what level of reopening each district is advised to follow on August 16, based on where towns are at that point in time.

RIDE has also launched a website today dedicated to school reopening. [Back2schoolri.com](http://Back2schoolri.com) will host new updates on Rhode Island schools, as well as events that will connect students and parents with experts to inform them of school reopening issues. The website also breaks down the requirements RIDE has outlined for the districts as well as links to each individual district.

Governor Raimondo also indicated today there would be options for parents who did not feel their child would be safe in school. Parents and teachers in organized social media groups centered on schools, have indicated for weeks that many do not feel safe sending their child to school. It remains to be seen what the state envisions the distant learning alternative to be, as the state has not actually assessed the outcomes of distance learning from this past spring, instead opting to do it this fall.