

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: June 10th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

06/10/2020



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. I'm honored to be joined by the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan. Thank you both. The guy to my left who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. Pat, thank you. Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples, First Lady Tammy Murphy is with us.

As the table in front says, public health creates economic health, and today I want to open with and I know Judy will also want to weigh in with more information about one of the ways in which we're going to protect public health. As I initially laid out several weeks ago, a robust and comprehensive contact tracing program is essential to our ability to continue along our road back over the long term. Today, I want to give a little bit more color on our efforts to build out our capabilities and the principles by which our program will operate.

So we know COVID-19 is out there and among us. There's no vaccine yet. There are no proven therapeutics yet. The only real protections we have against coronavirus are social distancing, face covering, washing hands with soap and water, but importantly, testing and contact tracing. It's that simple. Contact tracing, by the way, is nothing new. It is a proven method for taking on the spread of disease for many, many years. But in many of those cases -- not all, but many -- there were vaccines or therapeutics that were available, and the role of contact tracers was to urge those who had come in contact with someone who was sick, to get themselves to seek treatment. Not so now.



The role of contact tracers takes on a new urgency, especially against a virus that we are still learning about and which we have no proven defense against. If you want an answer to the question, is it just us that don't have all the answers? Look at Tony Fauci's discussion yesterday, which Judy, you and I talked about with a group gathering virtually, and you'll see that the unknowns remain many, even among the most expert among us.

So across New Jersey, there are roughly 900 contact tracers already at work in local health departments statewide, identifying the people who have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, in the days immediately before their positive test result. And by the way, we define, Judy and Tina will come in if they want to add more color to this, but close contact is defined as being less than six feet for a period of 10 minutes or more. Less than six feet away for a period of 10 minutes or more.

It's the job of the contact tracers to notify these contacts to tell them that they may have been exposed, to urge them to get tested, and help them find a testing site and to urge them to self-quarantine and provide the support they need to do so, to prevent further spread. Our job over the coming weeks is to grow their ranks, and we will, and we will do so rapidly. As we undertake each step in our restart, as more businesses reopen and more residents get outside and participating in our economy, we will bring on more contact tracers. I had the great honor this morning to speak to the group of 200 or 300 folks, again, virtually, who are among our nine Restart and Recovery Councils. And there is no question that this is increasingly part of our exchanges.

You know, it's not a question of whether or not the virus will come back. It will come back in some form or another, I hope in a small form, but the question is, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to be prepared for it? And contact tracing is a huge element in our ability to be prepared. Moreover, our contact tracing program is meant to supplement and further support the great work of our local health departments. We have no desire to uproot them or overstep them. We're going to work together with common purpose.

One of those programs I want to give a shout out is in Paterson, and it has already been nationally recognized; in this case, by the New York Times. Our goal is to ensure that they not only have the contact tracers they need to do even more, but that the information those tracers receive is uniform, that it's secure and can benefit not just them, but other communities. Because this virus, as we know, knows no boundaries.

So as we begin stage two of our restart on Monday, new contact tracers will be recruited and trained. As more businesses come back online the following week, so too will more contact tracers. Each step of our restart will be accompanied by the onboarding of new contact tracers. As part of their training, contact tracers will follow a full curriculum, and this isn't just about learning a database. A focus on interview skills, ethics and privacy will each be central in their training. We anticipate that our initial scaling efforts will require us to bring in at least 1,600 additional contact tracers on board in June, this month. Again, that's 1,600 in addition to the 900 in the local health departments who are already on the job. We are already preparing for the first cohort and expect to be ready to deploy them as we hit our benchmark dates for stage two, but we are fully prepared to bring on as many as 4,000 or more should we see the need, and should COVID-19 begin to make a second tour of New Jersey. And we have every confidence we'll be able to find the talent, as the contact tracer information page we set up at our covid19.nj.gov information hub received more than 50,000 submissions of interest.

Our contact tracers will be trained by Rutgers School of Public Health and by the local health departments through which they may work. And central to that, we will be bringing them fully up to speed on the CommCare platform that we, and we mentioned this a few weeks ago, and our neighbors especially including New York State and Philadelphia will use. The CommCare platform, importantly, that we will use across our entire contact tracing program is fully HIPAA compliant, meaning that any personal information inputted by contact tracers is protected under law. It uses state-of-the-art encryption technologies to protect the storage and processing of information.

To be clear, CommCare is the database that allows us to do this work effectively, but it is not a tracking app. It is not a tracking app. And there is a huge difference there. CommCare doesn't track your cell phone, know your GPS location, or use any geolocation data. Other consumer-facing smartphone apps are not contact tracing tools. They are what's known as, and I'm quoting, "exposure notification" or "digital alerting tools". A way for the public to track if they have come into contact with a person who has tested positive, and also enter that information into their own phone. The State of New Jersey is neither pursuing nor promoting

exposure notification or digital alerting technology, at least at this time. No one outside of our contact tracing program will have access to CommCare, and all the information is offloaded after 45 days to the state's epidemiological database.

Now, this brings me to an important point. The safety and security of every New Jerseyan is central to our contact tracing program. The four pillars of this program are, in order, consent, transparency, security, and limits. Our tracers will only contact those individuals whose names they are given by someone who has tested positive. There will be no wild goose chases or rogue investigations. We will rely on those who test positive to be open and transparent with us for the common good. Common sense for the common good. There is a responsibility on folks who've tested positive to really think through those meaningful, at least 10 minutes, shorter than six feet interactions that they've had.

Our tracers will be clear with how any contact information they are given is used and handled. Contact tracers will be trained to only ask for the names and phone numbers of those they need to be in touch with. They will never ask for Social Security, financial, or other personally identifying information, including immigration status or criminal background history. Our tracers will be properly trained to prevent the leaking of any information provided to them, and the CommCare platform's encryption and security functions will provide an additional level of confidence against outsiders.

And finally, our tracers will know the limits of what they need to do, to do their jobs, and the limits of how that information will be used. We will not tolerate any tracer who steps outside those professional bounds. So all this begs the question, how will I know if I've been exposed? How will I know if a contact tracer is trying to get in touch with me?

We are creating a broad public awareness campaign to ensure our residents know the vital importance of testing and contact tracing and the related services that may be available to them if they test positive, or if they've been in close proximity to someone who has. Just as importantly, we recognize that this cannot be a one size fits all campaign, and we are working within our communities as well, to establish trust where it may not exist, and to expand trust where it does exist. We are engaging directly with residents and community leaders, and as our team of contact tracers expands, so too will our community-based efforts.

We need people to know that when a contact tracer calls them, picking up their phones or returning their call if they missed it is important to their health and the health of their family and their community. And that's the point of this. We have worked hard to put together the testing capacity, and we're working hard to put together our contact tracing capacity. And together, they're going to not only put us firmly on the road back, but as importantly, if not more so, ensure that we stay on that road.

There is a lot more information available about contact tracing and our plan going forward. I encourage you to go to covid19.nj.gov/testandtrace. I encourage you to visit and learn more about our plans for making sure every new case of COVID-19 is handled properly so it doesn't lead to a second outbreak. Of course, we are still seeing ourselves through this emergency and with that, to map our progress, let's check the overnight numbers.

Yesterday we received an additional 611 positive test results, and the statewide total is now 165,346. And by the way, today is 99 days since we had our first positive test results on Wednesday, March 4. Here are these new cases graphed in relation to the past several weeks, and our rate of transmission or RT continues to track below one, which means that each new case is leading to fewer than one other new case. New Jersey's RT currently sits at 0.64, and we have one of the lowest rates of transmission right now in the United States of America.

The daily positivity or spot positivity rate for test samples from June 6, which was Saturday, was 3.4%. And let me say again that these numbers, both the RT and the positivity rate, are dependent on the data that we're getting from testing. There is no reason to not get yourself tested. Tammy and I got tested this morning. And as we just went through, we are putting together a robust contact tracing program to protect our communities. We have the testing capacity in place, so go to covid19.nj.gov/testing to find a testing location near you.

Moving to our long-term care facilities, 34,799 positive cases. We continue to work hard to push that curve down and as we see, the loss of 5,635 blessing souls from long-term care facilities. And again, continue to do everything we can to stem the loss of residents. One quick comment about LTC, this is an eye chart, but I want to quickly show the work that we put in to help our long-term care facilities, and Pat and team at OEM deserve a huge amount of credit here, to meet their critical needs for personal protective equipment for residents and staff. To date, we have distributed more than 27 million pieces of PPE across the spectrum of long-term care facilities, and those are subcategories. You can see overwhelmingly nursing homes, assisted and home health hospices are the biggest buckets, but it's extraordinary. We will continue our commitment to working with the industry not just to get them what they need today, but on the long-term reforms that we have discussed that we will ensure we get to a stronger and better tomorrow.

In our hospitals, there were 1,701 patients being treated for COVID-19. That's our sixth straight day, by the way, below 2,000 Judy, statewide, and the number of residents in field medical stations has decreased to nine. This is the breakdown of hospitalizations by region. The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care dropped back under 500 again, ended yesterday at 471. Ventilator use is 342. Yesterday 156 new patients entered our hospitals, so let's not take that lightly. That's something that Judy and Tina and I look at very carefully. The good news is 171 live residents left our hospitals, and here are the admittance and discharge numbers charted across regions.

However, with the heaviest heart, we must report the loss of another 74 New Jerseyans, blessed souls to COVID-19 related complications. We have now lost 12,377 New Jerseyans, and that's in 99 days since our first positive test result. Let's take a moment to recall a few more of these precious lives lost.

Here are a handsome couple. We begin with Sidney and Miriam Schneider, longtime Springfield residents who had most recently called Livingston home. They went, by the way by Sid and Mickey, and we lost them both within two weeks of each other. Mickey was a native of Summit, with varied passions that included fashion, traveling, theater, and her family. She channeled her love of fashion into a successful personal shopping business and could be seen most days traveling into New York City's garment center for her clients. Sid was born in Newark, a gifted athlete and sports fan. He, by the way, was a nationally ranked amateur tennis player, and a diehard fan of the New York Football Giants, and he loved playing backgammon. Sid trained as a pharmacist and owned a successful pharmacy in Union, and after he retired from the healthcare business, he became a very successful and self-taught day trader.

They met in Springfield three decades ago, after their own children had grown. Mickey had three children, and Sid had two, and at a time when life meant they could focus on each other. They celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary just this past October. They were snowbirds, splitting their time between summers in New Jersey and winters at Longboat Key in Florida. They leave behind Mickey's sons Geoffrey and Michael, and her daughter Abby, with whom I had the great honor of speaking, and Sid leaves his daughter Mindy and son David, who I also spoke with. Together they leave nine beloved grandchildren. Sid and Mickey may have met later in life, but they treat each other's children as their own all the same. Sid and Mickey were inseparable until the end, and I was told this by one, I think it was by Abby, they were literally holding their hands right through to the final gun, a fact that provides comfort to those they left behind. God bless you, Sid and Mickey, and God bless your families and friends.

And today, we also remember Dr. Godwin Onochie Molokwu of Maplewood. He was one of our frontline healthcare heroes, and he passed away on Memorial Day. Dr. Molokwu was a gastroenterologist with a practice in Irvington and an affiliation with Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, RWJ Barnabas Health, and I know that the team there are watching in his honor and memory. He dedicated his life and 25-year-long career to medicine and to providing for those who were in his care. A brilliant-minded, tender-hearted doctor, and strong-willed all-around individual, he touched the lives of many: his family, his colleagues and his patients.

But his community was just as important and that spurred him to run for a seat on the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education in 2014. He is survived by his wife Lillian, with whom I had the great honor of speaking, and four children. And Tammy, their age span is almost identical to ours, 16 to 23. I also had the chance and honor to speak with his son Brian. He also leaves a community of patients and colleagues whose

lives he improved with his compassion and skill. Dr. Molokwu was only 59 years old. He will ultimately, by the way, be buried in Nigeria. May his legacy as a husband, a dad, a friend, a caring doctor, be a source of pride and peace to all. God bless you, sir.

And we hope that the legacies of every New Jerseyan we have lost throughout this pandemic remains a source of pride and peace to their families and communities. As I noted, we've now lost 12,377 extraordinary lives and in the coming days, we should expect to surpass the somber number and milestone of New Jerseyans lost across the four years-plus of fighting in World War II. Let that sink in just for a minute. In just 99 days since our first positive COVID-19 case. This is a historic and unprecedented tragedy for our state.

But as my late dad used to remind me, both the Alpha and the Omega, we also have to remember that life does go on, and there are Alphas popping up all over the state, and Tammy and I want to give a shout out to Mayor Hector Lora of Passaic and his wife, the First Lady, who gave birth yesterday to their fifth boy. How's that for a lineup, right? In this case, Charles, and we've got a Charlie as well, so to the Mayor and First Lady and to the five Lora boys, God bless you, and it is for you and your futures that we do what we do.

We will emerge from all of this stronger than ever, even more close knit than ever. And we will do so because of the millions of you out there, New Jerseyans, each of you who have taken to heart the need for us to work together to beat back this virus. This is where we are. The numbers of hospitalizations of patients in our ICUs on respirators continues to push downward. These trends have been sustained over time and they are evident across each region of our state. But we're still not out of the woods. We're falling in the ranks in the number of new cases, which is great – not good, but great – but we're still near the top of two lists we don't want to be atop of: hospitalizations and fatalities. So while the stay at home order may be lifted, social distancing, face coverings, personal responsibility must remain our priorities. Common sense again, for the common good. Keep wearing that face covering when you're out, keep washing your hands frequently with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer, and go get a COVID-19 test.

Even though we're standing up a robust contact tracing program, we must continue to do all we can to keep slowing the spread of COVID-19. The fewer New Jerseyans our contact tracers have to be in touch with, the better. So let's keep doing this, everybody. As I've noted, tomorrow will be 100 days since our first positive case of COVID-19 was identified. In just 100 days, our state as well as our nation and our world have been turned upside down. Let's keep doing all we can to put it right again, and to move forward on this road back as one New Jersey family into a strong period of restart and recovery.

With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, our extraordinary Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. Throughout this pandemic, our local health departments have been using contact tracing to limit the spread of COVID-19. Contact tracing is something they're well experienced with. And in many cases, their work is often focused on a disease that they know much more about. When COVID-19 arrived in our state, we were all still learning about this virus and that continues until today. Local health departments are doing a tremendous job in the face of so many unknowns and challenging circumstances.

The department is focusing on further supporting our local health departments with the tools and staff to identify and contain the spread of the virus in their communities. We're working to ensure uniform training across the workforce. We're working to establish a common data reporting platform. We're working to scale up the number of tracers, to ensure there is more contact tracing staff, and that as many of these new contact tracers as possible come from and reflect the diversity of the communities in which they will be working. And we are working to ensure that we have contact tracing capacity wherever we need it.

As the Governor mentioned, the Rutgers School of Public Health is developing the contact tracing training curriculum, which will be guarded by tenants of social justice and health equity. Training will include cultural sensitivity, cultural bias, and historic cultural context training, to ensure that when contact tracers are connecting with exposed individuals from diverse communities, they have cultural awareness and aptitude. It will also include modules on data privacy and confidentiality, so they are equipped with the knowledge they need to keep information safe and secure. Training will begin next week, then will continue throughout the month. We expect to begin placing trained contact tracers at local health departments in the coming weeks.

The state is also soliciting vendors to provide additional contact tracing staff to support the local health departments to meet their operational demands. A formal request for quotes was posted on New Jersey's COVID-19 website last Friday. We expect to review those proposals in the coming week. The vendors will help the state with recruitment, assessment and onboarding of contact tracers, data managers, social support coordinators and other positions required to support a statewide enhanced contact tracing effort.

Due to the disproportionate impact of this virus on our minority communities, we will be looking at the respondents experience and capacity to communicate with minority communities and vulnerable populations. We want to ensure that potential contact tracing staff have familiarity with the communities in which they will be working. We also want the contact tracers to be able to effectively communicate and engage with individuals that speak languages other than English. New Jersey is a very diverse state, and we need a pool of contact tracers that reflect the communities they will be serving.

A trusting and safe relationship is the foundation of an effective program. Working with Rutgers School of Public Health, we aim to recruit, train and deploy an additional 1,600 contact tracers by the end of the month. The training is fully online and takes about 15 hours.

As the Governor outlined, CommCare is the chosen platform and it will bolster the department's existing lab-integrated program, our communicable disease reporting and surveillance system. We are piloting CommCare with a few health departments before the official statewide rollout. The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services participated in a soft launch of CommCare yesterday, and the health departments in Essex County will begin using it on Monday. We anticipate rolling this technology out to all health departments at the end of the month.

Along with advancing contact tracing in our state, we've also been working hard to increase access to testing. We encourage residents to get tested. COVID-19 is still circulating in the state, and testing is critical to identifying and containing the spread of this virus. The expansion of contact tracing, combined with robust testing, will increase our ability to quickly identify new cases and take immediate public health measures to interrupt the transmission of the virus.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, the hospitals are reporting 1,701 individuals and 471 of those individuals are in critical care, and 73% of those in critical care are on ventilators. No new cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children were reported since yesterday, so the total remains at 39 cases.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported today. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity is as follows: White 53.8%, Black 18.5%, Hispanic 20.4%, Asian 5.7%, other 1.7%. The veterans homes numbers remain the same, as do the psychiatric hospitals.

On the daily percent positivity as of June 6, overall in New Jersey, it is 3.4%. Northern part of the state, 2.77%, the central part of the state 3.75%, and the southern part of the state 3.94%. That concludes my daily statistical report. Please continue to take precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy and get tested. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you. We haven't hit this lately, but ventilator use holding at around low 70% of the folks in ICU. Is it your sense that's about where it's going to land?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, it's been that way for a while.

Governor Phil Murphy: Been that way for a while. Thank you for that, and for everything. Pat, a good chance, any update overnight, but also we've had now, I guess two weeks and two days since the killing of George Floyd. We've had gobs of protests, overwhelmingly peaceful. Any chance you can give us sort of not just an overnight summary and what we might expect today, but also sort of cumulatively as well? And thank you for everything.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Yes, sir. Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Compliance remains extraordinary. To the Governor's point with regard to, since May 31, which is only 11 days, we've had more than 300 demonstrations throughout the state of New Jersey, with thousands and

thousands of citizens marching on those. And of those, there's been 58 arrests. I think that just speaks volumes to how peaceful across that many demonstrations and that many people, that the overwhelming nature of these has been peaceful with regard to --

Governor Phil Murphy: Thousands, literally, probably double-digit thousands I would think in total, right?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Yes, sir. And just again, phenomenal, peaceful process to protest the murder of George Floyd. So again, another source of pride for us. I'll just throw -- I did my first keynote speaker of a graduation today, which was a little different. Ocean County Vocational and Technical School, particularly a program geared towards young men and women interested in law enforcement. Another source of pride that we have that generation, even during such challenging times as this, that also want to raise their right hand and serve and swear to protect the citizens in New Jersey. So it was an honor for me to do that and I sent your regards too, Gov. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. I'm taping one, I think this afternoon. It won't be live, but it will be in the can. Thank you for everything. Any idea how many demonstrations or protests we have today?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: As of this afternoon, there was 15 scheduled for today. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: And again, folks, you've been extraordinary both with your passion and understandable anger, from all of us, but please stay peaceful. Please, please, please keep it peaceful. The weather's gotten warm, which is great because folks have been able to enjoy a little bit of summer here. But please, please stay peaceful and do everything you can, face covering. Social distancing I know is hard, but do your level best and wash up and test up. So thank you.

I think we're going to start over here, Matt. Mahen, at the moment we're on for one o'clock tomorrow, but Thursdays are a day that frequently Judy and Pat and I are in a White House VTC, but we haven't had one called yet. For the time being, we'll be back with you at one o'clock. Out of deference to my long-belated and overdue congratulations on being elected class president, we're going to start with Brent Johnson first. Please.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: What do you make of the corrections officer who took part in reenacting George Floyd's death? Should he be fired? Should he lose his pension?

Governor Cuomo said he'll repeal rules that keep police misconduct records secret in New York. New Jersey's laws currently prevent the disclosure of those records. Would you support giving the public access to police disciplinary records? And if not, why?

Why didn't Commissioner Hicks or anyone from the DOC show up today at a Joint Assembly hearing on the prison system's response to coronavirus?

And then from Dan Munoz, -- actually one, sorry. Assemblyman Jay Webber is calling on you to pardon those who had received citations for violating your orders, after you participated in rallies this weekend. Would you consider that?

And then two from Dan Munoz. What are the legal consequences if someone refuses to cooperate with the contact tracer? Will they get a visit from police? And when are you planning to use apps that have geolocation data? How does the current app being used track potential cases and people who've had contact with those potential positive cases?

Governor Phil Murphy: If I understood the last question, we're not using those, so we're quite clear that's not going to -- they're not going to be used by us. I don't think there's any legal consequence, but there's an obligation, this notion of common sense for the common good. It is an abrogation of personal responsibility. I'm not sure there's a legal consequence.

I think I've said everything I'm going to say about the Assemblyman, and I appreciate his input. I can't speak to why the Commissioner wasn't there, so forgive me for that. I'll go back up to the top. I think your second question is, I'm not familiar with the specific steps that Governor Cuomo has taken but I think as we reimagine what law enforcement looks like, and the relationship between law enforcement and the

communities and trying to get to a place that we've never been before, I think about everything needs to be on the table, and that would include access to -- without committing to it, that's got to be on the table for consideration.

And listen, the corrections officer was suspended, and rightfully so. It's reprehensible, period, and there's a process underway. Beyond that, let's let the process play out, but completely unacceptable and reprehensible. Thank you. Let's go back to Nikita. Nikita, I'm not sure Matt got to you yesterday, it turns out there is a date that I have to submit, it's August 25, and I should have said that. I just didn't think of it at the time, so.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Yeah, he got that to me before I left yesterday.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Governor, so I only have one question for you. It's pretty clear what your stance is on the Black Lives Matter movement, given your attendance at the protests and your words here and elsewhere. But I do want to ask, so a few days ago you tweeted out, when you were sitting, giving a moment of silence, you tweeted out a picture of yourself behind Woodrow Wilson's desk. Now the former President has, let's say a complicated history with racism, including there were some protests in 2016 while you were running for Governor to try to get the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton renamed. So I'm just wondering why did you choose to pose behind that desk? And do you have any feelings on keeping that desk?

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't have at my ready usually Woodrow Wilson talking points, so you'll forgive me for not having been asked this question before. I didn't pose behind the desk. That is my desk. That's the Governor's desk. So, but you're right about his, I'll be charitable, uneven history as it relates to race and Princeton University, of which he was the former president, has been, I think, very soulful and very reflective on that reality. It's a good question. I don't want you to think that I sought out a Woodrow Wilson desk though to pose behind. That's the desk I sit behind every day, but it's a very, very fair point to be raised. So, thank you. Sir. Go 49ers, apparently.

Reporter: Thank you. It's that or a mullet, so. You announced that Rutgers would be training these folks about a month ago.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm sorry?

Reporter: You announced that Rutgers would be training these contact tracers about a month ago, you announced that partnership. It looks like it's going to be another few weeks before, at least another couple weeks before there are folks on the ground helping these local health departments.

Governor Phil Murphy: No, I would just -- not to interrupt you, I'd argue with that premise. There'll be people on the ground in addition to the 900 local tracers by next week.

Reporter: By next week?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep.

Reporter: I was told by Rutgers today that they wouldn't be rolling out -- they wouldn't actually be starting training until the end of next week.

Governor Phil Murphy: Well, Judy mentioned in her remarks that there's a pilot program that we've soft launched in Camden, and you're soft launching, or you're launching --

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well the technology program was launched in Camden. My understanding is Rutgers is starting their training modules on Monday, but we can confirm that.

Reporter: Okay.

Governor Phil Murphy: But they're 15 hours, so this is not a six-month course. This is 15 hours online.

Reporter: I understand. I guess the crux of my question though is that New York State, Massachusetts, a bunch of other states kind of had programs in place weeks ago, months ago, in some cases. Wondering why it took New Jersey this long to stand up a training program for supplementing contact tracing at local health departments?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that all you got? So listen, you guys can't stand success is one observation, nothing personal. We have the number one per capita testing state in America. We have among the lowest rates of transmission of any American state. We have a spot positivity rate, which please God it stays this way, between 3% and 4%, which means 96% to 97% of the people who are being tested are negative, and we have 900 people doing contact tracing as we sit here. So I will tell you, it won't be that long. You guys gave us a lot of grief about where testing was at. It won't be that long from now, I promise you. You can put it in the bank, where at some point I will say, and by the way, we have the highest I don't how we'll define it, per capita contact tracers of any state in America, and you all will be onto the next subject. Thank you. Dave.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. A follow up on contact tracing, a couple of questions. With this whole program being launched and expanded, there are some people and I think you kind of referenced this in your comments, that believe this is a government plot to track and monitor people that this is basically a Big Brother scenario.

Governor Phil Murphy: We'll be calling you first, Dave. You're the first call.

David Matthau, NJ 101.5: Thanks. What further words of assurance can you offer on this? And just to clarify, there's going to be no legal consequence if somebody refuses to cooperate with a contact tracer?

And second contact tracing question, are you concerned, and again, you sort of referenced this, that some people may not answer a contact tracer's phone call because they think it's either a robo-call or a scam. So what do you want people to keep in mind in this instance, because obviously, if you're not getting people to connect, it's a problem.

And then final one for the Commissioner who needs no introduction, nursing homes, any idea as to when family members might be able to visit their loved ones in a nursing home? We're going on three months.

Governor Phil Murphy: So on legal consequences, I practice both medicine and law without a license in either. Matt, am I correct on that? That there's no technical legal consequence, but I think there's a huge burden of moral suasion on folks to answer the phone and cooperate. Is that an accurate? Matt's shaking his head. So listen, we do think there's a risk of exactly, all kidding aside, of what you're talking about. That folks may think, you know, in this age of mega data and the feeling that, particularly look at our immigrant brothers and sisters and the breaking up of families, which we haven't talked about for a long time by ICE and things like that have legitimately got people nervous about the data.

So in addition to my words and Judy's words, we are going to start a public campaign, a public relations campaign, to consistently beat the drum, that this is legitimate, that your privacy is protected. Part of the reason Judy and team picked the CommCare's platform, a huge part of the test that they had to pass was the privacy of the data, the ability for that data to not be hacked. And so we all, in all seriousness, we recognize this as an issue.

I would just plead to folks, we're doing it for your good and for your family's good and for the greater community good. Literally, just think about this for a second. You've had a less than six feet, intense relationship that went well past 10 minutes with someone who's tested positive. Someone's calling you to, A, let you know that and encourage you to get tested, think through any other steps you should be taking. It's overwhelmingly to your benefit to take that call and to embrace that. So please answer the phone, please trust us on the data, and we will continue to do, not just in these daily press conferences, but we will in a more broad public relations campaign be aggressive with that.

Judy, anything you want to add to that? And then secondly, visitations. You and I are starting to hear this with a fairly regular drumbeat, not surprisingly. Folks have been extraordinarily compliant about staying away but you've got loved ones that they haven't been with at three months at this point. Please.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, the visitation in nursing homes is something that we talk about every day, right? Dr. Tan is engaged in these conversations with us. The disease in nursing homes is still there in most of our facilities, so we have to be extremely vigilant when we put out guidance for visitation. We're looking at what some other states are doing. We've identified some guidelines that we're just not ready to put out yet, but we will be soon. But whenever we put out the guidance, it's really with the thought in mind to keep it as safe for these vulnerable populations. And this is something we struggle with. We

understand both sides of this issue, but it's not something that we're going to be putting out without a lot of thought. But we will come up with a way for individuals, residents to have visitors in very selected circumstances.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, other than please answer the phone, anything else you want to add on contact tracing and the rightful concerns that folks may think that government's trying to get into their lives?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, I think that's why we want to recruit tracers from the community. We all have a tendency to trust and have confidence in people that we know, that we know speaks our language, understands who we are, how we live, the food we eat, and having contact tracers from the communities that they'll be serving, I think will go a long way into building that trust and confidence, so that the phone is answered and the door is open.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen. Thank you, Dave. Please, sir.

Reporter: Governor, are you concerned about people crowding on beaches and ignoring social distancing? Can you comment specifically on the situation in Point Pleasant Beach last night where there was a huge gathering on the beach? How do you respond to critics who say you set a bad example by participating in a march?

Now on contact tracing, who will actually hire and employ these contact tracers and what's the cost of the CommCare platform? Who is paying? Is that a state or a local expense?

And finally, at one point, you had suggested we needed up to 7,000 tracers. When you first announced this weeks ago, you said 5,000. Now it's 4,000. How are you determining this need? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the last one, I believe we gave you a range per 100,000 and if you look at the numbers, we're talking about whether you stop at 2,500 or you go up to 4,000, that's right in the middle of that range. For the time being, the federal government is I believe reimbursing the testing and tracing expenses and God willing that will continue. Did you ask how much they're getting paid?

Reporter: No, what's the cost of CommCare?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm not sure on the cost of CommCare. We'll come back to you if that's okay. Again, we like CommCare for many reasons, including the fact that New York and Philly are using it as well, because we're in this, you know, under the notion the virus knows no boundaries. The fact that we can have one common platform is very helpful.

Beaches generally, the reports we get back generally on beaches, Pat, unless you see it otherwise have been very good. Now, you're on a beach so are there a lot of folks wearing face coverings? No, based on any anecdotal, and it's consistent anecdotal evidence so at this point, it's north of anecdotal. But generally, I think we all should be proud about it. And by the way, I like the way we've done this, in the sense that we put out guidance, clear guidance, mostly coming from Judy and her team. But then we work with the four shore counties and the shore mayors, and then in our lake communities to allow them to figure out what was the best way to execute that guidance. I personally think that's a good model and it seems to be working.

I don't think anyone who stands up and joins others with great passion and speaks out against the stain of racism in this country, which is now clocking in at 401 years, is setting any kind of bad example. We need leaders. We need rank and file. We need people all over this country, just as they're doing by the way, this time it's different. It feels different. And please God, I'm right about that and that we're right about that. Stand up peacefully and demand action. Now, do it with a face covering. Get tested. We just did this morning.

You know, there's some things that go with that. Keep the social distancing, which is hard in some of these. Again, we were at two different ones. One was hard on social distancing. The other one was pretty straightforward and much easier to get it, because it was a vigil and it was not moving. But I would just say to the contrary.

Pat, Point Pleasant last night, I know that was a big gathering, someone said about 1,000 folks on the beach, right?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: That's correct. They're really, from all the reports that I received, that it was just that, a large gathering. They did request assistance. We had 15 troopers that responded and it cleared. I think the last update I got was about 11 cleared without incident and even the Sheriff of Ocean County Mastronardy was on that graduation Zoom this morning and reported the same thing back to me, that it was other than that, I don't believe any arrests and know it again concluded without incident.

Governor Phil Murphy: The tragedy associated with that, by the way, and I'm speaking only because I just happened to have spoken with Mayor Baraka, three young guys from Newark were killed on Route 22 on the way back from Point Pleasant Beach. I think they were at that beach gathering and they got into an accident and awful loss of life with two other guys who are in, I'm not sure what type of hospital care, but please keep them in your prayers. Thank you. Can you hold on?

Reporter: Sorry, Governor. I have two questions on behalf of News 12. I'm pulling it up now. The New Jersey Licensed Beverage Association called today to immediately begin phasing in indoor dining services. They say they are being left out and that they are very well prepared to open with limited capacity safely.

And the second question is, last month your administration proposed to eliminate the senior freeze. Will this still happen?

Governor Phil Murphy: Did you say the senior freeze?

Reporter: Yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so I will answer both of them if I may, and thanks to the News 12 questions. We will get to indoor dining. There's no question. If the numbers keep going in the way that we see every day, we'll get there. And by the way, it will be limited capacity, so on that we agree. We've just, we've got to do this in a right, responsible, step-by-step way. We're about to open up in a big way. I mean, we lifted the stay at home, we've increased indoor and outdoor gatherings. Faith is going to kick in, thank God, literally and figuratively this Friday. Outdoor dining on Monday, daycare on Monday, non-essential retail on Monday. A week from Monday nail salons, hair salons, barbershops. I mean, we're getting there. We are getting there, without question. So I share the same passion. I want that to happen, but we've got to do it right. But the health data, so far, so good, so we're going to get there. My guess is we'll be giving guidance on that sooner than later, by the way, even if the date is not sooner than later, we'll give guidance.

Senior freeze is like a lot of other things in government right now. We put forward a budget. Remember, we extended the fiscal year to September 30, so we put a budget forward at the end of May, I'm going to say with five or six days to go at the end of May, maybe a week. So it was for a few days in May and then June, July, August, September. For that limited period, cuts or deferrals of programs and expenditures, including ones that were our idea and that we love, senior freeze being on that list, have been to the tune of \$5.2 billion or \$5.3 billion of programs that are on the scrap heap right now.

And there's only two ways they get back, and it's probably both ways. Number one, we must be able to borrow, particularly from the Federal Reserve, for this unique program at very attractive rates. The Assembly has passed the bill that we need. The Senate is deliberating, I believe, based on the vibrations I'm hearing they're getting there, I hope sooner than later. And then I will sign our ability in that bill and work with them. By the way, they still have to appropriate, so this is a relationship that stays normal.

And then secondly, we cannot allow to be lost in COVID-19 and undoing the stain of racism in our country, we cannot lose sight of the fact that we, states, New Jersey on that list, desperately needs direct federal cash assistance. It's the way we keep firefighters, police, educators, EMS, healthcare workers on the job, and it's the way we can claw our way back to many of the programs that we love and want to get back to, including senior freeze. Thank you, sir. Elise, good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Good afternoon. On PPE, is all that's coming in being distributed immediately or is some being stashed for an expected second wave? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: I think, I mean, we're still not where we need to be, Pat. How's your answer to that, because we clearly are trying to build up our capacities for a second wave, there's no question about it, including with ventilators, which was not part of your question, but Pat?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Gov. We meet just about every other day. The PPE that comes in is still being distributed, but we have to plan and the Commissioner and I, as well as our team that we've brought in as to what is that, quote-unquote, stockpile going to look like? Do we need a month's worth to give us enough runway? Should it come, you know, next wave come back and understanding the challenges we had with vendors and manufacturers. So it's a little bit of both right now, Elise, but more so what's coming in is going out, and we are planning for the fall.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, may I just repeat something that we've said a bunch of times, we still don't have enough. And I think it's fair to say, Judy and Pat, I don't want to practice without a license yet again, but sort of the question is on ventilators, bed capacity, PPE. You all debate it regularly. What's the timeframe for that stockpile look like? Is it a month? Is it two or three months? It sort of seems to me it's in the 30 to 90-day range in terms of having the ability. God willing the same exercise is going on federally, I assume it is as well. Again, I know the ventilator reality more closely than the broad PPE reality. But thank you. Sir.

Reporter: How will you decide which local health departments will get new tracers? We talked to a handful who say they already have enough people doing tracing and would prefer funds. Do you want to comment on that?

Governor Phil Murphy: They do not have enough people?

Reporter: No, they said they do have enough people and they would prefer funds.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay.

Reporter: Are the 1,600 new people all Rutgers students? If you are still waiting to choose a company to help with staffing and of management, is the end of June a realistic date for deploying an additional 1,600 people?

Two more. I don't think you answered Sam's question about what took so long to get this program off the ground, and I'm also curious about that.

And for Superintendent Callahan, any idea, even if it's an estimate, of how many people have been issued citations for violating the various virus-related executive orders?

Governor Phil Murphy: You know, I'm not dodging Sam's question. We have 900 people in the field, and so this is not a question of what, quote-unquote, took us along. We also were not opening the state up. We're going into stage two of opening up on Monday, faith being the exception on Friday. So I reject completely the premise of what took us along. Judy, you'll have to -- is the number realistic to get by the end of June? Yeah, we wouldn't have given it to you if we didn't think it was realistic. They're not all Rutgers students, right? There's a block of 400, I think?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, and alumni also.

Governor Phil Murphy: So 400?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, there'll be some Rutgers students, some alumni of Rutgers, and then some general population.

Governor Phil Murphy: I can't speak to the specifics of the local, we don't need the bodies, we need the money. We need the money too, by the way, so I'd have to know what the specifics are and we could follow up with you on that. And by the way, this is a little bit also in the category of hoping for the best, preparing for the worst, right? You have a spot positivity rate that's still at 3% three or 4% a month from now and an RT that's, you know, I don't know 0.6 something or 0.7 something. This thing is going to the ground, so we're going to over build, and it's quite possible there's a local reality where they've got all the bodies they need. Citations, I'm -- I can't hear your question.

Reporter: How do you choose which departments get them? Get the contact tracers?

Governor Phil Murphy: Please, Judy.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're actually doing a survey of the departments right now and asking them, how many contact tracers do you need right now, and project out for the next couple of months?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Pat, citations?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Yes, sir. Since the state of emergency was declared, 319 citations that have risen to an indictable level, and an additional 3,371 non-compliance issues, so that could be again, not indictable, a warning, a written warning, so that's the scope so far.

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't normally do that, but I'm taking a drink before I mask up here. Thank you all. I will mask up. Thank you, folks. Thanks to my colleagues up here, Judy and Tina, thank you very much for being here and for everything you do. Pat, likewise. Jared, Matt, Tammy, Mahen, the whole team. Again, unless you hear otherwise and you could hear otherwise, because Thursday's are a little dicey in terms of our schedule, tomorrow at one o'clock, unless you hear otherwise. And I would just say where I've ended the past number of days, huge thank yous at two levels. One is the overwhelming compliance and good behavior and doing the right thing as it relates to COVID-19, unlike any American state. You don't get a rate of transmission as low as ours, given where we were 99 days ago, forget what we do up here. We try to get it right. You all have done that. Just please keep it up, particularly as we begin to open up.

And then secondly, over 300 protests and 58 arrests, there's no other -- the ratio of those two, there's no other state in America that has that record right now. So again, huge thank yous to folks. We completely respect, we are with you in solidarity in your anger and outrage, and needing and wanting action as it relates to ending the stain of racism at long last, but you've done it peacefully. Thank you for that. Please, please, please continue to do so. Thank you all and God bless.

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](#)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](#)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](#)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](#)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](#)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](#)

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](#)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](#)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](#)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(<http://drumthwacket.org/>\)](#)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](#)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](#)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](#)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](#)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](#)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)

[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation](#)

[\(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

[TikTok \(https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?)

Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(//www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/)

Contact Us ([//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html))

Privacy Notice ([//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html))

Legal Statement & Disclaimers ([//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html))

Accessibility Statement ([//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html))

([//nj.gov/opra/](https://nj.gov/opra/))

(<https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login>)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

(<https://tech.nj.gov/>)