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TRANSCRIPT: March 7th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media Call


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Acting Governor Oliver: Thank you all for joining today's briefing call. I'm joined on the call by Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli, Dr. Christina Tan, and Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth. As it was reported last night, we received notification of our fourth presumed positive, positive case of Coronavirus in New Jersey. The individual, a male in his 50s, has been hospitalized at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in Bergen County. Commissioner Persichilli will speak more directly to these cases in one moment. We know these reports of positive test results can be worrisome to residents, but we do ask everyone to remain calm. The Department of Health, along with our local and federal partners, continues to work hard in responding to and investigating each of these cases. New Jersey has been preparing along a whole of government approach since the very beginning for the eventuality that there would be positive Coronavirus tests in New Jersey. And right now, those plans are working. Overall, the risk of the average New Jerseyan and contracting coronavirus or developing COVID-19 remains low. As a reminder, the surest way to protect yourself and others is to practice smart hygiene. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, cover your cough or sneeze, and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. If you are feeling sick, take a day off from work or school and call your doctor or local health care provider. Anyone with questions or concerns is urged to visit the Department of Health's coronavirus information page nj.gov/health. The state's toll free public hotline has also been expanded to better accommodate out of state phone lines. Residents calling from a New Jersey phone number should call 1-800-222-1222. And those with an out-of-state number 1-800-962-1253. I will now ask Commissioner Person Cellie to provide an update.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Acting Governor. And good afternoon, everyone. Today, I'll share with you as much updated information as we have, bearing in mind, as I've said before, that this is a rapidly evolving situation.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: To date in New Jersey, we have completed 29 tests. 25 of those tests have returned as negative and 4 are presumptive positive. We currently have 4 tests in progress, one from Union County, one from Mercer County and two from Bergen County. And last evening, we have received notification of fifteen additional persons under investigation. Persons under investigation are individuals exhibiting symptoms that have either been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 individual or present with pneumonia of unknown cause. We have received specimens from 2 of those 15 cases and expect to receive the remaining specimens today and start testing either today or tomorrow pending on the time of receipt of those specimens. Those PUIs are from Essex County, 3 are from Essex County, 7 from Bergen County, 2 from Morris County, 2 from Passaic County and 1 from Camden County. Although at this

time, most of our PUIs are coming from the northern part of the state. They are testing negative for the most part. As I said, overall we have completed 29 tests, with 4 presumptive positives and 25 negatives. We currently have no high risk individuals on self-isolation. 4 positive tests or 3 from Bergen County and 1 from Camden County. Additionally, we are working with the health officer from Passaic in reference to a Rabbi who held services last Monday and to say it was reported to have tested positive for COVID-19. This morning we were able to verify that result with New York. We have advised the health officer that the recommendation that close contacts of the Rabbi to self-quarantine for a period of up to 14 days from the last contact with the Rabbi. And that's a general recommendation, elderly and or vulnerable individuals. In addition to practicing respiratory etiquette and washing their hands frequently during the day and monitoring their own health should limit exposure to mass gatherings. I will now give you an overview of the positive cases. A 32 year old male from Bergen County had onset of symptoms on March 1st. He was admitted to Hackensack University Medical Center on the morning of March 3rd. His initial emergency department visit was on March 2nd. He is in stable condition. He is still hospitalized. It is exposure to COVID-19 is still unknown. Contact tracing has begun and includes one close household contact who is now under self-quarantine. Health care workers who have had contact with this individual are being identified and assessed in New York City. Contacts are being followed by the New York City Department of Health. It was reported that he attended a medical conference in New York and also has household contacts in New York. The second case, a woman in her 30s, a Bergen County resident presented with onset of symptoms, either February 29th or March 1st. She has never been hospitalized. Her symptoms are reported as mild. It is reported that she had close contact with work, with a work colleague in New York City, confirmed to have tested positive for COVID-19. That work colleague is a New York resident. Contact tracing for her includes one close household contact, who is now under self quarantine. That contact has mild respiratory symptoms and is being tested. Health care workers are being identified and assessed. Additionally, 15 contacts attended a gathering at her home on the evening of the 29th, and those individuals are being notified by their local health departments to self-quarantine and monitor. New York Department of Health is following the New York contacts. The third case, a 61-year old male from Camden County reports the onset of symptoms on February 26. He was admitted to Jefferson Cherry Hill Hospital on March 3rd and is in stable condition. His exposure to COVID-19 at this time is unknown. Health care workers who have had contact with this individual are being identified and assessed, including E.M.S. transport. He reports 7 close household contacts, 5 friends and coworkers. He has no out-of-state contact at this point. The 4th case, a 55-year old Bergen County resident reports symptom onset, on the 27th. That resident was admitted to Englewood Hospital on March 4th and remains admitted in stable condition. Exposure to COVID-19 is a link to the case associated with Temple Young Israel in New Rochelle. He was present at the services on the 23rd. New Jersey contacts include 3 family members. The case patient was also at an out-of-state conference. So this investigation of contacts will include interstate communications. Regarding the Frisch school in Paramus. State health officials have been in contact with the local health department. The school decided to close as a precautionary measure after a number of students were notified of a possible exposure in New York. Commissioner Repollet and I had a series of stakeholder calls yesterday with 5 different school groups to discuss the guidance for school closures and dismissals. All of these cases that I shared with you are under public health surveillance activities through the local health departments and those processes are ongoing. As I've done in the past. I encourage all residents to be vigilant and practicing respiratory etiquette, coughing into a tissue or your sleeve, washing your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. And if you are ill, stay at home and if necessary, contact your health care provider. And then I would like to introduce Dr. Tan, our state epidemiologist.


State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Thank you, Commissioner. And good afternoon, everybody. The complete clinical picture regarding COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including illnesses resulting in hospitalization and death. And while the information so far suggests that most COVID-19 illness is mild, a report out of China suggests that serious illness occurs in about 16 percent of cases. As mentioned earlier, older people and people with certain underlying health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes. They seem to be at greater risk for serious illness. Worldwide, there have been very few cases reported in children, and of those reported, the illnesses have been mild. Much is unknown about how the new Coronavirus that causes COVID-19 spread, and


current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses, which are very common. Generally speaking, human coronaviruses are a common cause of mild to moderate upper respiratory illness. Most often, person to person spread is thought to happen among people in close contact, meaning within 6 feet of each other, occurring mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneeze is similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. This is a very rapidly evolving situation, and risk assessment of COVID19, will be updated as we have more information. And while we currently have several presumptive cases in New Jersey, the risk still remains low for our general population, but is higher for New Jerseyans who have traveled to areas where community transmission of COVID-19 might be occurring. And for those who have had close contact with confirmed cases and the increasing number of cases in other states and now in New Jersey make it more likely that we will see more cases in the near future, particularly since more people are being tested. New Jersey is no stranger to emerging infectious diseases. And as we are a hub for global travel, over the last 20 years, New Jersey has seen imported cases of SARS, viral hemorrhagic fever and Zika disease as examples. And also back in 2009. We experienced the H1N1 pandemic when over the course of a year we had over 3000 confirmed H1N1 cases, mainly impacting younger populations. And similarly, as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve worldwide and domestically, we are carefully monitoring the situation and are learning more about COVID-19 every single day and adapting what we need to do as needed. And right now we are seeing the different areas of the United States are going through different stages. So, for example, in California and Washington State, there is evidence of sustained community transmission. In other states are taking additional steps to control COVID-19 spread. In New Jersey and in our surrounding states, we have not yet identified sustained transmission in community settings. There are different public health strategies that can help contain communicable diseases such as COVID-19 right now as we have started to get COVID-19 cases. We work with local health departments and health care providers regarding contact tracing and assurance of appropriate infection control processes. However, we expect that as we see more cases, we will also shift towards different strategies. We're seeing in heavily impacted states such as California and Washington. We need to be mindful of prioritizing our health care resources. Community-based interventions can help slow the spread of novel corona viruses, and those interventions might include personal protective measures such as home quarantine and everyday preventive steps like hand hygiene. Also measures to increase social distancing, such as school dismissals or social distancing in the workplace. And of course, environmental measures such as enhancing cleaning up frequently touch surfaces. Again, we remind everyone that if you are sick, please stay home. And if you believe you need to be evaluated. Contact your health care provider on the next step. And as a reminder. Older adults and those with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for serious illness if infected with a Novel Coronavirus. And we remind these vulnerable populations to be even more vigilant and take these steps to prevent infection, including the everyday basic prevention steps and extra consideration regarding travel to areas with known COVID-19 community transmission. And with that, I turn this over to Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Good afternoon. As the commissioner just shared, there are currently 15 patients pending testing at our laboratory, with 4 being tested as we speak for a total of 19 patients. For our licensed clinical and commercial laboratories, we've published guides for them to begin testing in New Jersey. To date, we have not received any request for approval, but expect the requests to be coming in the coming week. We understand that Quest Diagnostics and LabCorp are conducting SAR COVID testing. However, they are sending the specimens out of state. They are not currently testing the specimens in New Jersey. We recognize that many health care providers and patients want the results as soon as possible. I must remind our healthcare colleagues, local and county public health staff and elected officials that we are processing specimens as fast as possible. As a result, to determine timely notifications will be made to ensure that information is shared in the appropriate manner. If you have questions about specific cases in your community, the local health departments are on the frontlines, managing and tracking cases and working closely with the state health departments, including the state laboratory. We ask that you direct your questions. There were local health officials can provide you with specific guidance. Thank you. And we will now begin our question and answer session.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi, everyone. Thanks for being available. Listen, I just have to precede my questions with a little bit of media perspective. What we've had for the past several days is a real disconnect between the real and the ideal. New York State and New York City have basically multiple points of contact and they are all empowered to disclose information as it happens and completely. In the case of the Westchester County attorney, the Health Department identified his county residents and his employer and that he was in his 50s. They told us which hospital he first sought treatment at and the hospital where he was ultimately treated and the schools that his children attended. Officials managed to do this without compromising any of the HIPPA information and later detail that they gave us, including that family members were affected, as was the neighbor who drove him to the first hospital. And officials in later hours disclose much more about individuals connected to him and how the virus had been detected. To be clear, this information helped thousands of people make informed decisions about how they go about their days. Information hasn't been nearly as forthcoming in New Jersey. A lot of this call has been a repeat of information that we had during the press conference the other day, a press conference, by the way, in which we were limited to 9 and a half minutes of Q&A when we had many more questions. If I were a community resident living in Fort Lee and had heard that the Fort Lee gentleman had gone to Urgent Care, A.

Communications Director Mahen Gunaratna: What is your question, please?  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Yes. OK. We have sat through lectures from your folks. So I'm just telling you what our perspective is right now. If you want help, getting your message out...  (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernoroffice>)

Communications Director Mahen Gunaratna: We are here to help you, please can you ask us a question?  (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Elise Young, Bloomberg: I'm not done.  (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Elise, go ahead, this is George.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: OK, George, I'm not going to go over all our gripes over the past couple of days because they're going to come off as gripes. But you can look at Twitter responses for what the Governor has put out and the Lieutenant Governor has put out. It's not just the press griping here. It's individuals saying we need more information. It does us no good at all to say we've got a man in Camden County. We need to know where does this guy live? Does he work outside the home somewhere? This is a positive. This is a person who is tested positive. And telling us these barebones details doesn't help us get the message out. In fact, it helps us confuse the message.

Communications Director Mahen Gunaratna: Elise, this is a press call for questions. What is your question, please? For the third time.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: OK. It's OK. It's a press call for questions. We don't need more lectures from an epidemiologist. OK, what I need to know is where this Fort Lee gentleman first went for his urgent care treatment. I want to know where this Fort Lee gentleman attended a conference in New York City. I want the hometown of the Camden individual, please.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: I'll just back up. As a general statement, we hear you loud and clear and we will do our best to be as forthcoming as possible with all of that information. As you as you well know, we are trying to balance a number of things, including that the Commissioner has consistently said is tracking down the community contacts and verifying them before we put information out there that may not be verified and causing greater panic. I hear you loud and clear. You are urging us to do better and we will. I think there were a number of new details provided today on the 4 cases, but I genuinely appreciate what you said.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: George. Where does the Camden, Camden County resident live?

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Here's what I would say is if you could write those questions into me, we will get you answers on this.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: OK. Did you have another question? I think we can go on if Elise has no questions. Thank you.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: You're getting Bloomberg overload, today. You said this is the place to ask questions. We asked where the Camden County man lives. What town. Can you not tell us that now, Judy?

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Can we verify the information? What township is he from?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have that information in front of me. But before we close out today, maybe I can get that.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Stacie, as I told Elise, if you put those questions in writing to me and Mahen, we will get you those answers.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: OK. I would like to know the town of every single person who has this disease. Also the Bergen County woman, you you disclose that she had a gathering at her home on February 29th with 15 people. And I think you said, I just want to make sure you said you're in the process of telling people. So 15 people were at her home two weeks ago and they still don't. I'm sorry. A week ago. They don't know yet that they attended a home, was at a party with a woman who's positive for Coronavirus. Is that correct?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, it's not. They all know that they attended the home of the person that was presumptive positive. And we're putting them in contact with their local health departments. So their local health departments, because they're not all from the same areas. As far as we know and I don't have the specifics of the areas where they're from. But the local health department then makes contact, has, is making contact, and we'll be following up on every single one of them.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: OK. One more question I have. Then two people attended conferences. Were those conferences notified that there, there was a person at the conference with the virus and were the members of the conference notified?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: My understanding is that these conferences are notified to the local health boards.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: Thank you.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: Thanks very much. I have a general question and two specific goals. Can you tell me, is there an estimate of how many people were in self-isolation around the state? And if there's a subset for how many of them are health care workers?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have how many are health care workers. I can tell you how many are in self isolation at this point. We have 4 that are in active surveillance, surveillance that are considered of medium risk. And active surveillance means that they're checking in with the health officer on a regular basis. We have 139 medium risk that are on passive surveillance, passive surveillance that they're monitoring themselves. They're making sure they take their temperature twice a day in the intervals of 8 hours and contacting the health officer if they exhibit any symptoms. We have 8 that are low risk and they're in self monitoring and we have 654 who have completed monitoring.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: And that last number was 6-5-4?.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yes.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: OK. And my next, particular questions, I have a little fuzzy connection. The Camden County patient, the data of onset. Was that February 25th , 2-5 or 26, 2-6 ,.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: In Camden County. Let me just get my notes.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Jim it's 26.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: Great.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: As far as to be clear, I am answering the correct question. You're asking when he had onset of symptoms.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: Right.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: And he had his onset of symptoms on February 26th.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: OK. And would that mean that was when he was contagious?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, in most viruses, you're considered most contagious when you have symptoms. And I'll let Dr. Tan speak to that if she wants to elaborate.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: Sure.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Nothing more to add on that.

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: And my final question was simply the email address where we can get this guy's hometown. What is that address?



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Alex Altman is the single point of contact for any press inquiry on Coronavirus. Jim, if you would send Alex the email, we will get that back to you.



(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: And what is Alex Altman's email address?



(<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

Deputy Press Secretary Alex Altman: That is my full name which is Alexandra Altman@NJ.gov (mailto:Alexandra.Altman@NJ.gov).



(<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)



(<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Jim Walsh, Courier Post: Thanks very much. Appreciate it.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Thank you very much. Thank you all for participating in this. Thought I heard at the beginning that you said 1 of the 4 presumptive positive is from Union County? Did I misunderstand that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, we have one testing in process from Union County. We have 4 tests in process, two from Bergen, one from Union, one from Mercer

Brian Thompson, NBC: OK. Do we know when to expect the results on those?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Chris, do you have that answer?

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Right now, for cases 1 to 2, we expect CDC results by close of business today and for cases 3 and 4. We expect them either late Monday or early Tuesday .

Brian Thompson, NBC: Wait, you said CDC results?

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Oh I'm sorry, the 4 in progress results, the 4 in progress, we'll have results by tomorrow morning.

Brian Thompson, NBC: But from our own lab, not from CDC.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Correct.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Correct.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Yes.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Okay. So all tomorrow morning.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Yes.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Are they all obviously exhibiting significant symptoms? Was that a good way to put it?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I wouldn't say significant.

Brian Thompson, NBC: I'm sorry. You would not say significant?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, we don't have that information. They all, in order for them to be considered a person under investigation, they are symptomatic and either had a nexus with someone that is diagnosed with COVID-19 or has a pneumonia, which could which is significant with unknown cause.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Understood. Could you please go through the protocol on self-quarantine? As far as you might just pick as an example, the, the outpatient in care, whether we want to call that center in Bergen County. If people had some sort of contact, whatever the number was in that facility, what it was 3, 5, 10, whatever. What is the protocol in suggesting or asking them to self-quarantine or not?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Dr. Tan, do you want to take that?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Yes, sure. So the self-quarantine, you know, you're separating the well, individuals who are exposed and from other individuals basically involves having those individuals like stay at home. Social distance, keep themselves separate from other individuals in their household. Also self-quarantine might involve refraining from going to school or work.

Brian Thompson, NBC: You may have misunderstood. What is the protocol in having those people self-quarantine? In other words, would anybody who was a health aide in the same room as the person in room 10 the health aide? Would they all go into self-quarantine automatically?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: This is Tina again. It depends on the risk assessment. As the Commissioner had mentioned, there's quite a bit of assessment in conjunction with the affected health care facilities. As far as identifying individuals who came into direct, close contact with individuals. So, again, you know, it's not that there isn't a blanket, okay. Because, you know, you showed up and then you're going to be at this public health recommendation happen. There actually is a thought out process as far as doing an assessment of what the risk is for individuals who might have come into contact with confirmed cases.

Communications Director Mahen Gunaratna: We need to move on to allow other reporters the chance to ask questions. You're more than welcome to resubmit another question. We just need to move on, please.

Alex Zdan, News 12 New Jersey: Hi. Just a question, of the 4 tests that are in progress are those people at the hospital and if so, which hospital or are they self-quarantined? And similarly with the 15 people who attended the party in Bergen County. Are they in hospitals right now? Self quarantined or none of the above?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: As far as we know, the 15 that attended the gathering in Bergen County. We have no information that any of them are hospitalized. Of the 4 that are in process. All of them at the present time are in hospitals. One in Valley, one in Hackensack Palisades, one in RWJ Rahway, and one at Capital Health, Hopewell.

Katie Sobko, Bergen Record: I just was looking for some clarification on the Rabbi from Passaic. He's a confirmed case for New York. Is that what you were saying earlier?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The rabbi from Passaic was a confirmed case in New York. Yes.

Katie Sobko, Bergen Record: And, he lived in New Jersey? He lived in Passaic? Or he just...

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: My understanding is he lived in New York. He came to a service in New Jersey.

Katie Sobko, Bergen Record: Is he hospitalized at this point?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have that information. I don't know.

Katie Sobko, Bergen Record: And can you have any anything else available just about him or about that case?

Depending on whether or not they're a New Jersey resident or not, may receive either a federal or state quarantine and be required to quarantine at the residence or the Joint Base. Again, as you're aware at this point.

Caesar Darias, Darias News: Are there any of those cases of some sort? I thought you were done. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off there. Are there any cases right now that fit that category of somebody who arrived at the airport or on a cruise ship in New Jersey?

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: No, there are no cases at this time.

Darius, Darius News: OK. And my second question, please. New York today is talking about getting the FDA to approve what they're calling automatic or automated testing. Can you just refresh our memory? Or just again, update the procedure. The technology that is available in New Jersey to do it within the state and in this automated testing request that some are asking for.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: So I can't speak to that automated testing. I just don't have any information available on specific on what you're referring to. In New Jersey, through the Governor's (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy) CDC method of testing. Our state labs are part of a nationwide network. Those laboratories, specifically for these purposes. And we followed the CDC technical guidance (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy) method is a real time PCR test. Again, following the CDC approved method. Thank you.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: Hello there, a few questions. First, you said somebody else had also been at an out-of-state conference, the 55-year old Bergen County man (https://www.instagram.com/frstjeandph/) what state that conference was? I can ask the other two real quick. One school is closed in New Jersey, Frisch School in Paramus. Are there any other schools that are closed as a result of the Coronavirus? And then I'll ask my third when you're done.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Okay. I'll talk about the schools. As far as I know, no other schools are closed. I know that Hackensack School District sent a letter to parents just identifying that they'll be close to the situation and will keep them and keep the parents informed if they think there has to be a school, a school closure. I don't have the name of the conferences that these two individuals were at, particularly the one that you questioned, send that question into Alex. We'll do some further investigations so we can get that to you. Okay.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: Ok, thank you, one last thing. Is there a recording? Some other states are listing, keeping a running list of how many tested, how many positive, how many negative, write it on their website. Is it possible for you to do that for the press so we can make sure our facts are right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure, we could probably do that.

Stacie Sherman, Bloomberg: Thank you.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Thank you very much. Do we know what town this 55-year old Bergen County man is from?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't, I'm trying to get that. I was hoping to get that before we got off the line.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Ok.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Brian, this is George. We're going to get the information for all 4 positive tests and their hometowns and get that to you.

Brian Thompson, NBC: I would appreciate that. The 15 people at that party in Englewood. Are they all under the self-quarantine?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: My understanding is that the Englewood Health Department has contacted every single one of them and they have put out a statement, Englewood put out a statement that they've identified and contacted all persons directly associated with the presumptive positive cases of

Coronavirus. Those who are in close contact are quarantined and have been instructed on how to monitor themselves. And the Englewood Health Department will continue to monitor these quarantined individuals daily.

Brian Thompson, NBC: And then on the Frisch School students, are they simply being monitored? The ones we went to that New Rochelle, Bat Mitzvah.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, they are. They are all home. They're all home. They are being monitored by their parents and being monitored by their own self monitoring at home.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Self monitoring, but not necessarily in self-quarantine.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Pardon me?

Brian Thompson, NBC: Self-monitoring but not necessarily in self-quarantine?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yes, self-monitoring

Brian Thompson, NBC: And then I just want to say, Elise, I thought made some great points and I appreciate you guys keeping an open mind moving forward on this.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Brian. George, again... We appreciate that point. And again, it's not the administration's position ever not to be forthcoming with as much information as we can. We're striking a delicate balance with a very deeply personal conversation that we want health professionals to have with patients and families. But we've heard you and Elise loud and clear, and we will work towards that end.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Thank you so much.

Anthony Birriteri, NJBIZ: Thanks, hi. For the positive cases, the presumptive positive cases for the 15 people who will be tested. Have you contacted their employers? And if so, what action steps are you asking the employers to take in notifying their employees?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, for the 15, we don't have results yet. There is no reason to follow up until we get the result. For the 4, the public health process is contact tracing and in contact tracing. Not only is it close personal contact, but any contact that the individual had from the time they were identified as being symptomatic forward. And if they had gone to work, their workplace would be notified.

Anthony Birriteri, NJBIZ: OK. And do you advise the workplace on what what action steps to take? Anything. Anything at all?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yes. We have guidance posted on the website at the Department of Health, on what, how organizations, businesses should deal with these situations. And we also had a conference call. They called a stakeholder conference call with businesses last Monday with Governor Murphy and shared the guidance to our state.

Anthony Birriteri, NJBIZ: OK, thank you.

Charlie Stile, Bergen Record: Good afternoon. I just had a quick question about 3 out of the 4 positive tested individuals. It seems that they've had some connection with New York City or been over there. Do you know whether they've during their time of that they've had this virus and an early stage or when it was transmissible that they took mass transit?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: For the most transmissibility of viruses is when you're symptomatic. So I just want to make sure that that's clear for everyone. We, we had some tracking of the first individual that may have had some mass transit travel. And that has been a trend. That information has been transferred to the New York Health Department and they are following up.

Charlie Stile, Bergen Record: A general question, of what Elise opened up the conference with you folks. You're now going to provide us, you know, basic and more information about these people, like for what town, for example, in Camden County. What, can you explain the hesitancy to not provide that initially as it is this, if you talk to George mentioned a delicate balance that you're trying to reach. I mean, why not

release that information? Doesn't seem to even go near the private personal information or revealing these people individually. I mean, I just just trying to understand your rationale. I mean, after now you're going to provide it, but why not initially?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: From our perspective at the Department of Health, we look at everything through the lens of whether it has a purposeful, purposeful reason to advance our public health mission. And if and that's a discussion that we have. Is this going to advance the public health mission? And if it does, then we would release as much information as we possibly can. We're always balancing the rights of individuals versus the need to protect as many people as possible. Does the individual address advance the public health mission? I guess we could have a discussion on that. Does releasing where a person attends a mass gathering where others could be exposed? I would have to say definitely, yes. So that's kind of the discussion that we have, the protection of individuals. I can tell you that, you know, there's been some misses in that regard. But on the other hand, I can tell you that there's been some instances throughout this process where, for example, the individual that was from out of state, that was quarantined, ended up with someone knocking on her door while she was in quarantine at a hotel. And it really scared her. So we're always looking at how to balance, again, individual privacy and rights versus the public health mission.

Rebecca Panico, Star-Ledger: Yes. Hi. Thank you again for the opportunity and for holding this conference call. I just want to clarify something about the temple that was mentioned earlier in your office service, you said, in Passaic. Is that Passaic County or the city?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: You know, I don't have that in front of me. It was at a temple on the 23rd, I believe.

Rebecca Panico, Star-Ledger: Do you know which temple?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Rebecca, this is George. Good question. If you could submit that to Alex, we'll get you that answer.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, sorry, I don't have that in front of me, I don't want to misstate it.

Rebecca Panico, Star-Ledger: I just had one other clarifying question. Those 4 cases versus the 15 that are under investigation. Can you just explain that again? I'm not entirely clear on it.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: What for?

Rebecca Panico, Star-Ledger: There's 4 from Union County that are being tested right now. But then there's also 15 under investigation.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: There is 15 persons under investigation. They are individuals that are having, are symptomatic, either have pneumonia that are in the hospitals either have pneumonia with unknown cause or have had symptoms and have had contact with someone who is confirmed as COVID-19. Most of them, all 15 of them are currently in hospitals in New Jersey. And the hospitals are contacting us. They've been screened to determine whether they fit the criteria for testing. And we are now waiting for the specimens to be collected and the specimens to be transported to our lab so that we can begin testing. My understanding as of the start of this call, we had received 2 of the specimens and we're waiting for the other 13 before cases that are in the process to have their specimens. They're undergoing testing. That's that's one that's two from Bergen, one from Union and one from Mercer. Did that clarify?

Rebecca Panico, Star-Ledger: Yes. Yes.


Lindy Washburn, USA Today: I have two questions about the public locations that the confirmed cases have attended or have been present at. Can you tell us the name of the Urgent Care center in Bergen County where the Fort Lee gentleman and I think the Englewood woman first sought care and what the dates were that they were there and how many contacts your tracing from that location?



Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I do not have that information in front of me, but we will get that to you.


Lindy Washburn, USA Today: All right. And then the second question deals with the Rabbi and what synagogue that was. If it was in Passaic City or county and the day of the service, so that people there would be aware of that and how those people are being contacted.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yes, I can tell you that the people are aware. I can tell you that there was that announcement this morning after services that anyone that was at the service, that was on the 23rd. Anyone at that service who had closer contact with the rabbi, they should contact their local health officer and the local health officer will be determining their self-isolation processes.

Lindy Washburn, USA Today: Ok. The third case in Bergen County, what is the hometown of that gentleman, a 50 something man at Englewood Hospital.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have the home addresses. That is something that we'll have to send to you. I was trying to get that while we've been on the phone  (<https://twitter.com/governorphil>) so I apologize. OK. Thanks.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi. The Bergen County resident who had symptoms on the 27th, who is admitted to Englewood Hospital. Is he 65 years old or 55 years old?  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)  (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We have. I'm looking for it.  (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

Elise Young, Bloomberg: I'm sorry. What's it say?



(<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Again, 55, 55

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Ok. And is this the individual who before you had the press availability the other day with this, was the individual who you had heard about only a half hour before that news conference?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yes, I believe it was.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Ok. And regarding the Frisch school. How many students and staff are affected by that closing?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't know the total amount of the students and staff. I know that there were 28 students that had possible exposure. They had attended a Bat Mitzvah up in New York, I believe, Temple Young.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Ok so when you say you said they attended a Bat Mitzvah do you know the date of that Bat Mitzvah.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: OK. And did this take place at? This is a Young Israel event?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: It was a Bat Mitzvah.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: So is there a connection to Young Israel?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't want to misstate that. I don't have that in front of me. So I don't want to misstate it, but we certainly get that.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Ok. Because at the news conference the other day, you mentioned that anybody who had been in contact with this congregation to take precautions. Were these the folks that you were speaking to?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The children and the services in Passaic are two different circumstances.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: I'm not sure I understand, the other day at the news conference, you said anybody who may have been in contact.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: That was referring to the February 23rd. And that's the Passaic event.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: That's the Passaic event. And that was a Bat Mitzvah as well?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, that was not a Bat Mitzvah, that was services.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Ok.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The Bat Mitzvah relates to the Frisch school.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Ok, got it.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Hey, Elise. Sorry, George again. The answer on the number of students and staff is a readily available answer. It's a bit to Alex because of the day of the week. Bear with us. We'll get you that answer.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: OK. Thank you.



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Sam Sutton, POLITICO: Thank you for taking a follow up. Actually one, I am pretty happy that there's an epidemiologist on the call. Because my question is about community spread. Wanted to clarify that, there's no community spread in New Jersey. But it sounds as though some of these cases are due to community spread in New York. I want to make sure I'm understanding that correctly.



(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)



(<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Sure. This is Tina. You know, we do know that some of our cases do have the association with known confirmed COVID-19 cases. So that is correct. That piece, we don't have a source of exposure for our other cases. So, you know, that's a matter of you know, still looking at some of the information and seeing if we can identify any more.



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Sam Sutton, POLITICO: Got it. OK. So no evidence of any spread in New Jersey, but obviously some of these cases are possibly due to exposure in New York or known cases in the U.S.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: That's right.

Sam Sutton, POLITICO: OK. Thank you.

Caesar Darias, Darias News: Thank you. Just two quick questions to clarify comments from earlier. Is the correct term that you're using in progress or in process? What does it matter?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'm not sure it matters, Chris. Does it matter?

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: It doesn't matter.

Caesar Darias, Darias News: I didn't know it was a term of art or...

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: We have 4 tests that are in the machine being processed now, so in progress pending, however I will.

Caesar Darias, Darias News: I didn't know if there was a term of art where one was correct and the other one wasn't. The 2nd is you mentioned 4 hospitals earlier, Valley, Hackensack, Palisade, and I missed the 4th. And are those the 4 where the presumptive positive cases are currently. Is that why you mentioned those 4 hospitals?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: No, they were mentioned there that's the 4 in-process.

Caesar Darias, Darias News: Ok. And what was the fourth one, please?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Capital Health, Hopewell.

Caesar Darias, Darias News: Thank you very much.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Hackensack Palisades, Robert Wood Johnson Rahway, and Capital Health Hopewell.

Caesar Darias, Darias News: Thank you.

Brian Thompson, NBC: Thank you very much. Do you? Are you folks aware? I asked this not knowing of any New Jersey residents on any cruise ships? I think there's some people in Bethlehem, Israel, who may have been exposed. I mean, anybody from New Jersey who is in quarantine or actually has come down, with Coronavirus in any other location out of this state.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'm not aware of any, that doesn't mean there aren't any.

Brian Thompson, NBC: There hasn't been one. The other question I have is regarding this past week, the AIPAC conference in Washington, D.C.. Are you aware of anybody from New Jersey who may have attended that conference? Well, two. I believe, Rabbi. Yes. Two rabbis from New York who have Coronavirus had attended.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'm not aware of anyone that has attended. I don't know, Dr. Tan, if you're getting any of that incoming from a health officer.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Not at this time. Not that we are aware of.

Brian Thompson, NBC: OK. I did talk to Congressman Gottheimer last night. He says he was there and did not know. The two individuals, but very easily could have met with them. I guess that's kind of a situation where you won't know until somebody tells you. Would that be a safe assumption?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: This is Tina. That's correct.

Brian Thompson, NBC: All right. Thanks very much again.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Before we take the next question with the Commissioner's permission, I'll just go through the four hometowns which we have ready. Commissioner with your permission. I'll just run through these.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure.

Chief of Staff George Helmy: Number 1, case number 1, the hometown is Fort Lee. Case number 2 the hometown is Englewood. Case number 3, the hometown is Cherry Hill. Case number 4 the hometown is also Englewood. Thank you.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Lightly, could you clarify the Quest and LabCorp role in this, as I understand it, they don't now have either the capability or the approval to process. If they do get approval, when potentially would that start? And would it make for a faster read of test results if you have more labs or is it a case of you need three days, three days to get a positive no matter who's doing it? That it's not a case of too much workload.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Sure. So right now, the commercial lab, specifically, those two are conducting the test outside of New Jersey. Certainly they could proceed here in New Jersey with submitting a request to add SARS COVID2 to add to their menu of testing capabilities. It would depend on when they submit that to us how fast we would turn that around. I mean, it is in fairly short order. The reality is there's only two. There's only two options as far as testing goes. You can use the CDC method or you can have a lab develop tests and in fact, labs that do not follow the CDC method and develop their own tests can actually take 24, 48, maybe 72 hours longer than the testing that the state would do. So while it would increase the bandwidth of testing capabilities here in New Jersey, it would not necessarily increase the turnaround time.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Okay. So that's a processing time and not a workload matter.

DOH Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth: Correct.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Okay. Thank you.

Communications Director Mahen Gunaratna: Thank you all for joining us today. We will hold another call tomorrow. And we'll have further updates, for the next week as well.

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