



OFFICIAL SITE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Translate (<https://translate.google.com/>)
 Get Updates  (<https://nj.gov/subscribe/>)
 Search  (<https://nj.gov/search/>)

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: March 10th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media


03/10/2020


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

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

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

Lieutenant Governor Oliver and Health Commissioner Persi...

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

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


Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: Good afternoon. Alongside me are Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli, State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan, State Police Superintendent Patrick Callahan, and the Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples.

Over the past 24 hours we have received four presumptive positive test results, bringing our statewide total to 15. However, we are sad to report that one of these newly-reported patients has passed away. Commissioner Persichilli will have more details for you in a moment, and we just received that information. As you are aware, yesterday afternoon Governor Murphy declared a state of emergency in order to enhance our ability to proactively and efficiently respond to the threat of coronavirus.

We have been focused on the inevitability that coronavirus cases would be reported in our state since the Governor convened the Coronavirus Taskforce on February 3rd. We have put sound protocols in place across all levels of government and through our partnerships with both our healthcare systems and our federal partners. We have been in front of this throughout the weeks of preparations, and as the Governor said yesterday, the emergency declaration means that we will stay ahead of this. Our residents play a big role in our response and mitigation efforts and we encourage them to continue doing their part. We're going to get through this together in New Jersey.


 Back to top

I would note that through the Governor's emergency declaration, the Administration has taken action to waive any consumer cost shares for screening, testing, and testing-related services including emergency room, urgent care and office visits for as many residents as possible. We are also urging all private insurers to do the same for their policyholders. The Governor's order also ensures our strongest possible protections against price gouging, and we have empowered the Civil Service Commission to implement flexible staffing policies to proactively protect our workforce, and we encourage private employers to do the same.

That said, I am now going to turn things over to Commissioner Persichilli.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Lieutenant Governor. As the Lieutenant Governor shared, we have our first mortality as a result of COVID-19. Our thoughts and prayers certainly are with the family.

I will give you a short case history. It's a 69-year-old male with a history of diabetes, hypertension, atrial fibrillation, GI bleeding and emphysema. No history of travel outside of the United States. There is a history of travelling back and forth to New York. He presented a week ago with fever and cough to his primary care physician, was treated with antibiotics and Tamiflu. He did not improve and was admitted to Hackensack University Medical Center on March 6th. History was taken and specimens were sent to the state lab on March 7th. All isolation precautions were taken. He was placed in a stepdown unit. His condition started to deteriorate last evening. He suffered a cardiac arrest, was successfully revived, but suffered another arrest this morning and expired. The family has been notified.

We are reporting, including this case, four new presumptive positive cases from the state Public Health and Environmental Labs. We do not have any reporting today from the commercial labs. That takes our total number of presumptive positive cases now in NJ up to 15. The cases that I just received, two were from Bergen – one is the individual who is deceased; and two are from Burlington. At this point I do not have full case histories on either of these cases.

We currently have 31 persons under investigation remaining to be tested. Just as a reminder, persons under investigation include any hospitalized person who has signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and no other known diagnosis for an established diagnosis of pneumonia; symptomatic travelers from affected geographic areas; and symptomatic individuals who have had close contact with a known COVID-19 patient. As I said yesterday, the fact that we are continuing to see additional cases is concerning but it's certainly not unexpected. It follows the trend we're seeing around the country.

We've just come from a meeting of the Coronavirus Taskforce where members of the cabinet and I discussed the state's coordinated response to address this novel coronavirus update, and Governor Murphy's declaration yesterday of a state of emergency and a public health emergency to ramp up NJ's efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. Executive Order #103 declares a state of emergency and public health emergency across all 21 counties, allowing state agencies and departments to utilize state resources to assist affected communities responding to and/or recovering from COVID-19 cases.

As the Lieutenant Governor said, the state is committed to deploying every available resource across all levels of government to help in this response. The declaration tasks the State Director of Emergency Management and Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, Colonel Patrick Callahan in conjunction with me to oversee the implementation of the state emergency operations plan and to direct our response. It triggers other executive powers and safeguards, such as prohibiting excessive price increases and the availability to waive certain procurement procedures.

Governor Murphy's emergency declaration also empowers all state agencies, specifically the Departments of Banking and Insurance, Health, and Human Services, and the Civil Service Commission to take all appropriate steps to address the public health hazard. For example, several state agencies are acting in conjunction and in coordination with us to remove barriers such as copays for patients eligible for charity care assistance so that they can be tested for COVID-19.

As I said yesterday, we are increasing New Jersey's COVID public health strategy to include containment steps and mitigation initiatives. Mitigation interventions are decided on a case-by-case basis. They're focused on controlling the spread of disease. They can include things like self-quarantine and social distancing. They may also include things like workplace accommodations, school closures and dismissals, daycare center closures, screening and/or restricting visitors to facilities caring specifically for vulnerable populations.

As I said yesterday, we are sending out precautions to the public on what they should consider if they were ever quarantined for 14 days. The Department and other public health officials are available to discuss all of these situations on a case-by-case basis. Local Health Departments across the state are also a very important resource to help guide communities on mitigation steps.

All municipalities by statute are required to have health officers, and we currently have about 100 local and county Health Departments. Many of them have shared service agreements with other municipalities, therefore a health officer who may be covering one municipality may in fact be covering two. These health officers can help inform decision making at the local level. They are also responsible for contact tracing, which is such an important part of a public health review.

Our 24/7 hotline operated by the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System continues to take calls from the public. The hotline, as you know, is staffed with trained healthcare professionals and available in multiple languages. To date they've answered more than 3200 calls, over 600 just last evening. The call center can be reached at 1-800-222-1222, and if your cell phone is a non-New Jersey one, if you're calling from out of state, use the line 1-800-962-1252. We know there can be some delays for the callers but the call center does provide important public information.

The top three questions that we're getting is where can people get tested, what are the symptoms of COVID-19, and information about what it means to self-isolate – meaning the person is sick or has symptoms but is not sick enough to go to the hospital. We hope the information we continue to share along with the public call line will help keep residents informed. Thank you.

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: And with that we'll open up for Q&A.

Q&A Session:

Reporter: Commissioner, there's been a lot of talk from you and others about being self-quarantined and people who come in contact with people who are presumptive positive. Could we get some clarification on specifically what constitutes coming in contact? Does that mean you're next to somebody, they cough or sneeze in your face, they kiss you? You're ten feet away from them? Do we know how contagious this novel coronavirus is? Does it vary from person to person?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: As I stated yesterday, we talked about the transmissibility and how virulent the virus is, and that's certainly still under investigation. When we talk about having contact with a positive COVID-19 and you talk about social distancing, we usually use as a general definition six feet. If you're outside of a six-foot perimeter you should be okay; if you're closer to that you should be concerned. And of course, sneezing, coughing, sniffing – if you're near someone that seems sick I would move.

Reporter: New Jersey Transit about 90 minutes ago announced that it's [putting on extra train and bus service to the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade.] Is the Parade something that you would advise people to attend, and if so, is mass transit really the way to go?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We've had several questions about St. Patrick's Day parades. There's no recommendation to cancel your St. Patrick's Day parade. Our concern is more for the gatherings before the parade and certainly gatherings and parties after the parade. And we feel very strongly that people that are frail, not feeling well, immunosuppressed, vulnerable in any way should not go.

Reporter: Would you take mass transit to a parade, Commissioner?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Would I personally take mass transit? Is that the question?

Reporter: To the parade, yes.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: To the parade? I don't go to the parade. I've never gone to the parade.

Reporter: This gentleman that passed away, was he a commuter? Did he take mass transit?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: You know, I literally got this information as I was pulling up in the car today, so it was only shared that there was a history of working in New York. Obviously, the contact tracing which will now have to go through family members may illuminate that but I don't have that information.

Reporter: Just to follow up, also Princeton municipality put out a press release. Are you aware of the investigation of two Biogen attendees [inaudible]...

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We're aware of the press release (https://twitter.com/GovMurphy) attended that conference, and we are aware that the conference is sending notifications out to the people that did attend. And I did not know about the Princeton case but that does not surprise me. (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy)

Reporter: So, does yesterday's Executive Order that declared a state of emergency does that affect the four special schoolboard elections that are going on today? (https://www.nj.gov/newsroom/)

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: No, it does not. There are four schoolboard elections today, rather small districts and no it shouldn't. But you should know that all of those polling places have been provided with sanitizer and poll workers have been advised to take precautions. Brenda? (https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

Brenda Flanagan, NJTV: Yesterday, the MTA's Chairman Pat Foye basically said if you can avoid the subway do it. And you're recommending that people keep six feet away. What does this say about riding mass transit, NJ Transit for example? We're noticing there's not as many people on the trains anymore. Is this something that you would also recommend, that people should avoid if they can drive? What should they do?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think people have to take personal responsibility for making those decisions. The six feet is the guideline if you have been near a person that has subsequently been determined to be a COVID-19. So, when you're on a subway I don't know how you could keep six feet away. We have to focus on community spread. We do not see particularly in New Jersey right now what we call community spread, which is person-to-person transmission without a known COVID-19 exposure. When we start seeing community spread there is no doubt that we will be exercising more vigilance in our recommendations for closures, travel, mass transit. But in New Jersey we're not there yet. I invite Dr. Tan to illuminate that a little bit more if you can.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: As the Commissioner said, it's a matter of people have to evaluate their options for transportation. So, some of that will have to be a personal decision as far as if they have a private conveyance versus if their only option is mass transit. And again, everybody's situation might be a little bit different, but keeping the principals in mind about the social distancing – that's why we're putting that information out there, so that people can be informed and then make the best decision based on their own circumstances.

Brenda Flanagan, NJTV: Can I follow, did the Taskforce come up with guidelines so that you will be able to determine when you're gonna pull that trigger and say, "This kind of gathering..."

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: I'd like to say that what we are doing... As you see, information and circumstances are changing on a dime. Just as the Commissioner pointed out, we just got information about the man who expired. So, our approach is on a daily basis, as we do data collection and we get reports from the field, we will make those kinds of decisions on a daily basis.

Reporter: Commissioner, two things. First you said there's no community spread. It sounds like with some of these investigations you have to... I mean, the investigations are still ongoing. So, what is your confidence level that none of these have been community spread? And in your comments there, you just also alluded to the fact that you expect community spread to occur. So, what's your confidence level that that would take place?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Okay, the second item first. I don't expect community spread to occur. I hope with containment and mitigation it doesn't. What I do expect is more cases. You might have more cases but it might not necessarily be qualified as community spread. And the second part was?

Reporter: What's your confidence level given the investigations are ongoing and the current positives that there isn't community spread?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We know right now with the presumptive positives that we have that there's not community spread. We know that two of the cases were related to New Rochelle?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Actually, I believe it's probably <https://twitter.com/PhilMurphy> if not more than 100 of our cases that have some sort of known exposure to confirmed COVID cases. And again, because we're early on in identifying these cases, there are opportunities for <https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy> containment efforts for each of these cases as the Commissioner is alluding to that will hopefully help. Early <https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice> containment will help prevent the community spread. But again, we still have to continue with the mitigation efforts as well.

Reporter: We've seen some school districts that are proactively <https://www.instagram.com/njgovernor/> closing down to the ground completely for a prolonged closure. Are you getting any reports that there are more absences than usual from people keeping their kids home? And are we any closer to a prolonged closure? <https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: That's a great question. We're getting absolutely no reports of increased absenteeism generally or as a result of COVID-19. Commissioner Lamont Repollet and I are in constant contact, and today at the Taskforce we are setting up a subcommittee to look at all levels of education because of some of the decisions that some local colleges and universities are making to go to all online teaching for instance. They are not based on increased absenteeism. They're based on individual school policies and decisions, so we decided to set up a subcommittee just to work in concert with preschool all the way through college.

Reporter: Have the schools gone too far in your opinion?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think they have to make their own decisions. Every school has different reasons for their decisions and maybe they're different than just COVID-19. It's up to their own policies and I guess they work with their board to make those decisions.

Reporter: Dr. Tan, a couple of months ago you and I had a discussion about the pneumococcal vaccine and how that's recommended for older people in relation to how influenza can open you up to other infections including pneumonia. Would we assume correctly that the pneumococcal vaccine possibly could also help to protect people from getting pneumonia from coronavirus? And would it be your recommendation or is it in the realm of possibility that younger people might also benefit from something like the pneumococcal vaccine or something else? Because the coronavirus, it seems that as with other types of viruses – and again, this is just from hearing you guys – it opens up different medical problem possibilities. It's not the coronavirus itself that necessarily kills you but something else could if it gets that serious.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Thanks for the opportunity of talking about the importance of making sure everybody's up to date with the appropriate vaccinations that they need. And we really strongly recommend that individuals, aside from doing your regular checkups with your physicians, ask them, "Am I up to date on my vaccinations?" because as you had mentioned, there are many adult vaccines that are recommended for everybody. For instance, every year I get my flu shot. When I become old enough to get the pneumococcal vaccine, which prevents against infections with streptococcal pneumonia. It's a type of bacteria so it's different from coronavirus which is a virus disease. So, it's really important – talk to your doctors about the adult vaccinations as well as for the kids, too. There's a series of vaccinations for

children as well. The current vaccines that are available do not provide protection against this novel coronavirus, and that's actually in the works. The Feds are in the process of doing trials and hopefully there will be a vaccine available soon at some point. But absent that, this emphasizes the points that have been raised about without a vaccine specifically for COVID-19 virus, that it's important that we take all these mitigation steps and the everyday preventive steps that we can do.

Reporter: Can I just get clarification though? Would the coronavirus possibly open you up to getting pneumonia and then this could help you or not?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: Well, you know, the vaccines can potentially protect against other respiratory illnesses that could potentially weaken your immune system. So that's why, if you haven't gotten your flu shot yet – just a reminder, we're still in peak season here in New Jersey so it's not too late to get that vaccine. And that will take one load off your mind that will help you against one of the viruses that's definitely circulating here in New Jersey. The issue about coinfection, we don't have enough information about that at this time and hopefully we'll have more data.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think it's safe to say that anything that affects your immune system and lowers it opens you up for more vulnerability to COVID-19.

Reporter: If I can get a quick clarification from the Commissioner and then a question about contact tracing. [inaudible]

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Today. Actually, we got the result of the expiration.

Reporter: My question about contact tracing, can you just go into how that's done, what those people are doing and who they are? Are they Health Department employees? Are they State Troopers? [inaudible] Can you tell us how many of these investigators are out there [inaudible]?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Contract tracing is probably one of the most important public health activities that takes place during a situation like this. So, I'm going to let Dr. Tan talk about how it all fits together.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: So, as a reminder, the local Health Departments are the lead for respective investigations that happen at the local level, and the state Health Department is available to provide assistance for kind of trickier situations. So, the gist of contact tracing, whether it's for COVID-19, whether it's for meningococcal meningitis, for other reportable conditions – because we have to remember that there are a lot of other communicable diseases that are a public health concern here in New Jersey and nationwide – it begins with a local Health Department identifying that there's a reportable communicable disease; then doing interviews with the case patient him- or herself to try to identify what are those contacts around the individual. The contact tracing will also depend on the disease that we're talking about, because you might have for example, like norovirus which is a GI illness spread. It's a slightly different mechanism, but since we're talking about COVID-19, we're talking about what we understand as some of the risk factors for transmission from a case patient to close contacts. So, it begins with the interviews. A lot of local Health Departments do that. Sometimes with exposed healthcare facilities, the hospitals are the ones that wind up doing the bulk of that contact tracing. So, it really depends.

Reporter: Is there any information about the new cases? At the beginning you rattled off there were two of them. Did they show up at hospitals? Do we know anything about that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Of the new cases? No, I just have the numbers. There were two in Bergen, two in Burlington.

Reporter: One more question, here in South Jersey we don't have as many cases as [Cherry Hill].

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have information to share on them right now.

Reporter: What exactly is the availability of testing. You're talking about cost sharing and urging private insurers to join the state. What does that mean for people who want to get tested and how can they get tested? Do they have to go to hospitals, or can their doctors...

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Okay, let's talk about how they can get tested. In most instances, they're coming through the hospital emergency rooms or through an admission to the hospital. In some cases, now that the commercial labs are doing testing, the individual may go to the doctor's office and the doctor may just write a script and the individual gets tested. That gives us limited ability to follow up on that case. It does get reported as a positive to the Department of Health Communicative Disease Service. So, we do know that we have a positive but what we don't know is all of that background screening that the hospitals are now doing with any patient that presents with respiratory symptoms and fever. That's why the commercial labs, we need to develop a closer collaboration.

Reporter: Do you know what commercial labs are doing them?

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: Quest and LabCorp.

Reporter: [inaudible question] long lines at a lot of DMV locations. [inaudible] to cut down on the large gatherings at these locations?

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: I believe that as I said earlier, even though we're surveying the Governor (https://twitter.com/govmurphy) And I am certain if the Commissioner of Motor Vehicle feels that that step needs to be taken, I'm sure she'll make a recommendation. (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy)

Reporter: Wouldn't that be more on the Commissioner of (https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: Well, I think the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles would have to weigh in. (https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: At the Corona taskforce we've asked all of our (https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy) Commissioners to identify what type of waivers they feel would be important if we do see significant community spread. So, the situation you just described is similar to that. I know in the Department of Health we've already prepared written waivers if we need to expand licensed bed capacity. If a hospital's license says 100 beds but they want to go up to 120, effectively we would waive the licensing regs. So, that's just an example but every department is going to be looking at that.

Reporter: Commissioner, on the tests, what's the status of the number of available tests? Are there enough tests in the state for people who are trying to get tested? And also, this might be an impossible question to answer but you mentioned that they're waiving the fees. What is the cost if someone goes to their local doctor versus the ER?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, as you can see, Chris Neuwirth who is head of our labs, our Assistant Commissioner is not with us today. He is testifying in front of Congress or a Congressional subcommittee about our needs here, and he is the one who could give you the specificity of the testing, which I believe he gave you yesterday. So, if you want to send that question to Alex we can get that back to you fairly quickly. I don't have that off the top of my head. I know that we have received two sets of test kits and I know that test kits can do 500 tests, which mean that we can test between 196 and 216 people per test kit as I recall he said.

Reporter: To follow up if I may, Commissioner. You just said that doctors can write a script for somebody to get tested. Weren't last week we talking about the fact that people should not go to their doctor, they should call their doctor, then they're going to get sent to the ER? You call the ER and say, "I'm coming in?"

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We always recommend that they call their physician first if they have signs and symptoms of a respiratory illness and fever. And then, the doctor will decide whether they should go to the emergency room or whether they should come to the office. Many doctors offices are now identifying almost like a fast track separate from their waiting rooms like pediatric physicians have all the time to be able to accommodate that in their offices. So, you can go in either place but the phone call is important because we want either the doctor's office, the urgent care center or the hospital to be aware that they're receiving someone with respiratory symptoms so that they can protect not only that person but everybody around them.

Reporter: But would the doctor then make the assessment, "Yes, I think this person should get tested for the novel coronavirus?"


Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, he would have to prescribe it, yes.

Reporter: Or she.


Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: He/she yes, thank you.



Reporter: Now that we're in a state of emergency, does the time change, what is it now? And does [inaudible].

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: I'm going to ask Matt Platkin, the Governor's counsel to respond to questions and inquiries about the executive order.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: With respect to your last point, we'll get you specifics from the AG's office. But the state of emergency declaration, public health emergency kicks in the strongest anti price gouging statutes which sets hard caps on how much prices can increase.  (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Reporter: [inaudible]  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: I'd have to get it to you after  don't have it off the top. We'll get it to you and follow up. (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

Reporter: You mentioned yesterday that you're going to debate as part of the Taskforce the criteria as to what extent you're going to consider mitigation, how drastic  (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>) what is the result of that? And a separate question is when is that local health officer involved in that process that you just laid out?  (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, the first thing with the Corona Taskforce, like I said we met this morning, and the decision was that we break down into smaller groups because the situation per group could be very different. I'll give you an example – Corrections. Forensic patients, because of the close living circumstances are considered high risk for communicable diseases and passing those diseases along. So, we will be meeting specifically with the Commissioner of Corrections. We talked a lot with Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families. Their concern, and it's a valid concern is that they have thousands of employees throughout the state that are going into homes, that are traveling around the state and having one-to-one contact with individuals and also caring for vulnerable individuals. So, we're going to break down into a smaller group with them to start identifying their mitigation activities. So, what we found this morning was something a little bit different in every department, so we're getting all of those concerns and issues into my office. And then we will be meeting with those smaller groups so that we can get more specificity on exactly the criteria that we're going to use over time.

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: I'd like to elucidate on the example that the Commissioner gave you. For instance, at the Corona Taskforce this morning, the Department of Corrections Commissioner reported that he has suspended all contact visits in the Department of Corrections facilities. There can be behind-the-glass visitation but no contact. He additionally reported that some of the county facilities are on their own choosing to suspend contact visits as well.

Reporter: Just one final follow on that. Is there any discussion with say the Sports Authority about possibly cancelling large events?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, it's always in front of our mind. We're not in a position right now to recommend discontinuation of mass gatherings. We just continue to put out the alert that if you're elderly, if you're frail, if you're immunocompromised, if you're vulnerable in any way stay home.

Reporter: Commissioner, you had mentioned that if somebody gets tested in an independent lab you get the information back if it's positive. But is there a plan that the state is going to try to develop here to follow up and get more information, because it would seem very important that follow-up interviews and so forth be done.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, that would be reported to the local health officer and then the local health officer would have to follow up with the limited information that we would give them; whereas now we give them a little bit more information.

Reporter: But is that happening though?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Oh yeah. Every presumptive positive is known by the health officer and the health officer is responsible for doing the contact tracing – locating the patient, doing the contact tracing.

Reporter: So, the lab is letting the local Health Department know. The interviews that are done by the local health officers, are they in person, person-to-person or are they behind glass on the phone?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: In most cases the person is hospitalized and they're done in conjunction with the healthcare workers at the hospital. And if the patient is not in a condition to answer questions then they interview the family. If they're at home, and we do have a number of presumptive positives at home, the health officer either visits with protective equipment (https://www.tiktok.com/@govmurphy)

Reporter: But if it's in a hospital would that be with protective stuff? (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy)

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Oh yeah, yeah definitely. (https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

Reporter: [inaudible question]

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The only change is what we knew was coming in Bergen County, that the County Executive was going to step up mitigation activities in Bergen County. And we agree with that. We had a discussion with him and because of that connection to New Rochelle we agreed to it, because I think mitigation at this point is a smart thing for that community. (https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

Reporter: Do you know what town the man who expired this morning was a resident of by any chance?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have that. I don't have that. What I gave you is what I have.

Reporter: And as a follow-up to that, you said that Bergen County, the fact that they were stepping up mitigation. I saw that Governor Cuomo is sending the National Guard into New Rochelle because of the high instance of cases there. I guess the highest instance of cases in New Jersey is Bergen County right now. Are you aware if he's calling for the National Guard to come in? Or are you aware of what the mitigation steps would be for Bergen County at this time?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I am not aware of that and I doubt that he would be calling in the National Guard at this point. We had just heard that the National Guard was going into New Rochelle, not sure what they do there.

Reporter: Do you know the number of tests the commercial labs have and does the state have a say in the approval of the tests?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The commercial labs work with the CDC for approval of the tests.

Reporter: Do you know the capacity of those labs?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I would not know that.

Reporter: [inaudible question]

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: They do. Our troopers do have access to the N95 masks. They also have the Drager masks in addition to access to the Tyvek suits as well as... I think we just started looking yesterday into the actual, although they have those ballistic helmets with the shields that come down which are a little bit over-the-top I would say, we're looking into the purchase of just the simple plastic, the elastic with the plastic eye shield that you would see your dentist or hygienist wear.

Reporter: The self-quarantines, if somebody is directed to self-quarantine, is that a recommendation or an order? And if it's a recommendation, could it become an order? How do you handle that? Because like there was a case someplace in the Midwest where somebody was quarantined and then he went to the father-daughter dance and then they had to close the whole school down?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: It's a recommendation and it could, with these emergency declarations, go into an order. I know the Attorney General's office, Mr. Platkin and our legal counsel are working on that.

Reporter: But we're not there yet.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We have had no one that we know of that has broken quarantine.

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: Yes, I'll go to you next, but I first have been advised that Commissioner Hicks has not yet implemented no contact visits. It is something he has under consideration.



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

Reporter: Could you talk about your relationship with [redacted]? Have they been responsive in answering questions, have they been available? Have they offered an explanation of why those results have been delayed?



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



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

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, the first thing is, if you've not gone on the CDC website, I would encourage you to do so. They have put out from day one guidance that has helped us immeasurably in developing our Department of Health guidance for all types of situations. Additionally, Dr. Jay Butler who is one of the Directors at the CDC, I'm in almost constant contact with him. And anytime there's a situation that changes or is evolving and he feels like I should know he calls. From the time that we became a funneled airport in Newark till about three weeks later it was an everyday call to see how we were doing, was there anything that we need. I have not found that the CDC has been anything short of responsive. The testing kit situation, which is well known in the press and talked about a lot, has not affected our ability to test the persons under investigation, the number of persons under investigation that we have right now. If it becomes a significant surge we certainly might have a problem, but I think Chris reported yesterday that we could do a couple of hundred tests if not more right now. And as you know, we have about 30 in the queue to be tested.



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



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

Reporter: And have they offered an explanation as to why there's been a delay in getting those test results back to you?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I've not sought that explanation so I don't have any information on that.

Reporter: A question about the local health officers. What part of that chain do they get involved? After there's a presumptive confirmation and then you relay it back to the local health officers to do a contact investigation?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Once there's a positive, that's when they get involved.

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver: Okay, if there are no other questions this will conclude our briefing for today. Thank you.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you.

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

Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket (<http://www.drumthwacket.org/>)  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

Key Initiatives



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



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

Economy & Jobs (</governor/initiatives/#Economy>)

Education (</governor/initiatives/#Education>)



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

Environment (</governor/initiatives/#Environment>)

Health (</governor/initiatives/#Health>)

Law & Justice (</governor/initiatives/#Justice>)

Transportation (</governor/initiatives/#Transportation>)

News & Events

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

Photos (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy>)

Public Addresses (</governor/news/addresses>)

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

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

Direct Appointments (</governor/news/appointments>)

Advice and Consent Appointments (</governor/news/acappointments>)

Statements on Legislation

(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

Administration Reports (</governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml>)

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

Press Kits (</governor/news/press>)

Social

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

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

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

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

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

TikTok (<https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?>)

Contact Us



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



Scheduling Requests (</governor/contact/scheduling/>)

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



Contact Us (</governor/contact/all/>)

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



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



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

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](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html))

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

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

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

(//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/)



(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)



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



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



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



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