

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: April 21st, 2021 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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## Governor Murphy Holds COVID-19 Briefing



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everybody. The woman who needs no introduction is still, I believe, testifying before the Budget Committee and will be here, I think will join us in progress. So Judy will join us in progress. But we have today the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Director, Dr. Ed Lifshitz; Ed, great to have you back, we've missed you. The guy to my left who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. We have Jared Maples, Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Parimal Garg, and a cast of thousands.

First, I must acknowledge the verdict from the trial in Minneapolis. Let's begin with the irrefutable premise that George Floyd should be alive today, just like any of the too numerous other Black Americans whose futures have been unjustly stolen from them should be. While we are glad that justice has prevailed in this case, for sure, and I conveyed that expression and had a nice exchange this morning with Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, George Floyd's murder is a painful reminder that inequality has deep roots in American history, starting during slavery, and continuing to the present day in areas such as wages, health care, housing, education, and treatment by law enforcement. And by the way, I say slavery, we are now in the early years of the fifth – fifth – century since slavery came to our shores.

Yesterday's verdict brought some measure of justice and accountability for the Floyd family and millions of our fellow Americans. Yet we all must remember that systemic racism is still pervasive in American life. We must be resolute in our fight for justice to ensure that the pain of yesterday and the pain of today does not become the pain of tomorrow. I remain committed to this, and I know millions of you share that commitment. Let's keep working together.

Next up, switching gears, tomorrow is Earth Day. I'm especially proud that in New Jersey, we can celebrate this Earth Day knowing that we are once again truly leading the nation in smart, forward-looking environmental policies. We have historically been a leader, but over the past year, we've augmented our status through our continued efforts to put our state front and center in the emerging offshore wind industry, with our nation-leading law and environmental justice, and becoming the first state in America to enshrine climate change education in our K-through-12 core curriculum standards; which, by the way, was a key initiative of the First Lady, and which is essential to building the workforce of the future. And we're going to keep working to prove that a cleaner environment and a robust economy are not either/or, but they go hand-in-hand, and/both.

Now moving on, and to reiterate the announcement we made yesterday, the Atlantic City mega site at the Atlantic City Convention Center is holding special walk-up hours between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. both today and tomorrow. This means you can be vaccinated without an appointment. Each day during these hours, the staff will be administering up to 700 walk-up vaccinations. Anyone who does have an appointment during or after these hours should not worry. Your dose has already been reserved for you through your appointment. and you will be given priority upon your arrival at the convention center.

But in our effort to make it even easier for those who want to be vaccinated to get vaccinated, we are pleased to be able to make this arrangement. Tammy and I had our first shot at the Atlantic City mega site two Fridays ago, and I can attest that Atlantic Care along with the Department of Health, the State Police, the National Guard, county and local officials and their partners run a terrific operation. So again, from now until 3:00 p.m. today and from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. tomorrow, the Atlantic City mega site at the Atlantic City Convention Center is administering vaccinations without an appointment necessary. If you are needing a vaccination and especially if you live in South Jersey, I encourage you to head over.

Before we move on. I want to thank the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund for funding research into vaccination hesitancy. They've done an extraordinary job, and that research will inform our collective efforts on how to get to our goal as efficiently and as quickly as possible of vaccinating 4.7 million adult New Jerseyans by the end of June.

And with that, that brings us to today's numbers. We are reporting a total of more than 6.2 million administered doses and just shy of 2.6 million New Jerseyans are now fully vaccinated. We are also reporting an additional 3,614 positive test results, either PCR or presumed antigen positives.

The statewide rate of transmission has crept up a hair over the past couple of days, now at 0.93, let's hope it goes the other direction. The one-day positivity for the 21,242 PCR tests recorded on Saturday was, surprise, surprise, back into low double-digits 10.94%. But as we have noted many times, the weekend percentages usually see a spike as the number of total tests is low. And also, our assumption is you're getting tested on a weekend because you've got a cause or a reason to do so. So while we cannot dismiss this and we won't, it comes with that important caveat.

Across our hospital systems last night, census counted a total of 2,114 patients being treated. Of those, 1,961 were confirmed COVID positive, the other 153 were persons awaiting those test results. Of this group, 455 were in intensive care, and 248 were on a ventilator.

COVID patients were admitted. And our hospitals – again, not confirmed – reported 22 deaths yesterday.

Now speaking of discharges, this is a big one. I want to give a huge shout out to this guy on the left, John Kwiecinski of Manalapan, who is home with his family after a battle with COVID that lasted more than a year. He was first hospitalized with COVID-19 in March of 2020. Over the past 13 months, he spent 67 days on a ventilator, experienced several setbacks on his road back, and survived multiple transfers from hospitals to rehabilitation centers. He fought every single day, and he is finally back home.

I had the honor yesterday to speak with John and his wife Roxanne, two extraordinary individuals, fellow Monmouth County residents, Pat, I want the record to show. He still has a lot more to do until he's fully back but his story is so exceptional. I send our very best to them and to their two daughters, Julia and Justine, one of whom is an Alabama, one of whom is in the Garden State. And I hope that in a future trip along the Shore I might be able to stop by and personally congratulate John, Roxanne, and family on this amazing recovery. His spirit is so reflective of our state's; our strength, our resilience, our fight, our commitment to tomorrow.

Unfortunately, we know that not every story has a happy ending. And with the heaviest of hearts, we must report an additional 46 newly confirmed COVID-related deaths. The number of probable deaths was also updated today, Ed, by you and your team and that total is now 2,611. And as we do every time we are together, let's honor and remember three more of those who we have recently lost.

We want to begin today in Camden County, Runnemede, Rosalie Dear on the left, she was 88 years old. For many years, Rosalie was easily recognizable as one of the top realtors in South Jersey. And that was her second career, as she started many years ago as a seamstress and dressmaker. But the success she found in real estate allowed her and her husband Paul to ensure the best for their growing family. Both Rosalie and Paul, and I had the great honor of speaking with Paul on Monday, Paul is 90 and he himself, they were both stricken with COVID. Paul thankfully is recovering slowly but surely and we send him our very best in prayers, along with our condolences.

Rosalie and Paul were married for more than 65 years. She also leaves behind their three sons John, with whom I had the great honor of speaking, Stephen and Mark and their families, which includes her 10 beloved grandchildren. She's also survived by her brothers John and Eugene, and sisters Helen, Angie and May. And Rosalie lost her sister Mary to COVID-19 as well last year.

Rosalie spent a career helping families make New Jersey their home, and for that we are forever grateful. May God bless and watch over her and her sister Mary, and continue to give strength to Paul and the extraordinary family that she left behind.

Next, we're going to go to Morris County to honor Giovanni Iachetta of Roxbury Township, that's Giovanni seated second from left. Giovanni, not surprisingly, was born in a small town in southern Italy, and was trained to be a carpenter, a career passed down to him by his father, who he worked alongside as a young man. At the age of 30, in 1970, Giovanni made his first move to the United States, and after he returned to Italy, he emigrated again in 1994, and stayed throughout the rest of his life.

As a carpenter, he took tremendous pride in his work. He also was not afraid to help friends and family on projects in his free time, and he could often be found in their homes pitching in and passing along his knowledge. That charitable nature was just part of who Giovanni was, and he was particularly fond of helping the folks at St. Jude Children's Hospital. He could also be found in the kitchen and tending to his barrels of homemade wine. He was also, I'm told, a big soccer fan and I did not know him, but I'm going to put words in his mouth, he would have been happy that that stupid Super League has crashed of its own weight.

And by the way, it was not easy for him. He was paralyzed, and I know his family would want me to say this because they are out in their own crusade to make sure that we know more about this – and Ed, you would have forgotten more about this than I would ever know – he was paralyzed by Guillain-Barre Syndrome, and his family wanted me to mention that because that's something, again, that they were very focused on.

He is survived by his wife, Amelia, and his daughters Anna Maria, Antoinetta, and I had the great honor of speaking with her on Monday, and sons, Giempiero and Luigi and their spouses and significant others, as well as by his five grandchildren Anna, Dominic, Amelia, Gianluca, and Penelope. Giovanni also leaves behind his seven siblings, Michael, Angelo, Antonio, Giner, Anna and Angelina. Giovanni was 80 years old.

New Jersey is proud of its rich Italian heritage, a heritage made even more rich by Giovanni and his daughter Antoinetta said two things as well to me. Number one, he believed deeply in the American dream, and it is alive and well. And secondly, that New Jersey, part of the reason he loved it, reminded him of his home back in Italy. We are honored to have had him as part of our family and may God bless him watch over him and the extraordinary family he leaves behind.

And today we also honor John Powers Sr. of the Bayville section of Berkeley Township in Ocean County. John, a Jersey City native and a proud and decorated veteran of the United States Marine Corps, was 76 years old. Following his discharge from the Marines in 1967 – and he had attained, by the way, the rank of sergeant – he began a career as an occupational safety consultant. He notably worked in the Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Division from 2001 until his retirement in 2012. And in 2018 he was honored for his on-the-ground service following 9/11. He was a proud member of both the Bayville VFW Post No. 9503 and the Corporal William H. Smith Detachment of the Marine Corps League's New Jersey Department. He was also a faithful parishioner at the Church of St. Pius the 10th in Forked River.

John leaves behind his beloved wife of 25 years, Christine, and I had the great honor of speaking with her on Monday. She, by the way, also – this virus is so crazy, Ed, she got it at the same time he did. She had virtually mild-like cold-like symptoms, and it obviously crushed him. He also leaves behind his children John Jr. and Susan, his two stepdaughters Alana and Alyssa and their spouses and significant others, and his granddaughter Zion. He is also survived by his sister Cecilia and her husband and several nieces and nephews. We thank John for his many years of service to our nation and to our state, both military and civilian, and may that legacy of service be a model for others. May God bless and watch over him and his family.

Let's switch gears if we can. As part of the National Volunteer Week, I'd like to recognize the New Jersey Medical Reserve Corps. Under the direction of local health agencies throughout the state, approximately a thousand Medical Reserve Corps volunteers are currently deployed each week to assist with our COVID-19 response. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers represent almost every discipline from among our healthcare professions. They serve at drive-thru, walk-up and COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites, and assist with the vaccination of homebound individuals and people experiencing homelessness. They staff local health department, public call centers and provide language translation and interpretation services, education and outreach, among so much more.

Several of our volunteer teams were honored yesterday by the US Department of Health and Human Services. The Middlesex County Medical Reserve Corps, which operates under unit coordinators Rich Kozub, Laurie Karabinchak, and John Dowd was recognized with a National Award for Community Response for their efforts with COVID testing. Ella Sakovitz of Perth Amboy received the Medical Reserve Corps Mentor Award. She has been a nurse for more than 35 years and has provided mentorship and training to hundreds of Middlesex County volunteers. She has been involved in a variety of COVID-19 response activities, including COVID-19 testing, and vaccination.

I also want to recognize the Medical Reserve Corps units from Bergen, Burlington and Monmouth Counties which each received honorable mentions for their continued vaccination efforts. And I also congratulate Daniel Ossuary and Kaylee Hammond, both from the Burlington County Medical Reserve Corps, for their honorable mentions for outstanding responder. If you would like to become a member of the New Jersey Medical Reserve Corps, please visit the New Jersey Learning Management Network Online at [njlmm.njlincs.net](http://njlmm.njlincs.net).

And beyond the Medical Reserve Corps, the Office of Volunteerism in the Department of State has continued to support New Jerseyans who wish to serve our communities. To learn how you can be paired with volunteer opportunities, visit the Department of State [online@nj.gov/state](mailto:online@nj.gov/state) and look for volunteer under the civic engagement tab. If you want to volunteer to help address COVID-19 needs in your community, you can find those opportunities by going to that bottom website, [helpnjnow.org](http://helpnjnow.org), to sign up. And again, to everyone giving their time and efforts in their communities, we thank you.

And speaking of serving our communities, I also want to give a shout out and a thank you to the Princeton-based nonprofit Share My Meals which is headed up by that woman, Isabel Lambotte. Share My Meals combats food and security in our state's capital region by working with restaurants, supermarkets and local farms, among other businesses, to provide their excess to families in need. This not only helps fight food insecurity, but it also combats food waste, which is a growing environmental problem.

When the pandemic took hold and many families who had never before experienced food insecurity needed a helping hand, Share My Meals stepped in, and working with their networks, to provide more than 55,000 healthy meals to those in need. Now through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Sustain and Serve NJ Program, Share My Meals will be able to continue their tremendous work. They received an EDA grant totaling more than \$130,000 to expand their vital services. Share My Meals is an all-volunteer effort.

And I caught up with Isabelle on Monday. That's their website, by the way, [ShareMyMeals.org](http://ShareMyMeals.org), check them out. And I thanked her for all that she and her team are doing for families in Central Jersey. This is what community is all about, and this effort also has the added effort, as we prepare to celebrate Earth Day, that it's based on a goal of having a positive impact in our environment. And to say that Isabel is part of a power couple would be the understatement of the day, week, perhaps month or year. Her husband is the Chief Executive Officer of Bristol Myers Squibb, another dear friend Giovanni Caforio.

And finally for today, I want to honor a friend who passed away on Monday, the late former Senator from Minnesota and Vice President Walter Mondale. In a remarkable career in public service that spanned more than a half a century, he brought good humor, dignity, kindness and honesty to our politics. And most of that during times when our civil discourse sorely needed all four. I first met the man knew simply as Fritz about 15 years ago when I was The National Finance Chair for the Democratic National Committee, and he instantly took me, and he was always willing to provide support and advice and I am honored to have counted him as a friend.

And there are many across politics lucky enough to have called him their friend too. As luck would have it, people ask me a lot over the years, why politics? And I talk about my dad who didn't get out of high school but cared deeply about it, the inspiration of John Kennedy and others, but when I actually began to operationalize getting involved in politics, ironically, it was with a bunch of folks who were veterans of his failed presidential campaign in 1984. A group that grew together and tight guys like Bob Rubin, the like Jim Johnson, Mike Berman, who became real mentors to me and really cut their teeth by working with Fritz Mondale, even though that was a blowout loss in the reelection of President Ronald Reagan.

And by the way, Walter Mondale is no footnote in American history. He left an indelible mark. He singlehandedly changed the role of the Vice Presidency from that of merely president in waiting to one of presidential advisor and confidante. His choice of Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate in the very same 1984 presidential campaign signaled a watershed moment for women in national politics. He never stopped advocating for smart policy or advising those who sought his opinion, myself included. He never stopped supporting those who he believed had the best interests of our nation at heart. And he always stood for the right thing.

In the bitter aftermath of that election loss, which was the biggest blowout in American presidential electoral history, Carter Mondale won only Minnesota and the District of Columbia. His quote really stayed with me and I think it stayed with a lot of Americans. "We told the truth, we obeyed the law, we kept the peace." To have that grace and that wisdom in that moment of defeat is pretty extraordinary. In his honor, in accordance with the directive by President Joe Biden, who by the way served alongside Senator Mondale, our flags are flying at half-staff through the late Vice President's interment. We will miss him, his smile and his tremendous grace and wit.

With that, please help me welcome Dr. Ed Lifshitz, who will give the daily update and again, we're still hoping Judy will join us in process. Ed, over to you.

**DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** Thank you. Good afternoon. As the Governor shared, vaccinations continue to increase in our state. The department has worked with vaccination sites to ensure that seniors have the opportunity to get vaccinated, and we have seen great progress in getting the senior population vaccinated. 83% of those aged 65 to 79 have received at least one dose of vaccine; 76% of those 80 and older have received at least one dose of vaccine. We're also seeing percentages among other age groups rise; 62% of those 50 to 64 years of age have received at least one dose, as have 46% of those 30 to 49, and 27% of those aged 16 to 29 have also received at least one dose.

As eligibility expanded to all those 16 and older on Monday, we expect increases to these percentages to increase over time. In terms of state allocation for this week, New Jersey will receive 132,210 first doses of Pfizer and 120,510 second doses. For Moderna, we are receiving 98,500 first doses and 87,400 second doses.

Moving on to the department's daily report. As the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 2,114 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation last evening; this number has stayed relatively flat. There are total of 2,429 reports of CDC variants of concern in New Jersey, 2,245 of these are the UK variant. Additionally, there are 51 reports of the Brazilian variant, P-1, three reports of the South African variant, B-1351, and 130 reports of the California variants, B-1427 and 1429.

Fortunately, there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 115 cumulative cases in the state, one of these children are currently hospitalized.

At the state veteran homes, there are no new cases among residents. At the state psychiatric hospitals, there are no new cases among patients.

As mentioned, our daily positivity as of Saturday, April 17th was 10.94% for New Jersey as a whole, which breaks out to 10.75% in the North, 10.96% in the Central region, and 11.43% in the South. That concludes our daily report. And as the Commissioner would want me to say, stay safe, continue to mask up, social distance, stay home when you're sick, get tested, get vaccinated and remember, for each other, first of all, please take the call and download the COVID Alert NJ app.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** That was a mean, terrific impersonation of Judy Persichilli. Particularly the last imploring. And again, no visibility Ed, on the Johnson & Johnson road forward. Again, we said this on Monday, Dr. Fauci on Sunday sort of indicated a sense that we'd get some word this Friday, and a further sense that it might be a modified recommendation of usage. And it looks like that's what the Europeans are doing. And any amount of Johnson & Johnson would be gravy, as it were, on top of the Moderna and Pfizer numbers that you referred to. And again, to repeat something that is, frankly, I believe, a bigger challenge for us than the overall number of Johnson & Johnson vaccines, and that is because it is a very particular and potent weapon in the pursuit of equity. It allows us to get into places that are hard to reach with a one-dose, regular refrigeration vaccine. So Ed, thank you for that and for everything you do and welcome back.

With that, Pat, anything – not a lot lately on compliance? Is that still the case? We had some nasty thunderstorms out there. Any other reactions or topics you've got? Great to have you.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Yes, nothing reported to the ROIC with regard to Executive Order violations. The weather, still between the winds this afternoon and spotty thunderstorms, temps are going to drop dramatically, from what I understand. I'll make the last plug since the application process closes on Friday, NJTrooper.com. We're up to over 2,500. So for those women and men that have gone on and put their hat in the ring, I thank you. But I know that there's more out there that would find this profession rewarding. Again, NJTrooper.com. That closes on Friday night at 11:59.

And I think on that note, with regards to our 100th anniversary, I think I'd also be remiss if I just didn't say a word or two about the guilty verdict which confirms what the women and men of the New Jersey State Police know to be the truth. And that is that we join our nation in unequivocally affirming the jury's guilty verdict. And I also want to take the opportunity to assure the citizens in New Jersey that the troopers out there remain committed to preserving the nobility of this profession by holding ourselves accountable to the highest standards and never wavering from those core values we were founded upon 100 years ago of honor, duty and fidelity. Thanks, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you for saying that, Pat, and thank you for your leadership, period and for all. NJTrooper.com. It's a little bit like we're running, I feel like I'm back to the Jerry Lewis Labor Day telethon days. This is our last shot. This is through Friday end of day. NJTrooper.com. Please sign up. I apologize, Matt, let's start over here because I feel badly that we've always run you guys at the end. So Nikita, we're going to start with you.

So again, I think we will be in the rhythm that we've been in. I think folks should assume that we will be virtual tomorrow. And we'll probably be somewhere on the road on Friday. Whether it's COVID-related, vaccine-related or other matters, and obviously, we'll keep you posted. Mahen will make sure that we stick to that schedule and we'll keep you updated as to any developments. So with that, let's start. Nikita, good afternoon.

#### Q&A Session

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Good afternoon, Governor. I have a few questions from myself and then one from Dan Munoz over at NJBIZ. So there were about a dozen school board races held yesterday. Across the board, turnout was abysmal. In Newark, the state's largest city, less than or fewer than 5% of voters turned out. I'm wondering, at what point does the state simply take school board, or April school board elections off the table?

Then in Jersey City, the city walked back on a plan to open in-person schooling on Monday, citing a shortage of teachers. I'm wondering, when will the state no longer accept teacher shortages as a reason to not open schools, and when it would give guidance on replacing teachers who refuse to show up for work out of concerns over the virus?

And then lastly, on day programs for developmentally disabled adults, those programs have been shuttered for over a year now. I'm just wondering what those public employees have been doing in the meantime? And what the state's target date to getting state employees back to in-office work is?

And then from Dan Munoz, thanks for sticking with me, Matt. He asks regarding the NJ tax break programs and NJ Emerge, is the state going to need to clean-up bill? And if so, what would that need to focus on, and when would you like to see that passed? Is anything underway at the moment? He asks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I don't have a crisp answer to, what do you do about turnout at off-cycle elections like school board elections in April. But I have to say without question, the turnout is as low as those numbers, and I've not looked at the turnout numbers myself, but assuming that you're right, and I assume you are, that's an unacceptable level of turnout, no matter which side of -- which candidate you're on. So I don't know. But having said that, I'm not sure I've got a crisp, "and this is what we're going to do". In fact, I don't. But that's something that should not be.

Again, nobody's fault. These things get very little airtime and given the stakes, to your second question, they deserve more airtime. I was disappointed in the Jersey City development. It's very hard to say otherwise. I know Mayor Philip was and I know he had done a lot to try to push that into the right direction. I hope that the combination of good, smart, public health habits, vaccinations in the many millions, warmer weather, that that combination would allow that a decision like that to be reconsidered.

I know for sure, as I've said this, we're back in business in September, Monday through Friday for educators, kids, everybody in as close to a normal school year as possible. What happens between now and then I think it's to be determined. And I do want to say this, in fairness to everybody involved. I was on with a bunch of educators yesterday, and I call them regularly, just sort of up and down the state. The stress is overwhelming for everybody; the educators, the kids, the parents, anybody associated with our educational communities and all that goes with it. We've talked about learning loss, mental health impact, pure physical health concerns, et cetera. So that's really all I've got to say there.

I know Judy had mentioned this yesterday, we've been meeting with leadership of both Democratic and Republican Legislators, yesterday happened to be a meeting with Republican leadership, Pat was with me, as well as other members of our team. And Judy indicated yesterday that she is working on -- and Ed, I assume you're working on this with her -- guidance that hopefully we'll get us to a better place as it relates to the day programs for the developmentally disabled. Again, we're trying to balance physical health and mental health. And there's no question the mental health stress, particularly for vulnerable communities, and this is a great example of it, including their families has been overwhelming. So I know she wants to get to a better balance, and I would guess that that's sooner than later, but I don't want to speak for her.

And to Daniel's question, no specifics, but I would welcome the opportunity to do something that would quote-unquote clean up a couple of the items, a couple of loose ends as it relates to the incentives package that I signed in January. The conversations, by the way, around what those incentives will actually lead to, I think, have been very good. A lot of that's anecdotal because these programs are not up and running. The rules are not promulgated yet, although that's coming very soon. But it feels like it's having the effect that we wanted to have. There's a lot of interest in projects and companies and whatnot, but no more color on the cleanup piece of this. Thank you, though. Dave. Good afternoon.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Hi, Governor. In Israel, as you know, where a lot of people have gotten vaccinated, when they hit 50% --

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Dave, I apologize. I meant to say, Nikita, one thing on the schools, I have an update. I apologize. I give folks our best guess of what percentage of our kids are hybrid, either hybrid or in person, and that number is up slightly. It was just under 81% on Monday. It's now just over 81% today. Sorry, Dave.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** In Israel, as I'm sure you know, a high percentage of the population has been vaccinated. When they hit 50% positive cases, deaths and I believe hospitalizations all dropped very significantly. Do we expect the same scenario here? And if so, when? Even a ballpark idea.

A couple of questions from my newsroom, Dr. Ed, you had mentioned the high percentage of vaccinations for seniors. Why were we so successful in doing that? I believe we had a program where we were actually reaching out to them, calling them and so forth, going into different communities. Is that program still continuing or has that wrapped up?

And finally, the FDA has issued a report on multiple failures at a troubled Baltimore vaccine manufacturing plant that was making the J&J vaccines. The facility was, quote, "not maintained in a clean and sanitary condition." According to this report, and "some procedures to prevent cross-contamination were not being followed." Governor, do you think it's going to be hard to restore faith in the J&J vaccine once the pause is lifted? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Dave, I'll start and then Ed, you should come in and add any color to this. Israel is a global model, they've just done an extraordinary job. And they've been able, by the way, to open up meaningfully and that's what we're going to do as well, please God. In fact, I think people have asked of late, I know, a bunch of mayors have rightfully raised this, I would bet, Parimal, early to mid-next week is probably the right time, assuming our numbers continue to go in the right direction. And they're a little bit sideways yesterday and today, but assuming they do and our prospects and optimism remain high, we're going to give a pretty significant amount of guidance by early to mid-next week. You didn't ask that, but I wanted to make sure I said that.

And folks are rightfully asking for that. We don't want to lurch, we don't want -- we're the only state in America that has not lurched. In other words gone forward, and then had to pull something back and we don't want to start that now. But we also owe people our best guess as to what it's going to look like for graduations, summer on the beaches, and whatnot.

Ed, I'll let you answer the question in a sec, if you don't mind. If we hit 50% -- in fact, we're over 50% of our objective. We're not 50% of our population, but we're over 50% of our objective. Do we expect the same sort of drops in cases? And if so, when do we think that may happen?

I think we've been successful on seniors, because we didn't sit back and wait for them to come to us, we went to them. This feels like ancient history that began with a call center. So we went online first and then the call center. And that now is a very robust, well-functioning call center. Had some teething issues early on, but that's no longer the case.

The outreach programs for 75 and up and then 65 and up, clearly calling people helped, going, bringing the vaccine toward people as I've mentioned before, we're now at 99% plus or minus of our population is within five miles of a vaccination location. We have over 800 of them. Our hope is to make sure that that's the case for within a 15-minute walk. The J&J piece is probably helpful in that respect. Obviously, we're not administering J&J right now. But the one-shot reality allows you to take it places you otherwise couldn't.

And I've read the headlines on the Baltimore plant. It is worth noting, and Ed or Judy will correct me if I'm wrong. We never had any of the J&J doses out of that plant. All of our doses came from the Netherlands, and I believe that was the case, including the supply that we're now holding in refrigeration, which is a couple hundred thousand doses.

And I think I think the faith will come back. I really believe that. In a funny way, the pause over -- which is not a funny matter, I don't mean that. But the positive of the blood clots, I think, is proof that the system is working. I haven't read this FDA report. This is another, as bad as it looks, it's another proof point that actually, it was found out and the system worked. The feds were able to uncover that. So in a funny way, I think that comes back. And again, it's a huge weapon for us as it relates to equity.

Ed, comments on any of the above? Do you expect that we'll start to see a drop off, precipitous drop off, please God we will, and when? Any comments, more color on why we've been successful with seniors? Although my guess is you'd echo a lot of what I said, and any comments on Johnson & Johnson, faith in their vaccine?

**DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** Sure, I'll go backwards with that. I have, as I've said before, tremendous faith in the career scientists and the people in the federal government at the FDA, at CDC, who look into these things and are paying very close attention. And when the committee meets again this week, and they come out with a recommendation, I very much expect that I would believe and follow that recommendation. Is anything 100% risk free? No, nothing is 100% risk free. We all do things every day to protect ourselves.

You know, when I got in my car this morning to come into work, what was the first thing I did? I put on my seatbelt. Why do I put it on my seatbelt? I put on my seatbelt, because I know that seatbelt saves lives. I also know that --

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Also because Callahan was going to pull you over.

**DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** And the car might beep a little bit, but I also know that in a very small percentage of cases, a seatbelt might actually kill me. It may actually make it harder for me to get out of the car if something else may happen. It doesn't happen often, but sometimes it happens. It's a very similar thing with medicines, whether it be antibiotics or other things. In the large majority of the times it helps; every now and then, unfortunately, you may have an adverse outcome. That doesn't mean that we still don't go ahead and we still do it. So I very much expect that J&J vaccine will play a role going forward.

And I think, you know, we hear anecdotally that people are looking forward to this vaccine. You know, they very much like the one and done aspect of it. So I do think that it will certainly play a role, it may be limited somewhat as to exactly who gets it, but I believe it will play a role.

As to the question about when will we begin seeing results from vaccination? My argument would be we already have. And we've seen that in different ways. And one of the big ways is if you compare case rates in our oldest population, the people who've been eligible to get the vaccine for the longest period of time and have been encouraged strongly to get it, you've seen them drop dramatically compared to those age groups who haven't been eligible to get it. So overall, and these are approximations, you know, if you look at the roughly 5-to-18-year-old age groups, their case rates now compared to about two months ago, in December, they're roughly the same, down maybe a little bit. If you look at our case rates amongst those who have been eligible to get the vaccine, and particularly our oldest, they have dropped the most relative to that.

So yes, I do believe that we are seeing some impact from this vaccine. Is there a magic tipping point number at which you'll see everything drop, that so-called herd immunity, where basically we are all going to be covered? That's not a single number. That's a general destination as opposed to a specific point. The higher your overall immunity gets in the population, the more you can expect to see numbers drop, but there's not going to be any one exact number when we get to 50% or 52% or 70%, or whatever where we can say, okay, that's it. We're not going to be seeing any more transmission.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Ed, thank you. Dave, thank you. Sir, do you have anything? Make sure you get in focus there.

**Reporter:** From Colleen O'Dea in our newsroom, in light of the Chauvin verdict and recognizing all the forms that the Attorney General has put in place, is there anything more New Jersey needs to do in the areas of policing or criminal justice reform to prevent what happened to George Floyd and similar deaths we have seen around the country?

On another topic, do you know how many people in New Jersey have gotten COVID more than once? If you have this information, can you add it to the dashboard?

Do you know how many breakthrough COVID cases NJ has had? Other states have begun reporting this. Will New Jersey?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Sorry, what type of case?

**Reporter:** Breakthrough COVID cases. Every day, the CDC reports vaccine numbers for New Jersey that differ from the ones that New Jersey is reporting, meaning total doses received, administered and people fully vaccinated. Can you explain why that is and which numbers are more accurate?

From Tim Nostrand, with the open appointments in South Jersey, do you fear that you are seeing the beginning of vaccine hesitancy in that part of the state?

And from our live stream, when are you planning to release guidance for colleges and universities for summer and fall semesters? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I would suspect to Colleen's question that there's always going to be – you know, Barack Obama used to have this phrase that we wake up every day to perfect our Union, and the acceptance that our Union is a work in progress and never perfected, never perfect. And my guess is that that's my answer on criminal justice reform. That this is a journey that we've been on and we will remain on.

I am proud of what we've done. I'm proud of what the Attorney General has done. I'm proud of the engagement that Pat and other members of law enforcement have had to deepen relations with communities. Leadership among our faith leaders is overwhelming in our state, everything from Homeland Security to a daily call that we have with over 100 members on vaccine status and everything in between, not just criminal justice matters.

My guess is it's a journey that we will remain on for the rest of our lives. But I would say I'm proud of a lot of the steps we've taken. And I'd probably put the steps that – you never want to say you're there yet. Again, this is a journey. But I'd put the steps we've taken in the engagement between law enforcement and our communities up against any other American state.

I have no idea on a couple of your questions. How many folks have gotten COVID more than once? Do you have an answer to that, Ed?

**DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** Yes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Why Ed's here.

**DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** Thank you. And why sometimes I wish I wasn't because it's not that straightforward an answer. It seems like a very straightforward question. You got it once, now you got it a second time. Just tell me how many there are. The answer is it's actually trickier than that, because you have to know that they actually had a choice and it wasn't just that they were continuing to shed the virus, as many people do, and they can test positive over time, the same person and all those sorts of things.

So to answer your question, yes, we do have some internal tracking of that. We do have a general idea. But it is a tricky number to go out there and say exactly this, for all those reasons. Meaning it's hard for us to put an exact – to use the Governor's words, give good color on exactly how that goes.

Similarly, we are tracking breakthrough cases, I know that wasn't quite asked yet. And we do expect to be releasing those numbers within the next week or so. It's some of the same problems that come up with trying to do the variants, though. There are technical issues there. You have vaccine that gets entered into one computer system, there's a separate computer system that measures or tracks who gets it, so trying to make those two systems match and getting to a reasonable level of accuracy so that you know that you're not counting people twice and those sorts of issues, it does take some time. But we will be expecting to be releasing those numbers, hopefully next week.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Ed for the benefit of everybody, how do you define a breakthrough case?

**DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** A breakthrough case is somebody who's tested positive at least two weeks after having been completely vaccinated, which means either two doses of Moderna or Pfizer, or one dose of J&J.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** It's fair to say we don't think it's a high number. That's a fair comment. Can we come back to you on the question on the numbers? Because obviously, we have a high degree of confidence in our numbers and I just want to make sure. Mahan, can you follow up on this question in terms of what we're comparing it to?

I'm not convinced that open appointments means hesitancy. But what I am convinced is, and I mentioned the Pandemic Relief Fund and the First Lady, I want to give her a shout out, and her team. We are convinced that we are in a phase that we knew we would get to. I think we're at the beginning of a phase where we need to be proactive, not just like the steps we took with seniors 75 and up, and then 65 and up, which clearly worked. But we're going to need to be much more offensive to get the rest of the 4.7 million across the goal line.

And that research that I mentioned is going to inform steps that we'll be taking, I think literally within the next – you know, if you do the math and you assume you're still going to be relying more than not on a two-dose regime, either Pfizer or Moderna, you've got to bring most of the folks who you want to get their first shots under the under the tent by the end of May if your objective is to get there by the end of June. I think you're going to see a lot of proactive steps, many of which are under consideration, that are going to get launched.

Again, I think less hesitancy although we know there's some of that, but the Department of Health's polling continues to have willingness to take the vaccine meaningfully above that 70% mark, which gives us optimism. I think it's more we just need to get to people.

On colleges and universities, I'm not sure it'll be part of our guidance next week. You've seen a number of colleges and universities already making their decisions and moves. I'm meeting with the Rutgers senior team tomorrow. They've made that move. Princeton, this week. I think Fairleigh Dickinson I think also has made that, has taken that step. And so again, more guidance, I think, as a general matter coming early to mid-week.

You know, one of the things, back to Colleen's first question, Pat, if I'm not mistaken, one journey that we're on that has a specific time association with it, which is the statewide implementation of body cameras for all patrol law enforcement. The deadline I believe is June 1st. And so that's a specific – that's again, it's a journey but that's a specific step and a deadline date. Thank you for that. Alex. Good afternoon.

**Alex Zdan, News 12 NJ:** Good afternoon

**Governor Phil Murphy:** is that Charlie Stile in front of you?

**Alex Zdan, News 12 NJ:** Right there. Do you want to go to him first?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** No, no, we'll start with you. But I just want to note for the record that Charlie's in the house here, okay.

**Alex Zdan, News 12 NJ:** Yes, sir. For you and for Dr. Lifshitz, what's the sticking point in reopening adult daycare? Is it the staff? Is it the facilities? Some of these folks who have been out of adult daycare for over a year now, that's obviously causing mental stress and strain for their families? How can that be reopened and when will it be reopened?

Governor, I'd like to get your reaction to Governor Lamont in Connecticut saying that he's going to drop all restrictions on businesses effective May 19. You talk about how New Jersey is moving slowly because it's dense and near New York. New Jersey is the number one densest state in the nation. Connecticut's number four, and obviously both states are close to New York. Why is Governor Lamont moving quicker than you? And do you intend to follow his lead?

Two more questions. You, Governor Lamont and Governor Cuomo had essentially an alliance early in the pandemic. You said that your states would move in concert. Has that alliance broken down? Because obviously, the three states are moving in different directions at different paces.

And lastly, would you say that you are running the slowest economic reopening in the United States of America? And do you wear that as a badge of honor?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Pat, does your mother know that you beat your dog? How about that for a premise? I think that on adult daycare, we want to come back to you. Judy is personally spending a lot of time on this. I think it's all the above, Ed. I mean, it's balancing physical health risk with mental health. Enormous challenge which we accept

completely, both with the individuals and their families, and getting that balance right. I think I mentioned that to an earlier question. I think that's basically it. Is it fair to say? For all folks, all participants.

I'll answer your second and third question together. You used a phrase that I do want to call out the premise of one of your questions. We never said we would move in concert, we never used that phrase. We said we would consult regularly. Our teams still do regularly. I spoke to Ned a couple of weeks ago. I haven't spoken him since, but we still speak. I haven't spoken to Governor Cuomo in a little bit longer than that, but our teams speak literally all the time. And not just these three states, we speak to Pennsylvania and others as well. And so it was thematically, we were trying to be in sort of thematic harmony. And we recognize that steps taken, particularly early on, could have unintended consequences. And that's where, for instance, you may remember, Andrew in particular early on, we did not want to have a reality of restaurants on one side of the Hudson versus the other. That was when the virus was new to all of us and we were both really concerned about that potential. We're still concerned about it and we're largely in harmony. But again, we compare notes all the time.

We're going to continue to open up, and I guess this gets to your last question as well. We're going to continue to open up incrementally. And if we think there's an opportunity to be something, to do something bolder than incremental, we'll do it. But the numbers just don't suggest, our reality does not suggest that at the moment. And so you'll have to ask Governor Lamont in terms of his rationale on May 19th, but I know what our reality is here. The numbers have gotten somewhat better over the past week to 10 days. They're still not where we need them to be, but they are showing a trend that is beginning to build in the right direction. And because of that, we're meeting regularly. We had another discussion earlier today, end of day yesterday on what steps we can take. And that's what we're going to continue to do.

And believe me, that's not because we don't acknowledge the pain, economic or otherwise, associated, mental health which you asked about. The collateral pain to this pandemic is overwhelming. We get it, and we'll do everything we can to mitigate that. Thank you. Charlie, welcome back.

**Charlie Stile, Bergen Record:** Yes, good afternoon. I just want to follow up on what Colleen O'Dea asked about earlier. You talked about the long-term journey that this is going to take for criminal justice reform. But isn't this the time for a Democratic Governor, the Democratic Legislature, to seize the momentum from yesterday's verdict, and, you know, to work with Democratic Leadership to prioritize or put on a priority track status, a lot of bills that have languished in the Legislature, like revising immunity protections, or at least beginning that dialogue, civilian review boards, and possibly banning chokeholds? And I say this all, as you mentioned earlier, knowing full well the historic directive from your AG. But isn't this the time to do it?

And secondly, especially since the likelihood of the George Floyd legislation in Congress probably going to hit a roadblock in the Senate, the chances of that happening are, despite this moment, nil. I guess, isn't it incumbent on a Democratic Legislature or the Democratic Governor to seize this moment now, especially given the importance of people of color in the Democratic Party constituency?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I mean, the answer certainly has to be yes, but the implication is that we've been sitting on our hands, which is far from the case, right? So we've done a lot in criminal justice reform. Am I open-minded to do more? Absolutely. I won't get into specifics on particular Bills. I suspect the Legislature is also open-minded to do more.

But I would say this, and this is with complete respect to a guy's life that should not have been taken. George Floyd should be alive today, unequivocally. But I would also say we did not need that tragic loss of life to spur action to begin with. But if there's an opportunity, as a result of this tragedy, to take steps that we have not yet been able to take, count me in. What those steps are, I don't know. The politics of it is not relevant to me. The fact that "who is our constituents" is irrelevant. We want to do the right thing for every member of the 9 million family. Charlie only because I haven't seen you in months, I'll give you another very brief shot at the microphone. But please don't abuse that privilege.

**Charlie Stile, Bergen Record:** Oh, no.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** By the way, the Attorney General put guidance out on how the law enforcement should deal with members of the media, I might add. So if you want to get some credit for you guys here.

**Charlie Stile, Bergen Record:** No, I guess I understand that you're open to it. But isn't the leadership demand on you to make that – you, as Governor, to make this a priority? To bring in the leadership and bring them in.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Again, I want to say this with nothing but complete respect for a guy's life that should not have been taken from him. But we kind of wake up every day thinking about criminal justice reform and steps we can take. Did we wake up yesterday and today with even more kick in our step to take more steps? Yes, I would say unequivocally. But we also did not need this tragedy to spur us into action already. Good to see you. Brent, take us home.

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Some people have said they simply want a timeline for reopenings. Just to allay some anxiety, is that possible to give them an idea of when this might happen?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I think we're going to begin to do that early to mid-week. And that's part of the reason why we want to do it. It's a little bit similar animating principle to why we wanted to give people a signal on when they could get vaccinated, even though we knew there was a supply-demand imbalance, because it gives people a peace of mind to know, okay, I know I'm up on a certain date. I know Johnny or Sally's graduation is going to be able to take place under the following circumstances. So the answer is yes. We are still -- there's a lot of moving parts here, so I would just ask people's patience for a few more days. And again, I'm signaling early to mid-next week to come up with a significant amount of that.

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** What was your reaction to the video of Perth Amboy police seizing bikes from Black and Latino teens who were deemed unlicensed? Do you have concerns about police using obscure and outdated ordinances to pull over and detain people of color?

Today marks 15 days since a group of undocumented immigrants began their hunger strike. How much longer do you expect conversations to go on before you can commit to meaningful relief funds for excluded workers, which is what they say they need to end the strike?

Is there any update on when the State Department of Labor may reopen its offices? And hello to my wife and newborn daughter Everly at home. I know they're watching, so I just wanted to say hi.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Oh, wow. That's great. Congratulations.

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** When was the birth?

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Two weeks ago.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Congratulations.

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Thank you. It's our first daughter, first kid.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Everyone's well?

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Yep, everyone's well.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** What's her name again?

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Everly like the Everly Brothers.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Everly. Everly Johnson. I love that. Okay. Phil or Don?

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Both. Well, Phil.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** There aren't many people who could have come up with that question, by the way. So I've answered the question on timeline and anxiety. We completely get it, we share the same objective here and we will get that to you.

Yeah, I'm glad that on the Perth Amboy, I'm glad the Middlesex County Prosecutor is looking at it. I don't think anyone who has looked at that has liked the sense that it is giving off, period. And so I think that kind of answers your question. And Pat, I don't want to speak for law enforcement and I certainly don't want to speak for you as a general matter, but there's certain things that should be high priorities and kids with bikes, to me, I think other than making sure they're safe, I'm not sure taking the bikes and taking them off the street is what we should be doing.

No update on the support for the undocumented brothers and sisters, other than it is something that we are working hard on. We continue to have conversations, and we want to get to a good resolution. Again, we've got no guidance yet on the American Rescue Plan money. That's a general comment. But that is one avenue, obviously, that is an option. And, you know, we'll continue to work on that. And again, God bless them. There should not be any reason in our society for folks to be on a hunger strike, and I want to repeat that unquestionably.

On DOL, no timeframe on reopening. I do know this, Rob Asaro Angelo, our Commissioner, would want me to say, if they thought they could process claims more quickly and more efficiently, they would open immediately and probably would have already. And having said that, I think he recognizes I recognize there is some benefit to having that face to face, I saw Dave and he told me as opposed to this entirely telephonic or via the internet. But again, they're doing a heck of a job under very tough circumstances. And that should not be solace to somebody out there who is still looking for their process and their claim to be resolved, which we understand that frustration as well.

Ed, I've got a question for you as we break. I mentioned every week, and we've got a minute or two here. Every Wednesday, we adjust the probable losses of life from the pandemic. And I know that's something that you personally oversee. Can you give some color on that process? And is it fair to say that the new probables are still from back before we had the ability to properly test? Or are these also ones that are coming up of late? Thank you.

**DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** Sure. So early on, most of those probables were people who died in places such as nursing homes who they just never got tested, but everything suggested that they probably died of COVID but we couldn't prove it, which is why they were probable. We still see some and there is an ongoing process. And we've talked in the past about the process that has to do with death certificates and how death certificates, the whole process goes. Starting with the doctor, it goes through locally as it goes to the funeral director, then locals then the CDC to be finalized, and then back to the state. And often that happens in a matter of weeks. But occasionally, it can take as long as a year. So there will be small changes that can happen out months or even a year afterwards, as things get finalized. And this can happen because people will make mistakes when they write death certificate, something doesn't make sense, something is unclear. So those things take a while.

So right now, as far as probable deaths go, we're seeing some from early on, but more the ones that we are seeing here are people who we know have died, but aren't a confirmed case. Because if you're not a confirmed case, then you're not a confirmed death. So it may have been that they had a positive antigen test, which makes them a probable case. And then if they died, they'd become a probable death. It may have been one of the other incidents as well where tests may not have been done but for some reason, the doctor thought that it was likely related to the COVID, and they write it on the death certificate. So there are a few different reasons. But I would say that certainly the majority are within the last several months, as opposed to going back to the beginning of the pandemic.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Very helpful. Thank you for that. So Ed, great to have you with us, as always. We miss Judy. Please give her our best. I assume she's still digging out from the budget hearing, so keep her in your prayers for that reason. Pat, as always, great to have you. The last time I'll say it for this recruiting season, at least, NJTrooper.com is the place to sign up. And please do. It's an extraordinary career. Jared, Parimal, Mahen, the rest of the team Matt, Councilman, I'll treat you with the proper respect. Again, we will be virtual tomorrow. We will probably be on the road on Friday.

Keep doing what you're doing folks, get vaccinated. Everybody's eligible, 16 and up. We have appointments. I mentioned the Atlantic City mega site, it's not the only place where appointments are available. So one of the questions was, do I sense that this is a South Jersey thing? I think it's a general matter right now, less hesitancy than the fact that we always knew this would come where we now have to proactively reach into the state in a variety of different ways. More on that over the next couple of weeks, but the shots are there. They're available. They're safe. They work. Please get vaccinated. God bless you all.

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