

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: May 9th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

05/09/2020

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry to be a couple behind here. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm joined today, as usual, by the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. In the audience today, please no offense, another person who needs no introduction, our State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan; and to my far left another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. Today I am further pleased to be joined by University Hospital CEO and the former Commissioner of Health. This is the ultimate job swap here. I just want to say, the two people to my right. At the far end, Dr. Shereef Elnahal. Shereef, great to be with you again, as always. And to my immediate left, the CEO of the American Red Cross New Jersey Region, Rosie Taravella. Rosie, great to have you with us.

Before I go on, I will say not only do we have Director Maples with us, but we have Mary Maples with us, who's the General Counsel at University Hospital and former member of my team. To each of you, great to have you. Chief Counsel Matt Platkin will be with us in a bit.

Shereef and Rosie are here because University Hospital and the American Red Cross have entered into an exciting and promising new partnership to help us in our ongoing work to save lives from COVID-19. Today we are announcing that the American Red Cross will be opening two convalescent plasma collection sites in North Jersey on Monday. One will be at the American Red Cross Blood Center in Fairfield and the other will be at University Hospital in Newark, New Jersey.


Back
to top

In late March -- again, let's go back a little bit here -- the US Food and Drug Administration announced an initiative to collect blood plasma from those who have recovered from novel coronavirus to treat patients with serious or immediately life-threatening COVID-19 infections. The plasma from recovered patients contains antibodies that may help others in their own fight against the virus. While this is a new advance against COVID-19, it is not a new practice. Convalescent plasma has been used before as a potentially life-saving treatment against quickly developing diseases and infections, when proven treatments or vaccines were not yet available.

University Hospital has been one of our hardest hit healthcare facilities and has treated a significant number of COVID-19 patients. Additionally, approximately 100 COVID-19 patients at University Hospital had been treated with convalescent plasma, with promising signs. So to everybody out there watching, if you have recovered from COVID-19 and wish to be a plasma donor, please visit redcrossblood.org/plasma4covid for more information and to sign up. If you are eligible and qualified to donate, someone will get back to you to make an appointment.

Additionally, other hospitals across the state have also begun their own plasma treatment efforts. COVID-19 hit North Jersey hard and Essex County is certainly no exception. Essex has our third-highest total of positive cases, but also our highest number of deaths. The more we can attack this virus where its toll has been the greatest, the more lives we can save. This is a partnership that we are extremely excited about, and as we continue to follow the science we know that it is just a matter of time before together, we defeat COVID 19. So to you, Shereef, and Rosie and your colleagues, including Mary, thank you again and I know each will have more to say about this in a few moments.

Now let's turn our attention to our overnight numbers. Yesterday we received an additional 1,759 positive test results for a current statewide total of 137,085. The number of new cases, as you can see, continues to show an overall positive trend, but where we are seeing the most progress is in the declining, as Judy always reminds me, the declining positivity rate. That is the number of tests which are coming back positive. This graph shows the daily positivity rate. Look at where we were not that long ago, Judy. It's hard to believe that. That's less than five weeks ago at the peak, and again, this is the positivity rates of the samples the day they are collected. This is important because when we report the numbers here, we are often reporting batches of results from different days. Being able to take a step back and look at results from a date certain is more insightful.

As you can see, the daily positivity rate has been coming down steadily over the past several weeks. And, for the latest test which we can assign a collection date to, in this case is May 5, that rate has dipped to 27%, so we're making real progress. And here are, another way to look at this, the daily positivity rates across regions of the state. You can see how they are coalescing.

The map that we've been regularly turning to keeps showing slower rates of spread across the state, and this continues to be a very positive sign but I would say it's showing slower rates have spread, but too slow, for my tastes. Or still too fast, rather, for my tastes.

In our hospitals, the number of patients currently being treated for COVID-19 dropped by roughly 130 from where it was yesterday and it now stands at 4,628. And as we can see, the number of hospitalizations across our health systems regionally also continues to trend down. The rates of hospitalizations regionally are on similar trajectories. Again, we saw more recently, Judy, as you pointed out, the South. This migrated and you can see that migration, in particular, in the south.

Our field medical stations reported 35 patients last night, and a reminder that the field medical station at the Meadowlands Expo Center is this weekend standing down and its operations transferred to East Orange General Hospital. To you, Shereef, I want to thank you and the University Hospital team for your partnership not just in coordinating all of our actions in the North where this hit the heaviest, but also for your partnership at the Meadowlands site. Thank you.

Looking at our long-term care facilities, the numbers of positive cases, as you can see here, and deaths, tragically, connected to these facilities continues to grow. However, as we have noted before, we have put in place significant new levels of oversight and resources and the New Jersey National Guard is deploying some of its members this weekend to several of these facilities to assist in mitigation. The number of patients reported in either critical or intensive care fell again yesterday to 1,416, Judy, you thought this

number, while it's getting better, is stickier than the number of hospitalizations. So it's going in the right direction, but not at the rate that I think you and I and others would like to see. Ventilator use continues on its downward trend with 1,054 currently in use, and all of us here are hoping that that number may soon fall under 1,000.

There were 364 new COVID-19 hospitalizations yesterday, but there were also 422 live patients discharged yesterday. We continue to see more patients leaving the hospital than entering. However, before you go on, I want to say this. Let's not forget – Judy would want me to say this, we're making a lot of progress – 364 people went into a hospital over the past 24 hours with COVID-19. We are not out of the woods, folks. Let's not forget that.

Here are the numbers broken down by region. Again, per capita, the number in the lower left in the south is the most troubling number, I think for me at least, on the page, because you've got a lower population. And 130, again, we're not shocked. Judy has told us this is going to migrate North, Central, South. You can see it's not out of the woods in the North or Central either, but as a per capita matter, that's a big number in the south. I was on with Kevin O'Dowd yesterday at Cooper Health and he's done an extraordinary job, the same job Shereef's been doing in the North, and Amy Mansue in the Central part of the state, Kevin has been doing in the South, and we have to keep these numbers all going in the right direction.

By the way, it's our collective job to do so. Social distancing is working. Wearing a face covering is working. Washing your hands with soap and water is working. And remember these eight words: public health creates economic health, and data determines dates. Let's not forget that. The more we keep this up, the better positioned we will be to confidently and responsibly get ourselves on the road back and we can begin to restart our economy.

Before you flip, I just want to say we had a very good call this morning, as we do every 10 days or so, with Legislators from both parties. We went through some of the steps that we're looking at potentially taking or in fact, are taking. But again, we reiterate, the faster we can break the back of the public health crisis, the faster it is that we can reopen our economy. We will do that at every step as we have, based on the data, the science, and the facts.

Sadly, with the heaviest hearts, today we must also report another—

[Technical Difficulties]

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: It's on. It's on.

Governor Phil Murphy: It's on. Thank you, Judy. Judy is not only our Commissioner of Health, but she's also our Chief Technician and reminded me that my microphone in fact was already on. So that's a light moment, but we're going to flip unfortunately, sadly, to a very tough moment. Again, another 166 deaths we're reporting from COVID-19 complications. That number now stands at 9,116 fatalities. It takes your breath away. I want to honor a few of those folks, but it doesn't look like we've got our – there we go. Let's remember several of those who have passed.

First up, if we can, there he is, Jeffrey Lin of my hometown, Middletown, in Monmouth County. Jeff spent a career in purchasing logistics, most recently at Perma Pure in Lakewood. In fact, right up until he fell ill with COVID-19, Jeffrey was on the job, procuring the supplies necessary for his company to produce tubing for ventilators. Jeff's family and friends knew him as an incredibly proud, yet humble family man who went out of his way to make everyone around him feel welcome and to smile, whether with a silly joke or a funny story. He was a fan of both Frank Sinatra and Paul Anka. For those of you watching at home, you may know that Paul Anka wrote Frank Sinatra's anthem My Way, and he was often singing along with them at home.

His daughter, Stephanie, who I believe lives in Philadelphia, summed up her father with these words, and I quote Stephanie, "He was the nice guy in the neighborhood, the sweet customer who regularly frequented Middletown shops, the chatty man in line at the grocery store. He made friends with any and everyone he met." He was, by the way, only 70 years old. He leaves behind his wife of 40 years, Carol, and please keep Carol in your prayers as she continues to battle; his two daughters, Stephanie who I mentioned, and Victoria with whom I had the honor of speaking. Stephanie, I believe, is in Philadelphia with her husband and with

Jeff's grandson, who he also leaves behind. Victoria is in Middletown. Jeff also leaves behind a sister and other members of his family. We send them all our deepest condolences and may God continue to bless the soul of Jeffrey Lin.

Next up, let's meet this guy. This is William "Bill" Scholts from West Milford, Passaic County. Bill spent more than 40 years within Sara Supermarkets and most of that at the Shop Rite in West Milford. It couldn't have been all work though, as it was there that Bill met his wife, right there with him, Denise, the woman who would become his wife 37 years ago. Together they would raise two children, Bill Jr. or Billy and Jennifer, and I had the honor of speaking not only with mom Denise, but also with Billy and Jennifer yesterday. And he took special pride in being with his four grandsons, Billy, Nicholas, Michael and Jackson. And when he would babysit them on his day off from work, there was nothing better. Family was everything for him.

Well, almost everything. Bill was also an athlete, and a huge sports fan, especially of, my team and I were trying to figure out how we got these together, of the Yankees and the now Las Vegas Raiders. He loved music, he loved to cook, he loved the shore, and he was just 62 years old and his wife, Denise went out of her way to tell me that he was in very good health. This is an example that while this has been ravaging older folks, folks with comorbidities, folks in communities that have historically been left behind, it has been also unsparing even with some of the healthiest among us. In addition to Denise, his kids and grandkids, Bill is also survived by his dad, William Sr., five siblings and their families, and so many friends and colleagues. His memory, his soul and all of them are in our thoughts and prayers today.

And finally, let's remember on the left there, a giant, Lillian DeMarco. Lillian was 90 years old and lived in the Lake Hiawatha section of Morris County. Lily was born in Newark and grew up in nearby Montclair. She got married to her late husband Paul in 1950 and in 1960, they moved to Lake Hiawatha to a house Lillian would call home for the next 58 years. She was a proud telephone pioneer and spent her career with AT&T and Bell Telephone before retiring in 1990.

Retirement for her didn't mean sitting back and taking it easy, however. In her retirement, Lily traveled the world and volunteered her free time at St. Claire's Hospital in Denville. She loved to read and to do word search puzzles. According to her family, Lillian was the happiest when she was spending time with her family and friends, especially if it involved a deck of cards or a set of rummy cube tiles. Lillian is survived by her three children. Her daughter's Catherine, who's known as Kitty, and Patty, and I had the honor of speaking with Kitty and Patty both yesterday, and her son Paul, in addition to their spouses and her four grandchildren. Likewise, we keep Lillian's memory and all of her family in our thoughts today. God bless you Lillian.

We remember Jeff, Bill and Lillian because neither they nor any of the other 9,113 we have lost should ever be just a number. They were real people who lived real lives and who leave behind real families. They were each a treasured part of our New Jersey family. Our battle here is not just a battle to bring down the numbers, which it is. It is a battle literally to save lives. Remember that, folks. So keep practicing your social distancing. Keep wearing a face covering when you're out in public. Shereef and Rosie and others, Judy and Tina and their teams across our state are doing great work on things like developing therapeutics and cures, but the only surefire cure we have today, right now, is social distancing, staying away from each other. So please continue to do it. And by the way, we have led every single American state in doing just that and we should all wear that forever as a badge of honor.

Let's switch gears for a couple of announcements, if we can. On Monday, the State Department of Education will launch an online application process for eligible districts to receive their shares of \$280 million to cover the costs of purchasing educational technology, providing remote instruction, cleaning and sanitizing buildings and ensuring support services for students who require them, among other, I might add, COVID-19 response-related expenses. Getting this funding flowing to our districts is a win for our schools, our educators, our students, and our taxpayers. I express my appreciation, especially to the Education Commissioner Dr. Lamont Repollet and his team, for working really hard to get this in place.

I next want to give a huge shout out and congratulations to the team from Rutgers RUCDR Infinite Biologics who, along with their partners at Spectrum Solutions and Accurate Diagnostics Labs, yesterday received federal Food and Drug Administration approval for the first at-home saliva-based test in the United States of America. This is a big step forward and to know that it was made here in New Jersey, with the support from our state's flagship institution of higher education is a great feather in our New Jersey cap. We all know that

testing is a critical part of our getting on the road back, and the easier and more accessible testing is, the more secure we will be on that road. In fact Monday, I think we're going to be able to do this on Monday. We're going to go through the whole testing plan going forward, Judy, and I think we've made another audible call at the line of scrimmage. I think we're now going to split testing and contact tracing because we think there's so much to go over in each of those respective areas, that we're going to split them between Monday and Tuesday.

I also want to return to a topic that I brought up on Wednesday which is not COVID-19 related, but is of incredible importance to our state, and that is the Census. Over the past three days, more of you have responded to our call to go to 2020census.gov to be counted and our response rate has ticked up, but just a little bit from 58.6% to 59.8%. We still, however, rank 21st of the 50 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico. I know we can do better. This map shows response rates across our counties. The darker the blue, the more of you who have already been counted. However, as the shades of blue go lighter, and in turn, shades of orange, these are counties that we need to see really start to step up. I'm going to return to this map occasionally and I'll even point out some of the communities that are both at the top and bottom ends of the scale, but this is our starting point.

Ensuring that every New Jerseyan is properly and accurately counted in the 2020 Census is vital. The Census is the data that the federal government and quite frankly, we in state government use to make the decisions that impact every community in New Jersey. New Jersey was undercounted in 2010 and because of that, we have left literally billions of dollars in federal aid on the table over the past decade. That undercount even impacts us today in our efforts to get more COVID-19 relief to our state. Folks, the money is there. If this money isn't coming to New Jersey, it's going to some other state like Kentucky. Let's make sure we get it here in New Jersey. So if you have not yet taken the time to be counted, please take a moment, go online to 2020census.gov and make sure you are. So much rides on an accurate count.

Now, before I wrap, I want to give a couple of well-deserved shout outs, but we're going to do things a little bit differently today. I want to give a big thank you to some folks who have been working directly with us in our response efforts, some in front of the proverbial curtain, and others whose work has been backstage, but in both cases equally as important.

First, I want to give a huge thanks to the US Army Corps of Engineers. Yesterday marked the Corps last day with us with regard to our efforts to expand our hospital bed capacity. In just 45 days, the Corps and the State Office of Emergency Management forged a partnership that assessed more than 20 healthcare facilities. Judy, you were at most of those, as was Pat, and designed and built out our three field medical stations. It was able to reopen mothballed hospital wings, erect a 100-bed medical tent in the New Bridge hospital parking lot, and convert the gymnasium there, as well, into a temporary hospital. The direct help of the Corps enabled us to quickly expand statewide bed capacity by some 1,400 beds.

Now the Corps is not going away entirely. They will now return to the environmental projects throughout the state that they had already underway, and in those, we look forward to our continued partnership. So to the US Army Corps of Engineers, its leader Lieutenant General Todd Semonite, North Atlantic Division Commander Major General Jeffrey Milhorn, and Philadelphia District Commander Lieutenant Colonel Dave Park and their teams, New Jersey thanks you. And to President Trump, I thank you as well for your swift response to our request to have the Corps deploy alongside us.

I also want to give a big thank you to one of our corporate partners today, Microsoft. Throughout our response, Microsoft has worked alongside our Office of Information Technology to develop the healthcare volunteer signups, and our hospital dashboard at covid19.nj.gov and to automate the reporting processes for bed and staff management, supply management, and discharge details. In these efforts, Microsoft donated both licenses and hundreds of hours. So to everyone at Microsoft, who has been a vital partner to our information technology team, New Jersey thanks you.

As I turn things over to Judy, I just urge everyone to keep doing what you are doing. Tomorrow, as Judy has pointed out, and I will today, is Mother's Day. And on a sad note, New Jersey lost one of its great mothers yesterday, Mrs. Betty Wold Johnson, at the age of 99 years old, the matriarch of the Johnson family, mom to both Woody and Chris. To them, and to the members of the Johnson family in New Jersey and around the world, Woody is now serving as our ambassador to the United Kingdom, our thoughts and prayers are with

you. The first time I met Mrs. Johnson, it was nearing the end of the first half of a Jets game and as we know, the Johnson family owns the New York Jets. I wanted to walk over and introduce myself. The person with me said, I think it was Tim McDonough, said she'll meet you at halftime. She never wants to be interrupted during the game. And I said okay, that is a leader. That is a mom. So to your memory, Mrs. Johnson and to the Johnson family, our thoughts and prayers go out to you.

But as a general matter, tomorrow is Mother's Day. I know we all want to make sure we remember properly the women in our lives who have done so much and continue to do so much for us. But let's make sure we are celebrating them responsibly tomorrow, so we can celebrate them again next year and the year after, and for many years and decades to come. Happy Mother's Day, everybody. God bless you all.

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

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. So as we prepare to celebrate our mothers tomorrow, I wanted to take a few moments to review some recommendations and resources for moms-to-be and new moms. There are over 100,000 births annually in New Jersey. COVID-19 cannot, will not, and does not stop the deliveries of our next generation, so we need to make sure that those deliveries are safe.

The New Jersey Healthcare Quality Institute convened a workgroup of maternal and child health experts, which included the Department of Health staff, to develop recommendations to guide pregnant individuals and their providers during the COVID-19 epidemic. It provides specific and clear guidance aimed at providers to ensure that all pregnant individuals obtain safe and equitable care, despite the social distancing and infection controls necessary to reduce the spread. The recommendations also are created to align with the work of Nurture New Jersey, which aims to reduce maternal mortality in New Jersey by 50%, and to eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes.

We do recognize this is a challenging time for pregnant women and new parents in New Jersey. Pregnant women and their families should take all possible steps to avoid infection. The full report can be found at njhcqi.org and I encourage you to look at, but here are some highlights. In person medical visits should be minimized to the extent possible, while maintaining patient safety. Patients should be encouraged to attend their visit, unfortunately, alone. Providers should develop a system for patients to wait for their appointment outside of the office to limit the number of individuals in the office at any one time. Prenatal education group classes should be encouraged and conducted via telehealth. Patients should receive education on what to expect when they arrive at the hospital, such as new triage procedures around labor support and discharge. Patients who are pregnant may be arriving to a facility due to an illness, pregnancy or non-pregnancy related. There could be complications, they could be in labor, or they could be scheduled for an induction or C-section.

All pregnant patients should be rapidly assessed based on the facility guidelines to allow the care team to provide the best possible and safe care. And if possible, all pregnant patients should be tested prior to, or at the time that they present at the hospital. Additionally, moms choosing to breastfeed their infant should be educated on the precautions that they should take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Again, for further recommendations, please go to the New Jersey Healthcare Quality Institute's report that can be found at njhcqi.org.

The Department of Health continues to support expectant mothers, children and their families and has modified many of its programs as part of the COVID-19 response. Telehealth is now used to provide doula support, home visiting, and the provision of critical early intervention systems. May is Maternal Mental Health Month, and our partners have modified their operations to offer virtual support groups for our new moms. To access any of these programs, please call the family health line at 1-800-328-3838.

This morning, the US Department of Health and Human Services announced the allocation plan for the drug Remdesivir. They are delivering 110 cases to New Jersey. Each case has 40 vials of the drug. The department is working with the hospitals on a distribution plan that will be equitable and consistent to where the greatest need is. These supplies are part of the donation made by Gilead Sciences. Remdesivir is an antiviral that improves the time to recovery from 15 days to 11 days. That proves that this drug can block the virus.

Now for my daily report. As the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 4,628 hospitalizations of COVID-19 and persons under investigation, and 1,416 individuals in critical care, with 74% of them on ventilators. The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported today. In terms of deaths, the breakdown by race and ethnicity, basically unchanged: White 52.5%, Black 19.2%, Hispanics 17.5%, and Asian 5.3%, other 5.4%.

There's 515 long-term care facilities in our state now reporting COVID-19 cases. At the state veterans homes, among a census of 673 residents, there have been 362 that have tested positive and we are reporting a total of 129 deaths of those residents today. Our state psychiatric hospitals are reporting 12 deaths today.

Yesterday I reported the death of a four-year-old with underlying conditions. We have no indication at this point in our investigation that the death was related to Kawasaki disease.

The cumulative percent positivity rate is 37%. The New Jersey spot positivity rate as of May 5 is 27%. That concludes my daily report. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy and don't forget to connect with your moms tomorrow, virtually. And again, Happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers out there. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you for the report. The counties, we'll be brief because we've got a number of speakers, the counties with the most positives continue to be the big six, and certainly the ones that are part of the commuting Metro New York City reality. But let's remind everybody, there are positive cases in every county, and there are fatalities in every county. I'm just wondering if we can petition the manufacturers of Remdesivir to change the name to something like pill, that could roll off the tongue here a little bit more easily.

With that, again, I mentioned this kiddingly earlier, but the two folks to my right have walked in each other's shoes. When Shereef was the Commissioner of the Department of Health, we really needed to stabilize University Hospital, which is one of the most important hospitals in the entire state, and directly controlled by the state. There was only one person who could do that, and that was Judy. Judy did it on a temporary basis and as luck would have it, University Hospital, when they searched not just the state, the country or the world and came up with their preferred new Chief Executive Officer, it was Shereef, which then allowed Judy and I to get together in a different way, and for Judy than to succeed Shereef. This is some version of The Lion King circle of professional life. With that, again, I can't thank him enough for his leadership. We're going to talk for a few minutes about plasma today, but Shereef has also been the coordinator, as I mentioned earlier, for Judy in the north region, and that's where this thing exploded first, and where its toll has been the heaviest. We're first going to hear from Dr. Shereef Elnahal, who's the CEO at University Hospital, and then I'm going to turn to my left and here from Rosie Taravella, who's the CEO of the American Red Cross, New Jersey Region. Shereef, up to bat. Thank you, man.

University Hospital CEO Dr. Shereef Elnahal: As the regional coordinating hospital for Northern New Jersey, we're thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with the Department of Health, State Police, National Guard, and the Army Corps of Engineers to set up the field medical station in Secaucus. This has been a very successful strategy to provide relief during the peak of this surge for northern New Jersey hospitals. University Hospital has been operating a 24/7 Medical Command Center to coordinate admissions of patients to the FMS Secaucus. Over the past month in Secaucus alone, we've worked with over 58% of the hospitals in northern New Jersey to admit 268 patients, saving those hospitals over 1,100 inpatient days. That means much-needed bed space for more seriously ill patients in the hospitals that we served, while providing top quality care to the folks that went to Secaucus.

Our Medical Command Center is an invaluable resource to the state, fielding thousands of calls and facilitating all patient transportation in the region during this time. This team did over 2,200 phone calls to date, which averages almost 80 per day. Although we had to plan for it, I really want to mention this and emphasize it. We thankfully did not have to ration care in the northern region at any time during this pandemic, even during the peak. That is not an accident. Governor and Commissioner, I want to say that as a direct result of your efforts, the stay-at-home order, the Commissioner's organization of all the hospitals in the state to respond and expand capacity, the Colonel and the State Police efforts to allocate PPE and ventilators from the National Stockpile, that is what got us through this.

We're also leveraging our status as an academic medical center, working with physician scientists at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School to research promising therapies and testing platforms, including trials involving Remdesivir, Azithromycin and other antiviral therapies, including monoclonal antibody therapies. University

Hospital is among the first in New Jersey to get FDA approval to provide a novel therapy that may be the most promising of all options to date, convalescent plasma. Governor, you may recognize the individual beneath the mask across the room. We want to thank Chief Council Matt Platkin and all the many individuals who've stepped up in our program after recovery from coronavirus to donate their plasma.

I also want to give a shout out to the New York Blood Center which has helped us get a lot of the plasma to date. We never stopped looking for cutting edge opportunities, and today I'm proud to announce our latest partnership with the American Red Cross to host a convalescent plasma donation site on our University Hospital campus in Newark, New Jersey. This site will open this Monday and we're already reaching out to interested donors to make these appointments. I want to thank the Red Cross New Jersey Regional CEO Rosie Taravella for her support. This will increase access to plasma donation opportunities for Newark, the surrounding region, and significantly increased capacity for plasma donations across New Jersey. In other words, more patients in New Jersey will be able to get this therapy because of this new site.

The effectiveness of this treatment is not yet known, but many patients that have received this therapy at University Hospital have recovered, which is a promising sign and importantly, we're leading a study that will help determine the efficacy. Governor, University Hospital thanks you for your leadership during this public health emergency. Commissioner, for your leadership as well. It is our honor to answer your call to serve our fellow citizens throughout the state. As with crises that New Jersey has seen before, including September 11, Superstorm Sandy, the Ebola threat and others, University Hospital has been and always will step up to meet the challenge on behalf of Newark and the people of New Jersey. This is why public hospitals matter. Remember, COVID plasma at uhnj.org and the phone number is 973-972-5474 if you recovered from coronavirus and you're able to donate. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Shereef, so well said and so well done. Thank you for your leadership on this and across the waterfront here, particularly in this crisis. It takes a village and we could not be doing this, the state couldn't be doing it, University Hospital couldn't be doing it, without the cooperation and support and leadership of the Red Cross. Please help me welcome the CEO of the New Jersey Region of the American Red Cross, Rosie Taravella. Rosie, great to have you.

CEO of the American Red Cross New Jersey Region, Rosie Taravella: Thank you, Governor. The American Red Cross has adapted to meet the extraordinary challenges of the coronavirus epidemic and the fulfillment of our lifesaving mission to alleviate suffering as we confront an emergency unlike any we've seen in a century. Four weeks ago, the American Red Cross and other blood collection organizations joined the US Food and Drug Administration's efforts to support the collection and distribution of convalescent plasma, a potentially lifesaving treatment for critically ill COVID-19 patients. Together we have worked around the clock to put this new initiative in place, by establishing a process to identify, qualify and collect convalescent plasma safely from recovered COVID-19 individuals, both at the Red Cross and other blood collection organizations around the country.

Last month, the first Red Cross collection of convalescent plasma took place right here in New Jersey and according to media reports, the two recipients that the plasma was given to have been discharged from the hospital and are in a rehabilitation center to complete their recovery. To date, the Red Cross has distributed more than 1,000 convalescent plasma products throughout the United States and is projected to collect and process a couple thousand more this week. We continue adding resources to qualify more donors, which will help increase collections. I'd like to thank Governor Murphy for his insight into this treatment's potential, his concern for the people of New Jersey, and for taking action to bring the American Red Cross together with the University Hospital in Newark for this partnership to help increase the collection of lifesaving plasma. We look forward to working with Dr. Elnahal and his team at University Hospital, and we encourage other hospitals to join the FDA's efforts to combat the effects of this disease.

The Red Cross encourages individuals who have fully recovered from COVID-19 to sign up to give convalescent plasma by completing the donor information form on our website, redcrossblood.org/plasma4covid. If the individual is eligible to give, a Red Cross representative will contact them to schedule a donation appointment at a Red Cross or at another blood collection facility that's near them. Please note that plasma is collected by appointment only.

Each day we're making strides to get more donors in the door and more products to patients. We're working with the FDA and hospitals to identify the scope of patient need in this rapidly evolving environment. Partnerships such as this one with University Hospital will help. Plasma can be frozen for up to a year, and so we encourage fully recovered COVID-19 patients to donate to help build up a sufficient supply of convalescent plasma that can easily be readily available for hospitals going forward, in the region and beyond.

In this time of crisis, the Red Cross is privileged to witness the best of humanity, as people roll up their sleeves to help those in need. We greatly appreciate the support of the American people and those recovered COVID-19 patients who have stepped up in an effort to help someone during this extremely difficult time. To learn more about this lifesaving effort again, please visit redcrossblood.org/plasma4covid. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Rosie, thanks to you and to your extraordinary team at Red Cross in the New Jersey Region for not just your help here, but leadership. It's great to have you with us today. Shereef, likewise. Pat, before you jump in, we made history today. For the first time in the history of the Wall Street Journal, my name, the word knucklehead and The Three Stooges were all in the same article. And so it's in that spirit I ask you to update us on compliance, PPE, infrastructure and other matters. Thank you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Although it was relatively quiet, I sadly have to report an additional one in that category. Thanks, Governor, good afternoon. In Newark overnight, Newark Police Department issued 33 EO violations and closed one non-essential business. And really, the only other event was also in Newark at a store, where a store manager and cashier got into a verbal argument with a customer over the price of an item. When the woman was escorted from the store, she spit on the store manager and on the cashier.

The only other thing that I would add, Gov, is just -- and I know I've spoken of it before -- is the National Ambulance Contract that's due to end on Friday, May 15. We still have 10 basic life support and 10 advanced life support in use for one more week. But in the time that they've been here, they've answered more than 10,500 calls for service, including more than 350 cardiac arrests. Just a phenomenal effort that did a tremendous job in alleviating the stress on our EMS providers. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. A couple of housekeeping matters. We're going to start over here with John. Do you have a question, sir, against the wall? Or are you good? You're good. We'll start with John. I can't, with these masks, that's one of the prices you pay is you can't see. We're not there yet. Hold on, Dante.

Again, just to go over a couple of items, Matt will correct me if I'm wrong. The Census deadline, back to the Census, has been moved from August 15 to October 31. That's an important point. We still have time. I said to my team over the past couple of days, I want to be a top 10 state. That may be a stretch in terms of compliance, but we have got to over-perform here. This directly relates to federal money that we get, including money in the here and now, battling COVID-19, never mind the past decade of money that we left on the table.

Secondly, we will be virtual tomorrow unless you hear otherwise. Mahen or Dan will get a hold of you if that changes, but we'll be virtual, we'll communicate with you electronically tomorrow. We will be together, although there is a White House VTC, we're still going to try to do this at one o'clock on Monday. And I'm happy and honored to say that Senator Bob Menendez will be with us. That will be, actually we're still trying to figure out whether we do testing and contact tracing, as I said earlier, because Judy and I have both concluded these are both big topics to discuss, whether we do them separately or together. Now, even since I said that, I now lean right now toward focusing on federal support on Monday with Senator Menendez if he's here, and then maybe doing testing and contact tracing together on Tuesday, but bear with us on that front. But again, tomorrow is virtual only. John, you're up. Let's keep these pretty quick and we can get you out of here. Thank you.

Q&A Session

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Yeah, can we get updates? We'd asked for COVID case data by zip code. Any chance of getting that soon? And any update on site visits by the Department of Health inspectors at long-term care facilities? Is that still continuing? Is there any thought to intervention or any steps being taken at the New Lisbon Developmental Center where there are over 300 positive cases?

And Governor, earlier today in New York announced an investigation into the pediatric disease associated with COVID-19, after saying three children died in New York state of that. Any indication in New Jersey of such cases? Any indication if there's hospitalizations or deaths associated with that?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, John. My guess is we're not there on COVID – you mean positive cases or fatalities by zip code?

John McAlpin, Bergen Record: Anything by zip code.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let's come back to you on that, because I don't know that we've got that, so we'll come back to you if we can. Judy will update us on long-term care site visits, as well as the New Elizabeth Center. And Judy, I know wanted to say this. This blessed four-year-old who passed yesterday, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but we got a lot of, hey, was the underlying health condition Kawasaki? And to the best of our knowledge, and Christina was part this, the answer is no. It was another comorbidity and we're going to leave it there for privacy sake. Judy, you may want to just as well address Kawasaki again and how concerned we are, and any steps we either are or are considering taking. We will come back to you on the zip code question if that's okay, John. Please.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: On long-term care, these site visits, the surveys are continuing. We had some difficulty with PPE at the beginning of the week, but that's primarily the masks, but that was taken care of. The latest count I have, and it's higher than this, but the latest count I have which is at the end of last week, there were 54 infection control focus surveys, one specialty hospital survey, one dementia care, home survey, five assisted living, 47 nursing homes.

On the developmental centers, as you know, we're doing universal testing in the developmental centers. All residents and staff at the five centers have been tested and we're moving on to congregate settings. That's the latest I've gotten from the Department of Human Services.

Governor Phil Murphy: On the specific location, if we've got any more color, Mahen will come back to you. Is that okay? Thank you, John. Brent, good afternoon.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. Going back to the four-year-old, we've now had, you know, that story sparked dozens and dozens and dozens of parents being like, terrified that now is my child going to die? And you know, isn't it in the interest of public health, and not to reveal who the child was or where they're from, but more about what happened there? Can we get anything else?

Two, long-term care facilities obviously are a big deal. Do you feel that there's more you guys could have done to prepare for this at these facilities?

Third and final, a new report shows there may be thousands of suicides because of unemployment and lockdowns during the pandemic. Are you tracking suicides? And is that something you're considering when it comes to how we reopen, if that's another number you're factoring in?

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, may I start and you come in. Is that all right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to say this, at the risk of -- on the four-year-old, this is a very specific situation with this blessed little kid and we're going to leave it at that. If it were something other than a very specific situation, we would have the burden of responsibility to say so.

Long-term care facilities, I don't know any place in America that would wish, upon reflection, that if only, it's just that this has been, you see the loss of life. Just to repeat two things. The performance by the operators has been extremely disappointing. Not in every case, but in too many cases. Uneven, disappointing, lacking in communication, lacking in some basic blocking and tackling. The second thing is, is that we have thrown now an enormous amount at this. Judy began that months ago, at this point. The Attorney General is investigating. We've plussed up with a nationally recognized team to further help our efforts. The National Guard is now in these facilities, not all of them, obviously, but beginning in a number of them.

You know, when we do our national post-mortem, when we do our own post-mortem in New Jersey, a huge focus will be on long-term care. Part of the reason why Judy's hired the team that she hired is not just to help us in the here and now, but to help us in the medium and long term and what this industry has to look like to achieve a more satisfactory and more consistent performance.

Last thing I'm going to say, Judy, I'll turn it to you is, I don't know specifics in terms of tracking suicides, but we have said this, that the combination of isolation, and now other factors like job loss are having big impacts on folks. There's no question about it. I think for the overwhelming folks, particularly those who don't have mental health challenges and who still have a job, there's been a spirit, as we've talked about, of coming together. But this is a healthcare crisis unlike any we've ever seen before. On top of that, an economic crisis unlike any that we've never seen before, and if that weren't enough, the cure for the health crisis is keeping people isolated.

We know that that's social distancing and staying at home. We know that's what the doctor has ordered. But you add to that job loss, small businesses that have been crushed, it's a toxic mix and we're not an exception in New Jersey. We have that challenge just like anywhere else where it's been hard hit. Judy, any of the above?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think we are concerned about mental health issues. I don't have the tracking of suicides but as you know, we've reminded individuals repeatedly to call the hotlines. We do monitor the calls to the hotlines. One of the reasons the Governor gave for opening up our parks was to allow people to get outside because the emotional wellbeing of people in isolation was a concern. So it is a big issue and we will continue to monitor it and encourage people to seek help for sure.

On Kawasaki, I can imagine that mothers are concerned. Just suffice it to say that the individual, like the Governor said, the poor blessed little soul, that individual did have a significant underlying condition and it obviously complicated the situation.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, sir. You good? You good? Charlie, I got you. Thank you. Christina, I was almost going to call on you then I realized it was you. Apologies. Charlie, how are you?

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: I'm well, thanks, Governor and Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers including my own.

Governor Phil Murphy: Likewise.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: So you appointed the Restart and Recovery Advisory Council this week. How does that fit in with the Restart and Recovery Commission that you appointed on April 28? Are the members of these bodies New Jersey residents? How, if at all, will they work with Craig Coughlin and George Zoffinger's Advisory Panel to assist recovery?

You signed EO 132 about the initiative and referendum petitions. Does that also apply to recall petitions? Surely if you don't want people circulating one kind of petition, you wouldn't want them circulating another kind. Is that covered or is there another Executive Order necessary to make those electronic petitions possible for recall?

And then finally, from the Health Commissioner, if I could just get an update on the EO 111 data? I still haven't gotten any from Robert Wood.

Governor Phil Murphy: Which one is that again?

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: The daily data on capacity and supplies that was Executive Order 111.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, I'll start, and you want to come in behind me, is that all right? So the Council versus the Commission is and I've said this, I think I've said this, the Commission is largely strategic, high-level guidance. That's not to say that they're not going to have an opinion on very specific tactical steps we may take. These are folks who have a combination deliberately of New Jersey, national and global experience, for a reason, from different perspectives. There's no one person on that group of, I think with the at-large members, so about 20 people, there's no one person on there that really duplicates an experience or perspective of another one.

The Councils which we announced yesterday are split into nine different, what I would call largely tactical groups. Again, that does not mean that they're not going to have likewise strategic thoughts and input and we welcome that. But they are going to be specific to transportation and infrastructure, tourism, social services and faith-based, there's nine different groups. They are overwhelmingly in this case, if not entirely, New Jersey folks. In fact, I'm going to go out on a limb and say I believe they are entirely New Jersey. I'm not sure necessarily resident in every case, but their experience is. That's a deliberate distinction between largely strategic, largely tactical, and we need them both.

The group, the Commission, the first strategic group is co-chaired by Dr. Shirley Tilghman, President Emeritus of Princeton, and Ken Frazier, the CEO of Merck, and it's a terrific group. The Councils are co-chaired by our Secretary of Higher Education, Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis, as well as by CEO of the EDA, Tim Sullivan, and the CEO of Choose New Jersey, Jose Lozano.

All of the above, including yours truly, will work both and it's not just the Speaker's group, but the Senate President has put a group together as well. We have already begun our interaction with both sets. I can't say for sure what that interaction will look like, but we have all agreed, wide open communication, cooperation, not competition are the watchwords. So far, that's worked out quite well.

I have no color on either of the EO questions you asked, but I will ask Matt Platkin to tell us whether or not EO 132 includes recall petitions. My guess is we'll want to get back to you on EO 111, unless you've got anything you want to add there. So, EO 132.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Does not include recall petitions.

Governor Phil Murphy: And EO 111, do you have any more insight, either you or Judy?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: I think we make the data available. The data that's presented every day is based on data that's submitted from EO 111.

Governor Phil Murphy: We'll come back on the EO 111. The answer on 132 is definitive, it doesn't. And then 111 we'll come back if we get more color.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: Does it affect the order of the recall petitions?

Governor Phil Murphy: I don't know, I haven't thought about it, but thank you. Sir, how are you?

Doug Melegari, Pine Barrens Tribune: Good. How are you, Governor?

Governor Phil Murphy: Very well.

Doug Melegari, Pine Barrens Tribune: I wanted to ask you if the Guardsman deployment includes the New Lisbon Developmental Center? Have you contacted the mayor of Woodland Township yet? He says we need to fix this situation.

Also, I was curious if the Health Commissioner could detail what might be behind South Jersey sort of lagging behind just a little bit.

Also, has there been any consideration to adjusting the minimum wage at all during the economic crisis, in either direction?

And the last thing is when might we hear from Commissioner Johnson here at these briefings regarding the developmental center situation?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. Judy, I'll jump in and please come in and correct the record. I have not spoken with the Mayor about this, but I will make sure -- Brady, you're going to help me. You'll go to Mike DeLamater right now, we'll reach out to him literally as we're sitting here. If you could do that right away, that would be great. And in terms of more details on that, I think we'll come back to you separately.

South New Jersey, South Jersey, I think is the reality that this thing exploded as a metro New York City reality and everyone's written about that, and I'm sure they'll be writing about it for the next, I was going to say decades, my guess is century or more. In the counties that were crushed earliest and had been crushed the most are the big commuting counties into New York City. There's no other way to put that, really.

But Judy reminded us, and she can put this in her own words, from day one that this would migrate. Not just around the country and around the world, but within our state. There was a time, Philadelphia appears to have gotten this behind it, where Philadelphia was being highlighted as a potential next hotspot, and it never exploded, thank God, at the level that New York City exploded. But the combination of that, I think, it has played out as we had expected. And as I said, the number today that we're reporting other than the blessed souls we've lost that gives me the most cause for concern are the number of new hospitalizations in South Jersey because per capita, that's a higher number.

No consideration on minimum wage, one way or the other. It is what it is, it's on the path that it's on, and will continue to be. And on Commissioner Johnson, it's a good point. She's been here, as you know. It's a good suggestion potentially to have her back, but maybe Mahen you could get a direct connection with her to talk about some of the questions that you've got, until or in the absence, until she gets here. Judy, anything you want to add?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Just on the South, we're beginning to see the flattening and decreasing of the cases, 10% down from the beginning of April. Just as a comparison, Central Region is 37% down, and Northern Region is 56% down. So the migration is exactly the way the Governor represented it. And you know, just the population base in South Jersey is so much smaller than Northern Jersey so good news all around, though, with the hospitalizations.

Governor Phil Murphy: And again, we'll get back to you on the Developmental Center. Mahen, you'll make sure that happens. You're going to Mike to get to the mayor right now. Thank you all. I want to thank, again, a distinguished group of colleagues and I'll mask up as I do this, Rosie Taravella, immediately to my left, the CEO of the American Red Cross New Jersey Region. Rosie, thanks for being with us and thank you for your leadership. Dr. Shereef Elnahal, the CEO of University Hospital, great to be with you again, pal. We miss you and we've been with you in spirit, even though we've been social distancing with you. As always, Judy Persichilli, our extraordinary Health Commissioner. Dr. Christina Tan, State's Epidemiologist. The one and only Colonel Pat Callahan, thank you. Team Maples are here in size, so Jared and Mary, thank you both. Matt.

Listen, the weather is better today than we thought it was going to be, even though it's cold. So remember, keep your distance, do the right things, not just generally, but specifically in state and county parks, as well as if you're golfing. Happy Mother's Day to every mother in the Great State of New Jersey and thank you, mothers, for everything you do. Again, we'll be with you virtually tomorrow and in person on Monday at 1:00 p.m. unless we tell you otherwise, with Senator Bob Menendez. We're honored that he'll be with us. And bear with us as Judy and I figure out whether or not we've got too much to cover already on Monday versus Tuesday on testing and contact tracing.

We continue to assess actively other steps that we can take to responsibly reopen. That's a big reason why we've got these Councils and Commission to give us advice on that front. Most importantly, remember that the person to my right and her team will be the primary inputs here. Remember, public health and personal health creates economic health. It's in that order, and that data will determine dates.

Folks, I can't thank you enough for being extraordinary in your compliance and social distancing and staying at home. We know it's not fun. Hang in there. Slowly but surely we are winning this. We will get back on our feet and we will be stronger than ever before. 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 \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](/governor/admin/fl/)
[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](/governor/admin/cabinet/)
[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency \(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](#)
[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](/governor/admin/bca/)
[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](/governor/admin/internship.shtml)
[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)
[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)
[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)
[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)
[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)
[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)
[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)
[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)
[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)
[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)
[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)
[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)
[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](#)
[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)
[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)
[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

Social

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

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

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

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

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

Contact Us

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

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

Statewide

NJ Home (<//www.nj.gov>)

Services A to Z (<//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html>)

Departments/Agencies (<//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/>)

FAQs (<//www.nj.gov/faqs/>)

Contact Us (<//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html>)

Privacy Notice (<//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html>)

Legal Statement & Disclaimers (<//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html>)

Accessibility Statement (<//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html>)

(<//nj.gov/opra/>)

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

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