

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: April 10th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good morning. Thanks for coming in early, everybody. We're going to be a little bit snappier in terms of our pace today, just because we've got folks who are going to be observing Good Friday, beginning in particular at noon. Honored to be joined by the woman to my right, who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another guy who's becoming familiar to many of you out there, Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz, thank you for both being here. To my far left, State Police Superintendent and another familiar face, Colonel Pat Callahan. And to my immediate left, another great leader, Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks.

We're going a bit earlier today than we usually do, as I mentioned, so while we have the overnight numbers, I'm not sure Judy will tell us how deeply we can dig into the numbers. We have at least the top line numbers, and we'll go from there. Let me get into that immediately. Since yesterday's briefing, we have been notified that we have 3,627 more residents who have received positive test results. That puts our statewide total at 54,588. Again, 3,627 overnight, and our statewide total at 54,588. According to our online dashboard, again, that's accessible through covid19.nj.gov, Judy, I think this is right, as of 10:00 p.m. last night, we had 7,570 residents reported hospitalized, of which 1,679 were listed in critical or intensive care and 1,663 ventilators were in use. For the 24-hour period ending 10:00 p.m. last night, a total of 682 residents were discharged. That's an important point to know. You can see up there, how many folks are hospitalized, how many of that cohort require intensive care, how many ventilators are in use. As Judy has said all along, that's going to bounce around at about one to one, and it is showing up to be that way. And another piece of evidence that we are at least beginning to see some light here, 682 residents who are discharged, and that's a big deal.

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Let's flip to a map that we've been showing you from time to time. This is the county heat map and it measures the amount of days of doubling of cases. When we first showed this map, it was orange and red, and red would have been the fastest amount of doubling. Orange was a little bit slower. The yellow is slower again. This is the first day that we have two counties where we are seeing a new color, which means it is more than doubling. It's doubling, rather, at least seven days or more. That's Salem County in the southwest where there are certainly cases. Salem has right now a total of 46 positives and three fatalities. That's good news, because that was red just a couple of days ago. So while the caseload is small, the curve was steep. That's encouraging.

But even more encouraging is Bergen County, in the northeast, and that's the other one that's lightly shaded. Bergen County has just under 9,000 cases and 390 fatalities. That's where it hit first and the fact that that's beginning to show that shade, please God it continues to, and we get other counties that continue to clock over. Those are good early signs. Again, too early to spike any footballs, but those are two important early signs.

As we noted yesterday, we may want to go back to the hospitalization numbers, do you mind, Mahen? The dashboard pulls data as it is reported by hospitals into the New Jersey Hospital Association. It is just a snapshot and Judy would want me to remind you of that. This is not a movie, it's a snapshot of a moment in time. Again, because we are here earlier than usual, there may be overnight changes that are not yet reflective in that data.

Now, additionally, with the heaviest of hearts, we also know that we have lost another 233 of our fellow residents since yesterday. That total number now stands at 1,932. Again, 233 precious lives lost, and now a total of 1,932 precious lives lost.

Please allow me to just tell a couple of very brief stories about a few of these folks. This picture, bring it up, folks, is Evelyn Sanchez. God bless her. Evelyn and her husband John were partners both in life and in their family-owned business, Emergency Pest Control. She is remembered for her tremendous generosity of spirit. She was born in Vineland and called Sparta in Sussex County her home for the past 35 years. She leaves behind her husband John, President of the Essex County Latino Chamber of Commerce, along with her children and stepchildren and step-grandchildren. I know she will not be forgotten, and she was only, and this is my age, 62 years old. God bless you, Evelyn.

Sam McGhee. There's handsome Sam. He was the first African American elected to serve as Mayor of Hillside in 1988. He was a member of the Township Committee, and also served on the Union County Improvement Authority, among other posts. Adding to his years of public service was a career as a high school history teacher, and 32 years as Dean of Admissions at New Jersey City University. We send our condolences and prayers to his family and friends.

And there's also Dr. Francis Molinari of Kearny, who was a physician for four decades, tending to his own practice in Bellville, serving on the staff of Clara Maass Hospital at the Meadowlands Sports Complex, as well as working for 30 years for Hudson County prior to his retirement two years ago. To his wife, Lorraine, with whom I spoke yesterday and daughter, Andrea, and their family, we join you in mourning his loss and praying for his soul.

The conversations that I have had with our families who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 are not easy, nor is sitting here telling some of their stories easy for any of us. It's nothing, nothing, nothing compared to what they're going through, both the folks who have left us as well as their family, and friends. We have to remember them. We must recognize the tremendous toll this virus is having on our state and seeing these faces and hearing these names reminds us that behind the stark and impersonal numbers are real people, real human beings, real families.

We all have a role to play in reducing the number of people we lose. We have to keep with social distancing. That is the key to cracking the code, flattening the curve and getting us to a better place. And again, remember, when we flatten the curve of the number of people that are infected, we lower the amount of hospitalizations, the amount of intensive care hospitalizations and ultimately, fatalities. One thing does lead ultimately, directly, to the other.

This weekend is Easter weekend, and I know it's one where we are used to gathering together, as we do normally at Passover. We gather normally at Easter to worship. We gather for children's Easter egg hunts, for family meals with friends. We can't do any of that this year. I feel awful, but we can't. We have to leave the gathering to FaceTime or Zoom, or just simple phone calls and texts and emails to our family and friends. Instead of heading to church, many of us will fire up our laptops for a live stream service. Staying apart this year is the surest way we'll be able to gather again next Easter, and the many Easter's to come. So please take this to heart and take this seriously. We all must work together. And if we do, unequivocally, we will come through this stronger as one New Jersey family, together.

But we each have to do our part, and the 9 million of us need to flatten that curve. Stay home, stay away from each other. Again, that leads to fewer infections, fewer hospitalizations, fewer intensive care unit hospitalizations, and fewer loved ones who we will lose. We will, you and me and the rest of the 9 million of us, will manage this front while our extraordinary, heroic healthcare workers and our teams represented by Judy and Ed and Pat and others will build out our capacity of beds, ventilators, personal protective equipment, medicines, and certainly relief for the bullpen for our heroic healthcare workers. We win those two fronts together. Those lines have to cross at a reasonable level. If we keep it up, if we stay with it on this weekend, this Easter weekend, and every day in the near term, near to intermediate term, we will win this together.

Switching gears, we know this public health crisis has extended into our prisons, and Commissioner Hicks, and I want to give him a huge shout out, has been attacking it for weeks and will address his efforts in detail in a few minutes in his remarks. The pandemic has touched many of our corrections personnel, just as it has those who are incarcerated. A virus this virulent can spread rapidly in a densely populated prison setting, and the needs of public safety and public health have to be balanced.

To that point, I just got off the phone a few minutes before coming here with the widow of Nelson Perdomo. His wife Fanny and I spoke, they're from Old Bridge. Nelson was only 44 years old, a member of PBA 105. He leaves behind his wife, Fanny, their three kids who are 18, 13 and 12. Awful, a guy who's left us far too soon. Mahen, even though I'm speaking about him today, because I just connected with his blessed wife, maybe we can have a picture of him tomorrow, if we could, just to make sure everybody puts a name with a face.

I also spoke with my fellow Middletown resident Bill Sullivan, who was not only a friend of Nelson's but is the President of PBA 105. To Nelson, his memory, his wife Fanny, their three kids, to Bill and all their colleagues, our thoughts and prayers and hearts go out to you.

So in that respect, today I am signing an Executive Order to help preserve this balance between health on the one hand and public health and public safety on the other. Under this order, certain low-risk individuals whose current age or health status puts them at particular risk for COVID-19, who had been perhaps denied parole within the last year, or whose sentences are to expire within the next three months may be placed – and I say maybe – on temporary home confinement, or granted parole if already eligible through an expedited process. I want to stress that no one convicted of a serious crime, such as murder, sexual assault, among others, will be eligible for consideration. We are setting up a robust process through which each potentially eligible individual must be determined to be safe to place on home confinement, and each will be required to have an individualized release plan to ensure they will have access to all necessary services, medical services, and housing. No one who cannot meet these standards will be released. Individuals on home confinement will be subject to Department of Corrections supervision.

As I noted, we have dual or twin responsibilities here. Protecting those who work in our prisons and those who are incarcerated. Social distancing is extremely hard to accomplish in a prison setting, and allowing some of our most vulnerable individuals who do not pose a public safety threat to temporarily leave prison will protect both their health, and the health and safety of the men and women working in our correctional facilities. And by the way, we're not the first to do this. New Jersey will join several other states. Some of the big ones are California and Illinois, and the federal government by the way, which have taken similar steps. And again, I want to give a big shout out to Marcus and his team, who had been mightily trying to stay out ahead of this challenge again, when you've got concentrated communities, from day one. This is a big, important step to help to allow them to continue to stay out ahead. I also want to acknowledge the Director of the Department of Homeland Security Preparedness Jared Maples, Deputy Counsel Parimal Garg is in the house with us as well.

Quickly onto the subject of testing, a reminder that tomorrow April 11, Bergen Community College drive-through testing site will be open to the public, and the PNC Bank Art Center will be open to healthcare workers and first responders only. Both sites will open at 8:00 a.m. and will be able to conduct 500 tests apiece. Again, to receive a test you must be symptomatic, and both sites will be closed on Easter Sunday.

There are 18 other sites around the state that are publicly available, and you can find a map with all of them by going to covid19.nj.gov/testing, and there are dozens more privately operating testing sites that your primary care practitioner could direct you to for a test, if you meet the requirements for testing. When you add up all the sites, I believe, as we said yesterday, it's at least 57 different sites. To receive a test, you must be exhibiting signs of respiratory illness, and you could take our self-assessment as one of your first steps. Again, on the master website, simply go to covid19.nj.gov/testing. It's anonymous and, by the way, not only does it give you some sense of where you may be, but it gives us the information that we need to help identify potential coronavirus hotspots before they flare up. That knowledge is critical for ensuring our healthcare networks have the supplies they will need before they are needed.

Speaking of supplies, I want to give a huge thank you out to UNIQLO. You may know UNIQLO is an extraordinary retailer headquartered in Japan, by the way, to give another piece of evidence that we are scouring the globe for help here. UNIQLO yesterday delivered a donation of 100,000 much needed medical grade masks for our frontline public health and safety responders. This is the essence of what it means to be a good corporate citizen and we are incredibly appreciative. Thank you, UNIQLO. And by the way, if you have any PPE to donate, no matter how much, please let us know by going to covid19.nj.gov/PPEdonations.

While we're at it, I also want to give a big shout out to the Stevens Institute of Technology and my friend President Nariman Farvardin for opening their Jonas Hall Dormitory so the folks at Hoboken University Medical Center and the Hoboken Fire Department can have a place to rest and recharge. Thank you to everyone at Stevens for thinking about their Hoboken neighbors.

I said we would be brief today, including in the Q&A, so forgive me, because it is Good Friday. But because it is Good Friday, I want to be able to share one more story of some of the good being done around our state. On this most solemn of Fridays, here's something hopefully that will lift your hearts. Today I want to recognize the members of the Wyckoff Girl Scout Troop 24 in Bergen County. There's a couple of their members – there's a member, rather, on the left and there's a healthcare worker on the right. After reading stories of nurses describing the physical discomfort caused by the straps of their face masks, the troop took producing simple headbands that can be worn under the straps to reduce their discomfort and make life on the job just a little bit better. The troupe donated their headbands to the Valley Hospital in Ridgewood. And there's an example of a headband you could see on the right of that picture.

So this is how we are going to get through this. It is both the huge donations of 100,000 masks, and for that we're incredibly grateful, but it's also the little thoughts like headbands to make those masks less uncomfortable to the professionals who are wearing them day in and day out for hours upon hours. So UNIQLO we thank you, and to the members of Wyckoff Girl Scout Troop 24, we thank you. New Jersey thanks you.

And I ask each of you to keep tweeting out the stories of your heroes and by using the hashtag, #NJThanksYou. Everyone who is pitching in to help us through this deserves our thanks. So too, does everyone out there who's doing the right thing to help us flatten the curve, especially with a major holiday weekend upon us. This cannot be a weekend to think we can let our foot off the gas. We're not even close, folks. We have to keep with it today, tomorrow, Sunday and every day until this war is won. And win it we will. Again, you're starting to see some glimmers of hope. Look at the amount of people discharged yesterday. Look at that county map. Look at the beginnings of the flattening of that curve of positive tests.

Remember, as we've said before, with the heaviest of hearts, even though those metrics are beginning to look a little bit more positive, we will still lose many folks in the state, sadly, because the folks we're announcing, Judy and Ed today, who have lost their lives, may have been infected several weeks ago. So we're now seeing the sad end to some of the realities that hit us weeks before. But stay with it. We will win this, unequivocally, if each and every one of us does our part, and we will. From the little things like washing hands with soap and water, to bigger things, stay home. Please, period. Social distancing, no matter where you are, including at home, all the way up to the steps that we're taking today including, for instance, the Executive Order that I'm

signing today as it relates to our corrections facilities. All of these are pieces in a broader puzzle. As we each continue to drop our pieces of the puzzle in place, eventually, that will be a beautiful tapestry of our one New Jersey family, finally back on its feet, together again, stronger than ever before.

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. Good morning. I want to take a moment to thank Commissioner Hicks and all the support he's given the Department of Health in working to protect the safety not only of his employees, but of the total forensic population, and all of our sister agencies. This is really a whole of government approach and they are all vital to the effort. And I thank them not only for their support but for what they're doing every day.

I want to share some information on our veterans' homes. As you know, New Jersey has three veterans' homes and they continue to be impacted as well. Today, the total census in the veterans' homes in New Jersey is 845. The home in Menlo Park has 16 residents and five staff members who have been confirmed as positive COVID-19. And in Menlo Park, there have been four deaths of residents directly related to COVID 19 and right now, 12 of their residents from that facility are hospitalized.

The Paramus home has 29 residents and 17 staff who have tested positive. There have been 13 deaths among those residents that are related to COVID-19. Currently, eight of their residents are hospitalized.

The Vineland location has no confirmed cases among their residents or staff.

And once more, as a reminder, there's 845 veterans in these homes. The Department of Health has been working with the veterans' homes and through our volunteer portal, we've been able to support their staffing requirements and have sent 15 registered nurses and seven licensed practical nurses to support care in these homes. Additionally, 35 combat medics have been sent to Menlo Park and 40 have been sent to the Paramus location.

As the Governor mentioned, according to data reported from our hospitals, there's 7,570 hospitalizations, which include the COVID-19 positive individuals and persons under investigation; 1,679 are in critical care and 1,663 are currently on ventilators. Today, we are reporting 3,627 new cases for a total of 54,588 cases in the state. To date, we have tested 105,611 individuals; 46,676 have returned positive for a percent positivity rate of 44.2%. Sadly we're reporting 233 deaths for a total of 1,932 deaths in the state.

Of the total deaths, 58% are male, 42% are female. The age range is holding at about 1% under 30 years of age; 4% between the ages of 30 and 49; 17% between the ages of 50 and 64; and 33% or 641 individuals between the ages of 65 and 79; and 45% over 80 years of age, or 866; 64% are identified as White; 20% Black or African American; 6% Asian; and less than 1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. 48% at this point have reported documented underlying conditions, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, cancer being some of the highest reported underlying diseases.

Along with the Governor, I want to thank all of you who are staying home. I know it's especially tough during the religious holidays when you would normally be congregating for religious services and family gatherings. I understand that while this may be disappointing to many who look forward to spending time visiting with relatives and friends, once again, it is imperative to continue to stay home to help slow the spread of COVID-19. So stay home, stay safe and stay healthy. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, thank you and thank you for everything. And by the way, I want to thank the Department of Health's team for getting the data a lot more aggressively and earlier than normal, because they've been a lot on their plate, so thank you. Judy, did you mention, I apologize, because I was just going to say what I was looking at in a second. Did you mention as part of race, did you mention Hispanic today, by chance?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I thought I did but let me check. I didn't, it's not on there.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so if you ever look at a census report, you sort of have a listing as usual and you have to do sort of a sideways cross racial assessment as it relates to Latino. I just, I don't know how official this is, but I got my first sense of it was upper teens.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: 17.1%.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, that's what I had as well. And we're still, again, would you say this is still early stage in terms of the racial data? But that looks early stage to be about consistent, and I'm saying this advisedly, with the representation of the Hispanic population as a general matter, but that's something we want to stay close on. This is the first day we've had that insight. And the African American number, again, just to repeat what we said the entire week, is running at least 50% over, African American fatalities at least 50% over the representation of the African American community in our broad New Jersey community.

Just want to give, again, a huge shout out to our veterans, God bless them, including the ones in those three homes and the 400,000 to 500,000, I think, veterans in our great state. God bless each and every one of them.

And the reason I was looking down is I got a note from someone who said, you guys never talked about postal workers. And that's partly because postal workers are under a federal aegis, not state aegis, but it must be said that postal workers are out there with diminished ranks, as far as I can tell, and at least through anecdotal evidence, day in and day out delivering the mail. And so we have to take our hats off to the women and men in the Postal Service who are doing that in New Jersey and around the country, day in and day out. Judy and Ed, thank you for everything.

Top five counties, I just want to make sure, total cases continue to be Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Union and Passaic. But I have to say, sorry, Middlesex has just clipped in ahead of Passaic. Passaic and Middlesex are about similar numbers in terms of positive cases, and Middlesex we have probably said less frequently than we should, because it's always been right there, just behind Passaic all week in terms of number of positives and today, due to the overnights, it's gone just slightly ahead of it. Thank you, Judy.

The positives are running, as we said yesterday, at about where they've been, right? It's just north of 44%, which again is something that we had expected. We could have had Marcus Hicks here any day over the past three or four weeks, because he's been leading proactively, aggressively from the front with one of the most challenging communities in terms of cohabitation and proximity that we have to deal with anywhere in the state. We've talked about long-term care facilities a lot. We've talked about psychiatric hospitals, homes for the developmentally disabled, and let there be no doubt our corrections community is right up at near the top. Marcus, it's great to have you today. I would love to get your brief take on some of the steps you've already taken and any color you have on the Executive Order that we're signing today. And again, it's great to have you with us.

Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks: Thank you, Governor. Good morning, everyone. Before I begin, I just want to take an opportunity to recognize the brave men and women of the Department of Corrections, both custody and civilian staff who are working on the frontlines every single day, courageously, diligently and behind the scenes to make sure that we're all living out our mission, even through these unprecedented challenges. And Governor, I want to thank you for taking time out of your schedule to contact Fanny, Officer Perdomo's wife. I spoke to her as well and I also know that Colonel Callahan did, to show that solidarity. Certainly a loss to the Department of Corrections and we mourn the loss of our colleague and fellow employee.

As the Governor alluded to, the health, safety and welfare of our employees and their families and the inmates that are entrusted to us are our top priorities. We have been in constant communication with the Department of Health. Thank you, Commissioner Persichilli, for your leadership and your guidance to us, and your staff, moving forward. We have taken significant strides to combat this pandemic. It starts with cleaning and disinfecting efforts, sanitation across the board from our facilities and to all of our vehicle fleets. We have mandated that each individual that enters into our facilities undergo health screenings, and are required to don surgical masks. Protective masks, as we're talking about PPE, have been available to our staff since March 13. as of April 4, all staff have been mandated to wear surgical masks at all of our facilities and our central office headquarters.

We have taken a look at all of our quarantine isolated areas in the department, ensuring that we have capacity. staff working in those quarantine isolation areas are required to wear PPE, including surgical and N-95 masks, gowns, Tyvek jumpsuits, face shields, to name a few.

As far as the inmate population is concerned, any inmate that's exhibiting respiratory symptoms are also required to wear PPE as well. Unfortunately, to date we have 129 of our staff members that have been impacted by this virus, 20 inmates currently in our system have tested positive. We had one inmate fatality as a result of COVID-19. Per guidance from DOH and CDC, any individuals who have come in contact with the infected are required to quarantine and we have been following that guidance and continue to follow that guidance as we move forward.

We have about 400 inmates right now on medical quarantine, so they are not symptomatic but they are in quarantine status. As far as our staff is concerned, we have over 1,000 of our employees that are on quarantine status as well.

As the Governor mentioned, you can imagine that when you're running a correctional facility in a correctional setting, that there are unique challenges in trying to institute social distancing. However, even with our limitations, we have made significant modifications to reduce the foot traffic in and out of our facilities. That has been an essential element in our ability to curb the potential introduction of the disease.

Now, one of the first things that we did was we suspended our inmate visitation back in March, and we understand how important it is for our population to have those visits, so we instituted alternatives including free additional postage, so they could communicate with their loved ones. We increased the number of phone calls and increased our JPG emails to enable alternatives to visits. We shut down our volunteer, contractors and non-essential vendors from entering into our facilities. And in terms of our workforce, we have instituted work from home, flexible and rotational schedules in the Department of Corrections, again to significantly reduce or eliminate staff that are entering into the facilities, where practicable.

For the incarcerated population, activities such as recreation, religious gatherings, education have been modified. And when it comes to dining, because again, following the guidance from DOH, we have eliminated communal dining to the extent that we can. Another thing that we've done is that we take a look at our transports in and out of the facility, how we're transporting inmates, the number of inmates that we are transporting to accommodate social distancing.

Just a couple of other things I wanted to highlight was our intake of county jail inmates into our system. We've suspended that. We did that a few weeks ago. We've extended that suspension right now to limit the foot traffic. We've suspended all of our community inmate details and we've placed a 15-day hold on inmates that enter into our assignment facility to ensure that they are free of COVID-related symptoms prior to being transferred to their facilities.

We're also working with external partners such as the New Jersey State Parole Board and I want to thank Chairman Plumeri, who has been a fantastic partner with us, to work with parole so they can conduct their parole board hearings remotely. It's not just the population behind the wall that are under our jurisdiction. We have about 2,500 residents that are in the community, in our residential community release programs or halfway houses, that we also are working with every day to ensure that they are implementing some of the same measures that we're doing in our facilities. And that includes health screenings and temperature scans as well. We're also quarantining them, if they have to come back into the facility, to ensure that there are not any symptoms of COVID. On top of that, we have suspended our work release programs as well.

I can't stress enough the importance of our medical team, and not just of the medical staff at DOC, but also of our contractor vendor, Rutgers University, who has been a resourceful partner with us. From a medical perspective, we are doing all we can to mitigate the spread of this disease. One of the things that we have done is that we have eliminated the copays for medical exams. We've waived them during this time, so as not to create a barrier for individuals who may want to seek testing. We've done in-person assessments as needed. We transfer people as needed. Folks that have flulike symptoms are COVID-19 screened. They're evaluated by medical staff and directed to the hospital if they have symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath. And again, with the guidance of DOH and CDC, that has been very resourceful for us.

Within our department, we have, as I mentioned, resources such as quarantine areas, isolation areas, infirmary isolation beds, as well as negative pressure rooms in some of our facilities which we utilize to keep our population safe. And for those inmates that will be released into the community, we continue to offer discharge planning through our Office of Transitional services to ensure that those that are leaving our

custody and going into the communities are placed on the best foot as possible. They're given a health assessment. We're prioritizing the housing needs of homeless individuals, including working with them to ensure that they have access to general assistance and SNAP benefits before they leave our custody.

The Governor mentioned the Executive Order. We believe that this is just another tool for us to help us mitigate this issue. And so under Executive Order 124, DOC is exerting its authority to grant temporary emergency medical home confinement to our most vulnerable incarcerated individuals who have not committed a serious offense. And again, that's very important. This is not for individuals that have committed a serious offense.

It is our belief that the home confinement will improve the prospects for an individual's health by providing this individual a plan, to account for their access to necessary services, and that includes medical as well as housing. The populations that we will be considering are those age 60 and over, those with high-risk medical conditions based on CDC and DOH guidance, and those presenting high risk for severe illness or death, and those maxing out in three months, and those recently considered for parole. Each case will be assessed by an Emergency Medical Home Confinement Board that will make individualized determinations of whether home confinement would better serve an eligible inmate. And at this moment, we don't have an exact count of how many individuals this will impact, as there may be duplication between the categories, but we will be working diligently to generate those lists to get this process started.

So moving forward, we will continue to evaluate our processes and our practices to ensure that we are attacking this issue as best as possible. We will continue to identify modifications that can be made in procedure with one thing in mind: to protect the safety of our staff and inmates and everyone, including the public in mind. And with that, I will turn it back over to the Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Marcus, thank you. Even in normal times, I appreciate and we all appreciate your leadership, but thank you for the steps you've taken over the past number of weeks. Thank you for leading the process that will come from the Executive Order that I signed today, which will, by the way, come to a head, to maybe anticipate a question. The process will begin within the next few days and it's got a seven-day window to it. We'll have results to report early the week after next. Marcus, thank you. Pat Callahan, always great to have you with us. I know it's early in the day for a whole lot of compliance color, but anything you've got on that or PPE or other matters. Thank you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Good morning, Governor. Thank you. And just also on behalf of the State Police family, Commissioner, that we offer our condolences and mourn and grieve alongside you in the loss of Officer Nelson Perdomo.

With regards to the overnight, in Pemberton, a subject was stopped, a motor vehicle stop, under the suspicion of selling stolen goods. He was found to be in possession of stolen goods and was turned over to Springfield Police Department where that burglary allegedly took place. In Roselle, Police were called to a supermarket because the subject was wearing a mask, yelling at customers, claiming to have coronavirus. By the time the police showed up he had left, but they had given a description of his vehicle and the subject was subsequently stopped in a U-Haul truck, found to be in possession of narcotics and also determined that the truck that he was in was stolen out of Newark.

Newark Police Department issued 51 Executive Order violations and didn't have to close any businesses. In Union, an anonymous call resulted in police responding and finding an open billiards hall and charging three subjects within that location. In Trenton, a subject was cited for the Executive Order violation for failure to disperse. And in Union, three subjects were arrested in violation of the Executive Order and also for burglarizing five vehicles.

Since Executive Order 107 has been in effect, across the state there's been 124 incidents that have risen to the level of an indictable crime. Beyond compliance, Governor, just as a quick note, yesterday, we did put out a wind advisory, especially because of all of the tenting that happens out at the sites, and as fate would have it, this morning the Bergen site, that's the FEMA-supported one, is temporarily just on hold. There's 40 cars or so in the queue as we speak and they're going to try and moderate that situation, to make sure those tents are secured and that the people are safe. Beyond that Governor, as my brother's a US postal worker up in Morristown, he's going to think that I planted that seed in your head, but I didn't. Thank you for recognizing our men and women of the US Postal Service.

Governor Phil Murphy: It may have been your brother who sent me that text that came in untagged. You know, we've escaped. I'm going to say this and we're going to find out we're going to get a three-foot blizzard tomorrow, but we've escaped the wrath, largely, of Mother Nature over the time that we've been dealing with this. Please God it stays that way, although my family reminded me yesterday during our press conference yesterday, a weather advisory came on. We put it out on social media, and it was some rain, but was mostly wind yesterday and wind today, so we'll keep you posted on that.

Martel, have you got the mic today? Martel has been with us literally every single day. Before Brian goes, Brian, you're up and I'm going to sweep from stage right to stage left, and we're going to do this, let's keep it rolling. Just to say, unless Mahen corrects me, tomorrow we'll be here at one o'clock. We will not be with you on Sunday, we'll let you know by paper and virtual release of any data that we've gotten. The only exception to that would be if we think there's something really material, I will personally volunteer to figure out a way to get with you. Otherwise, we'll see you on Monday. Monday is currently scheduled for 1:00 p.m. because we don't have insight into the White House VTC schedule at this point, but if that does come to pass, we may shift our time on Monday, so please bear with us. But again, tomorrow, 1:00 p.m. Thanks, Martel. You've been here every single day. Brian, you're up.

Q&A Session

Brian Donohue, News 12 New Jersey: Thank you, Governor and happy holidays to everybody. For the Commissioner, please, the Health Department, several questions. One dealing with the plan to transfer either COVID patients or non-COVID patients. I have a message from one nursing home in Wayne that says "We were asked to admit 62 COVID positive from Paramus. We were asked to do another 50 from Somerset. I turned them all down because we do not have the staff available to handle this." So how realistic, how practical, in the light of that sort of thing, is that plan?

On some of these nursing homes, staying on that topic if I may, Commissioner, many of them, their Medicare ratings are low or extremely low. Whether it's health inspections, the overall rating, the staffing. When I went online to the medicare.gov website, below average, much below average, some of them are as good as average in some ratings. Basically, why are they allowed to operate with these low, very low scores, from the US government?

And then there's the issue of whether people who have died and have not been tested, how can you say? How can you give any closure to people who want to know? Well, you know, it was a virus-infested home. The guy in the room next door, or the guy in the bed next to me, was tested earlier and was positive. And yet you're saying while we may have, for example, Military Affairs saying 37 people could have died based on statistical model, you're only saying, I think, 13 were tested positive. What about those who are not tested? And you know, the obvious question is, since you can't test the dead, you can't waste the test kits on the dead, are you trying to develop some sort of historical model, as Military Affairs did, for all of these homes? As to say, well, any nursing home might have three people die every month, they had 12. We only know of three positives. We have to assume that six of those were also killed?

Governor Phil Murphy: Is that it? Okay. May I just say one thing, Judy? You're going to get the bulk of this, for obvious reasons. We've said this from day one that long-term care facilities have been a particular area of focus and it continues to be. Judy will go through some of the answers, Brian, but also any other, she referred to some of the actions yesterday and today that are being taken and have been taken over the past couple of months. But we're not alone on this front. I just want to say this, that as we compare notes with other states, this is a particular -- when we do the nation post-mortem and we do the New Jersey post-mortem, long-term care facilities are going to be at or near the top of the list. We're all sort of going through this really challenging reality together. Judy, with that, please.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'm going to start at the beginning about the realistic. I mean, it's a great question. Is it a realistic plan? And what we're finding is a realistic plan on Monday becomes not very easy to carry out on Friday when the number of organizations, the number of facilities with at least one COVID positive case, is just increasing exponentially. So we're at the point now where we are going to every 375 of the homes to determine if they can cohort appropriately, so their residents would stay in place, cohort

appropriately and also cohort the employees. In other words, manage the movement of employees from the positive wings or floors to the non-positive, to try to make sure everyone gets the care they deserve and that we're not transmitting the disease. It's becoming a daunting task but we are continuing it.

We do have a number of contracted nursing homes that said they would take all COVID 19. What we're going to pay attention to first is those that can cohort. If we have nursing homes that cannot cohort, there's two things we need to do. Make sure they have the PPE to take care of all their patients in the same way, which means considering that everyone is a potential COVID-19, and then we have to make sure they have the staff.

We're looking at the Volunteer Corps, as we supported the veteran homes, to see if we can support those that are extremely stressed. They're primarily in the north and there's a lot of them. So I don't want to sugarcoat what's going on with the nursing homes, but I do want to tell you that we are on it full time. But it's going to be very difficult.

Governor Phil Murphy: How about the Medicare ratings?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The Medicare ratings, you know, they look at a variety of indicators. We do, with Medicare, we do inspect those organizations. We go out within 24 hours for any complaint that is considered what they call immediate jeopardy. For those, we are getting complaints right now on specific nursing homes that are considered higher risk, and we are getting PPE for our staff to actually go on site to those nursing homes to determine what is going on. But I do have to say, it is not one. There's a lot that we have concerns about. So covering them all, some of it will have to be remotely, because we just don't have the staff. Our staff, which are licensed, registered nurses, are being deployed into hospitals and testing sites as well. This is a daunting task. But we are on it. The frail and vulnerable of our nursing homes, we knew from the beginning, were going to be at risk and the statistics are proving that they are. Like the Governor said, it's not just a statewide issue, it's a national issue. We just have to take care of them as best we can.

Governor Phil Murphy: The question on testing?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The historical model, I'm going to let Ed talk a little bit about that, because it's certainly a statistic that we're keeping in mind for our after-action report. How can we be more predictive about what's going to occur? But maybe Ed could share his thoughts on that.

DOH Medical Director, Communicable Disease Service Dr. Ed Lifshitz: When we look at outbreaks from a response perspective, it's important to know what's causing the outbreak in the first place. And that's why we always want to go ahead and do testing to figure out what's going on. Once you know what's causing that outbreak, and this is true with other outbreaks such as flu and other things we see in other years, we don't require that everybody who has symptoms that are suggestive of that go ahead and be tested, because as you mentioned, it can waste resources and we really know what's going on in that facility.

We also don't tell facilities that they can't test. The Department of Health isn't telling any facility, don't test people who you think might have COVID. What we're saying is, okay, we have enough information to know that you're having a COVID outbreak in your facility. This is how you should be reacting. You should be assuming that these people are infected as well. And if you have the capability and the supplies and all that sort of stuff to go ahead and test, you certainly can. We do count those people separately in what's known as a probable category. We do count the confirmed separate from the probables, but we do keep track of that.

Overall, we're well aware that while we certainly try to keep track, because we think it's very important, we know that we're missing people. We know that we can't count every person who dies in the state from COVID, for a variety of reasons. We certainly do our best. And on the other side, there are a small number of people that we count as COVID deaths who probably didn't die of COVID, who had COVID, but died from something else. People die of other things when they're ill with this as well. The numbers are never going to be perfect. We think we're doing a pretty good job and are pretty close, but we're never going to say that it's going to be an absolute accounting.

Governor Phil Murphy: We're going to go to Dustin in the back. We have to keep moving folks, because we promised, it's Good Friday. I just want to say this. We talk about data, we talk about homes, positive tests, strategies, policies, I want to make sure everybody out there knows that we know that each and every one of

these people are human beings. They have family, they have friends, they have coworkers, neighbors, and we're doing everything we can and there's no price too high. In the world of limited resources and a once-a-century onslaught, everything we can to save every life we can. Dustin, please.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: On demographics, what percentage of people do we know race and underlying conditions for? Why was underlying health conditions removed from the portal? Can you go through each underlying condition and give the percentage of people and how many cases we have information for?

On modeling, what does the most recent modeling show about the peak, particularly in North Jersey and how ready or not are the hospitals? And when discharges are listed, are they going to a home? Are they going to a long-term care facility? Have any hotels or dorms been taken over for recovering patients?

And then on nursing homes, have there been any relocations or any long-term care facilities where there been so many tests that they need to be closed? Is there a state dashboard about beds and availability?

Governor Phil Murphy: I missed some of that. I apologize. But I know on underlying conditions. Judy, you had 990.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I think Ed has the breakdown of the underlying conditions.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, if I'm right, we've got 990 of the total 1,932? Just over half?

DOH Medical Director, Communicable Disease Service Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Yeah, 923, actually, which have known underlying conditions, or yes, for that. As far as the breakdown goes, a few general things. We get more and more information, obviously, on people who died than people who don't die. That information comes in somewhat slowly, so we don't get it all at one time. We have a general breakdown as far as what things happen, and certainly the plurality of people, most of the people that we're seeing out there, their underlying conditions are related to cardiovascular disease. Part of the reasons for that is because hypertension counts as a cardiovascular disease. So hypertension, obviously is very common in the country, but we don't have an exact breakdown of how many people have, let's say hypertension versus a previous heart attack or something like that. That level of data we don't yet have.

Governor Phil Murphy: You said it was taken down from the portal? I'm not sure.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We have a general breakdown on a percentage basis of the 990, so it's 29% cardiovascular disease, 15% other chronic diseases, 17% diabetes mellitus, and we all know how prevalent diabetes is, 10% other chronic lung disease, 7% chronic renal, 7% neurologic, 6% cancer, and then there's an other category.

Governor Phil Murphy: You would have gone over this earlier, so just to say that right? What else? I missed, I apologize, a couple of your questions there.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: On modeling, what does it show about the peak, particularly in North Jersey? And how prepared or not are the hospitals? As far as discharges, are they going home or to long-term care facilities? Have you taken over any hospitals, hotels or dorms for recovering patients? And then on nursing homes, have there been any relocations, any long-term care facilities where there's been so many deaths that it needs to be closed? And is there a state dashboard about beds and availability for those facilities?

Governor Phil Murphy: I would just say this going forward, we have to make the questions shorter folks, because we're going to run out of time. Judy, do you want to hit any of those in terms of peak, in particular in the north?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Sure, in terms of the discharges from the northern hospitals, that's a step-wise process. But at this point, we do expect 20 to 25 of their discharges to be in the field medical station by this afternoon, and that's exactly what we were hoping to do, was take those people that were low acuity, perhaps ready to be discharged in three or four days, and have them in the field medical.

Concurrent with that, we are bringing up some hotels for those individuals that perhaps have tested positive, need to quarantine, do not have a home, a situation that allows them to isolate or quarantine to the number of days they would go to a hotel. We're working up in North Jersey right now to bring up some of those hotels.

I don't know if we have anybody in the dorms yet, but we do have a number of dorms that are available throughout the state. That's primarily for healthcare workers who, for whatever reasons, maybe they're on quarantine and cannot go home. To protect their family they can stay at a dorm. They can also stay at one of the hotels. So there's a whole series of spaces available not only for patients, but also for our healthcare workers. Slowly, they're coming into those spaces.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, how about peak?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: At this point, with the predictive modeling that we have, and in conversations with our hospitals, we believe they will be able to handle the peak. In terms of their available bed spaces, particularly critical care, they have all increased their available spaces. We have to make sure that they have the available staff, the workforce, and then the PPE and the equipment. But workforce is tight right now. We monitor every day how many hospitals have to go on divert. And primarily they're going on divert because of workforce at this point.

Governor Phil Murphy: May I just say add one thing to everybody listening? We think we can withstand the amount of beds, but if we take our foot off the gas, you can throw that statement out the window. So we have got to stay home until further notice. We cannot think that we're in the end zone here. We're not close to the end zone. Judy makes another point. It's beds, it's vents, it's PPE, it's healthcare workers, it's medicines that allow ventilation, etc., to take place. Real quick, you had a question on nursing homes?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Have there been any relocations or facilities where they've been so many deaths that they need to be closed? Do you have a state dashboard on nursing home information?

Governor Phil Murphy: St. Joe's right?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, St. Joe's, one total relocation and actually that facility has been totally cleaned and decontaminated and we're going to work with the Sisters after the holiday to try to bring that back up.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Elise.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Governor, you have constitutional borrowing power without voter approval during times of war or acts of God. Is that a possibility for this budget process?

Also, we ask this every day, how many New Jerseyans are in nursing homes? How many patients are positive and how many have died? And can you please include this on the portal every day?

Finally, you've identified the veterans' homes and the number of cases and deaths for both employees and residents. Yesterday the Health Commissioner referred to three nursing homes that are under additional state scrutiny. Like the veterans' homes, they no doubt received taxpayer money in the form of Medicare and Medicaid. With all due respect to the veterans' homes, New Jersey's nursing home population and staff counts are far larger, they touch many more lives. Why the transparency distinction between the nursing homes and the veterans' homes? Can you please identify those private nursing homes that are under scrutiny? And if not, explain why?

Governor Phil Murphy: I would just say this, two things. On the constitutional authority to borrow, Elise, everything's on the table. And you're absolutely correct in your assessment that that is our assessment as well. That is a power that we have and that's something that we are looking closely at. Nothing more to report than that.

Secondly, I think, not only God bless our veterans, God bless everybody who's in one of these facilities. I don't think we're distinguishing or prioritizing one category of persons over another. I think there was a significant amount of focus, rightfully, at the Paramus home that came up over the past couple of days. But I don't want anyone out there to think that we are in some sort of rank order of prioritization. We can be both the

following: salute our veterans, thank them for their service to our nation, and do the very nbest we can to take care of them. And we will do that. And on the other hand, to our populations that are in nursing facilities, long-term care facilities, generally, we have the same obligation and we will do everything we can to meet that, Judy, real quick. Anything you want to add to that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We know we have over 100,000 individuals not only in nursing homes, but assisted living, dementia homes, developmental, all our group homes. I think in long-term care it's about 60,000 and you can compare that with the number of cases they're currently stating that are positive for COVID which I think is about 4,000, I have it right here. 4,179 individuals out of this over 60,000 are COVID positive.

We look at every single one of them. We know exactly how many, what their census is, how many staff tested positive, how many residents test positive, how many are under investigation, how many are showing respiratory symptoms other than COVID? How many deaths directly related to COVID-19? How many deaths overall? And we look at that every single day.

I'm sorry, I didn't get that.

Governor Phil Murphy: How many deaths and explain why you're not...?

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Why you're not identifying the three nursing homes that are under state scrutiny that you mentioned yesterday.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, we're going to cover that. Can you hit Elise's first? I'm not sure the three, that I recall, Elise. Did we reference them yesterday?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The three that what?

Governor Phil Murphy: The three nursing homes that were under particular scrutiny.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't know which ones we mentioned except those that have already been in the press. I may have been responding directly to Elizabeth, that nursing home that was in the press.

Governor Phil Murphy: St. Joe's, Paramus, veterans.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The Paramus was noted yesterday. I don't have my remarks from yesterday. But if the ones that I usually respond to are the ones that I think will have follow-up questions because they've already been identified in the press.

Governor Phil Murphy: We can come back to you and give you more color on this, Elise. I think the reason why we may not have numbers on the portal is we want to make sure the numbers are right. You all were asking for similar numbers on hospitalizations for a number of days before we felt comfortable, fair to say, putting those numbers up. We want to make sure when we do put them up, we get it right. Mahen, you can follow up on that. You did say folks who died overnight who were in long-term care facilities?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I did say that.

Governor Phil Murphy: We'll come back to you when we get it. Sir.

Reporter: Out of the total number of patients on ventilators in New Jersey, how many of them are COVID-19 related? And how many do you have left available in the state that are unused for either COVID-19 or any other illness?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I don't have that breakdown, I just have the number of COVID-19 and how many are on ventilators.

Governor Phil Murphy: And you're asking separately how many are left in our state's inventory? We don't have that. We'll come back to you. I don't know a number for either. We have some amount left. But we're also assuming the need is going to go up and we will not, at the moment, have enough. I don't have a number for you though. We'll come back to if we do have a number. Thank you. Real quick, if we could. Again, we're still, Elise, finding the numbers for the fatalities overnight.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I didn't want to interrupt.

Governor Phil Murphy: No, no, no, God forbid.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Of the 233 deaths, 71 were associated with long-term care facility clusters or outbreaks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Where'd you go, Martel. Here we go, right here. Please. Hold on one sec, sir.

Reporter: Governor, with the peak expected as soon as Sunday, how is the state preparing emergency staff and vehicles for a possible surge of patients over the weekend?

Commissioner, could you explain again the trend you're hoping to see in the growth rate and the doubling rate and the difference between those two figures?

Governor, warehouses have been deemed essential work, however, is there any oversight of warehouse conditions and would you consider changing the requirements for what is considered an essential product or an essential warehouse?

Finally, why haven't the hours of those working in the unemployment office been extended? Viewers are saying they're closed to the website, the dial-in center is closed even though there was a backlog, so this week was a short week to process claims.

Governor Phil Murphy: Vehicles. Pat, do you have any comment on that?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I didn't hear the question on vehicles.

Governor Phil Murphy: The first one on vehicles again is what are we doing to prepare for the peak?

Reporter: The question on vehicles is, we're expecting the peak as early as Sunday. Is there any statewide process for preparing staff and vehicles for – is there a surge of patients we're expecting this weekend? Is there anything being done to prepare for that?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: We do have, if you're talking about ambulances, we have 50 basic life support ambulances as well as 25 advanced life support ambulances that are staging up at Meadowlands MetLife Stadium under the leadership of the New Jersey Task Force.

Governor Phil Murphy: And by the way, even though I completely, I'm not even going to question the date as to when we peak. Please God, don't wake up Monday morning and behave differently. We're going to let you know when you can behave differently and we're doing this for your protection and your safety.

Warehouses oversight, or changing the definition of essential. We put the directive out yesterday or the day before and we expect people to follow it. It's an Executive Order. What amount of resources we have to spot check that? To be determined. If you think that your employer, and this is a good question, a good reason for me to remind folks, if they've got a complaint about an employer who's not practicing, enforcing social distancing or work from home rules, go on [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.nj.gov/covid19). Find that page and let us know. That's been a very effective, as it was with, you may have asked the NJ Transit bus question. That's been very effective in that respect as well.

Hours of the unemployment office, it's funny, I get inputs from two sides. One is when are you going to lay people off in government The answer is we need government more than ever before. And then why aren't they working longer hours? We're doing our best, just to say that these people have lives as well. They may have families. They overwhelmingly do, who are home from school and home schooling, remote learning. They may have challenges in their own family in terms of illness. We're doing our best to find our way through this.

I was on Ask the Governor last night, the overwhelming amount of questions from folks were related to unemployment insurance and it getting through. By the way, I've complete sympathy with that. That's never a question here. We're breaking any prior record by 10X in our state, in our country, frankly. We've now broken through not just the Great Recession, but the Great Depression in terms of unemployment ranks, and we're not alone in having to catch up and do our best.

Again, to repeat, no one will lose one penny as a result. No one will lose any of the Federal benefit that's been added on through the CARES Act. Judy, trending rate versus doubling rate, and how do you look at those?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: We look at the doubling time, which is the number of days for hospitalizations to double at a current rate. That tells us a lot about the patients, the severity of the patient, the condition of the patients coming into the hospital. Our doubling time for all COVID hospitalizations, as of 10:30 Last night was 18.6. The day before it was 28.8. One marker does not make a trend, but we want the doubling time certainly to increase rather than decrease. On the infection rates, on the other hand, we want infection rates to decrease rather than increase, so they're opposite so it gets confusing. But for the hospitals, we look at the doubling time of hospitalizations. The longer that is, the better it is.

Governor Phil Murphy: And remember, while the trend in positive testing, Judy and Ed, it's looking like it's flattening, it's still going up. Infections are still increasing in the state and folks have to recognize, we have to get to the top of that mountain and then aggressively bring it down the other side. Sir.

Sam Sutton, Politico: Yes. Thanks, Governor, Sam Sutton, Politico. The Fed announced yesterday --

Governor Phil Murphy: Sam, even with your thing on, I can recognize you.

Sam Sutton, Politico: Oh, really? I appreciate that. It was announced yesterday that for the first time they would start purchasing state municipal debt, targeting short-term debt specifically. Is this something that you're exploring?

Last week you signed Executive Order 113 to confiscate PPE ventilators and other medical supplies. Has that been utilized? And if so, where?

And then two quick questions on state collaboration. Have you spoken specifically with Governor Cuomo about group purchasing of PPE and ventilators through the NGA? Are you participating in that Consortium? Has Cuomo pledged to make the antibody test being developed by New York's health department available to New Jersey?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm gonna be very brief in answers here, and I think we all owe it to the folks who are going to be out there observing Good Friday here. I think I've already answered the Fed question, Sam, in the sense that all things are on the table. That's an unusual and historic move by them and that's something we're looking very closely at. I'll let that Pat Callahan answer confiscation in a minute. I speak to Governor Cuomo all the time, conceptually we've spoken about consortia. I haven't had a specific discussion about it, but we would absolutely be interested in participating in that. We have not had a specific discussion about the antibody work that New York State is doing, but we have had directional discussions about needing to coordinate as we get back on our feet, just as we have shutting down. Antibody is part of that in the sense that we need to make sure we have the right healthcare infrastructure at our disposal, not just in New Jersey, certainly, but in our region and that we do that together. Pat, confiscation if you could. And then Brent will be up next.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: We have not, but the process is entirely in place. We worked with the Division of Law in the Attorney General's Office. We have identified those ventilators and equipment, but have not yet implemented that plan.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you. Brent.

Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger: A few quick things. One, drive-by birthdays and parades that are being put on across the state, should they stop? I know some local police have called for them to stop.

Regarding inmates, how can you assure inmates and their family that the agency is doing everything it can to protect them, especially after a death? How is the DOC determining who gets tested and what would the agency suspect the number of tests would be if more were readily available? And the State Supreme Court suggested the DOC meet with the Public Defender's Office Monday to discuss possibly releasing some inmates. Do you plan to do that?

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, so on the drive-by birthdays and parades, I think we've got to be very careful. At one level it's really emotional when you see funerals, the firefighter who passed in Passaic, you know, pretty darn emotional. As are the ones where you may have seen, I think it was on CNN the other day, that I was on and they showed a nurse in Montclair returning home and the neighbors just literally en masse, separating to their credit, social distancing, but applauding. I just think they are incredibly emotional, and it

allows folks to express their appreciation or acknowledgement in the case of someone who's passed. I don't think there's a one fast, quick answer on that but I think we've got to be very careful because we want people to stay home. So even if you're in a car by yourself, you are going out and again, I think we have to do this in moderation.

I'll let Marcus answer the corrections, but on your last question, at least, I just signed an Executive Order to put a process in place for folks to be released. It's not a release. It's much more equivalent in my parlance to a furlough. I think we're calling it, Marcus, what are we calling it?

Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks: It's an Emergency Medical Home Confinement.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah. So please take it away on all of this.

Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks: So in terms of information and how we are getting the message out, particularly to inmates' families, there are a couple things that we have available. Number one, our website nj.doc.gov. On the website you can find frequently asked questions. These are the questions that we've been asked many times regarding the actions that we've taken place to mitigate COVID-19. That's on our website, open to the public.

Of course, as far as our employees are concerned, we send out daily updates to every employee giving them the information as to the number of positives throughout our system. As far as testing is concerned, as I said previously, that everything that we do is based upon direction of medical, DOH and CDC guidance. When it comes to testing, we are screening folks that have symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, and depending on our medical evaluation, they are being sent to the hospital for testing. And so, you know, we believe that right now, we are following prudent medical guidance, and we will continue to do so as we manage this crisis.

Governor Phil Murphy: crisis. Thank you, Marcus. Ma'am. Good afternoon, or good morning.

Colleen O'Dea, NJ Spotlight: Good morning, Governor. This is Colleen O'Dea from New Jersey Spotlight.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi, Colleen.

Colleen O'Dea, NJ Spotlight: I ask for a little bit of leeway with the Commissioner because it's been very difficult to get information out of the Department of Corrections to date, so I hope you'll let me ask a couple questions there. I have two generic ones, two shorter ones first.

One is, do you plan to continue to release data based on Hispanic origin and break that out of the White and the Black?

Governor Phil Murphy: The answer is we would hope to. But again, we're only going to release data that we're confident in and today was the first day. I think we've addressed that and I hope we'll be able to continue.

Colleen O'Dea, NJ Spotlight: The second one is, some nurses apparently now have resigned because of very difficult conditions. They were told that they're not allowed to resign during an emergency. Is that correct?

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yeah, I don't I don't have any information on that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Parimal, as a legal matter.

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: I am not aware of any restrictions preventing resignation at this time.

Governor Phil Murphy: If you have specific instances, not for now, but maybe follow up with Mahen and we can take a look at the specifics. Thank you.

Colleen O'Dea, NJ Spotlight: Sure. So in terms of corrections, we've been hearing for weeks from folks that are both inside, staff as well as folks in the halfway houses, these are just some of the things that there are multiple people who are inmates who are coughing, who have fevers, who are not being tested. They're told that they don't need a test. We're told at the halfway houses that people are not even, I guess there are daily

health logs, that they're no longer even being asked to fill these out, and they're no longer even being given a temperature test. There are again, people coughing. There are rooms where 16 people are living in the same room. There's no way for them to be social distancing. So, again, why are more people not being tested? And just kind of in general, why has this taken so long? People have been warning that this was going to happen. Just a week ago, I think you had maybe 30 positive cases among staff, no inmates. Now you've more than tripled that.

Governor Phil Murphy: Colleen, we've got to bring this to a head. Is that basically what your gist is? May I just say this, before Marcus answers, how many states in America have done what we're about to do?

Deputy Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: Seven states plus the federal government.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay, seven plus the feds. So I would say it may have been weeks. We've been hit with a tsunami and I think Marcus and his team have done, actually, relative to other states in America, relative to any absolute scale, an extraordinary job. That doesn't mean that we all bat 1,000 every day, that doesn't mean that we can't do better and it doesn't mean that we don't care. Because as I said, not only do we need to care as one human to another, regardless of their circumstance, but a more cold-blooded answer is, we don't break the back of this virus unless we bring all of us along, not just most of us. Marcus, real quick if you could.

Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks: So, first of all, Colleen, if you've been having issues getting the information, I mean, that's something that you can kick up because we have been very transparent throughout this entire process. But to address specifically the RCRPs, it is my understanding that those temperature checks are still happening. Health logs are still implemented. We have compliance checks by our staff. We had one today at 7:00 p.m. and everything was operating as the way it's supposed to be. We'll continue to monitor that. If you're definitely hearing things, please let us know. But in terms of testing, again, as I just mentioned, the testing protocol that we have implemented, particularly with the RCRPs, if anyone is feeling symptoms, because those in the community are still under our jurisdiction, there is a process in place. They contact our regional facilities and they are triaged. If they have to go out to the hospital 911, they go out 911. If they need to come into the facility for additional screening, then we have that as well.

I don't believe that really anyone can make the point that they don't have access to healthcare if they have symptoms, or if they want to move forward with testing if they are symptomatic.

Governor Phil Murphy: Colleen, we've got move to Charlie here and we're going to wrap up. If you know of specific situations and specific persons, places, etc., get them to us, okay? Because we strive to bat 1,000 and it's frankly hard to do that. We're doing the best we can. But thank you for asking. Charlie, you're going to clean up for us.

Charlie Kratovil, New Brunswick Today: Good morning, Governor. Following up on what I asked Tuesday, the four state-run psychiatric hospitals, which ones have cases? Have there been any deaths? Sad to hear about the death of the corrections employee and the inmate? Can you give us the name, age and the facility where the person was? Is it known how he or she got infected? And I also wanted to hear a little bit more about the relationship with Rutgers. You mentioned some sort of arrangement with Rutgers University, I'd like to learn more.

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me just say this. Judy, can you take the psychiatric hospitals? And the facilities, I'm not sure, I'll leave that to Marcus. I'm not sure we either want to say that or know that. Just bear with us. The name of the corrections officer I already referred to. For privacy, I don't know the answer to the inmate.

Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks: I wouldn't feel comfortable disclosing the actual inmate's name so I won't do that. It was at New Jersey State Prison.

Governor Phil Murphy: The age of the corrections officer was, as I understand it, was 44.

Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus Hicks: Yes. Rutgers is our contracted medical provider. They're responsible for all of our physical care. We work closely with them and they are advising us, along with DOH on how we are moving forward and treating patients, and how we are responding to our inmates during the pandemic.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to have Judy address psychiatric hospitals and we'll close. But again, on individual cases, we have to balance, as you can imagine, privacy concerns with making sure folks out there, all of us have the information they need to live their lives in the safest way possible. Judy, on psychiatric?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I have the statistics but not with me. I'll send them to Mahen, and he'll send them on to you. Does that work? I'll get them to you this afternoon. I just don't have them.

Governor Phil Murphy: I got a new mask here with Jersey colors. That's the good news. It's a little snug so bear with me as I'm going to probably put this on as I walk out. I want to thank everyone again for being with us, Judy Persichilli our Commissioner, Ed Lifshitz, Doctor, thank you for being here and everything you do. Pat Callahan, thank you for your leadership, Jared Maples again, thank you. And Marcus, it was really good to have you. We've got a few loose ends, which we need to come back to you on which we will do, but we find it imperative to shut down before noon. It's about five of noon right now. Again, Mahen will correct me if I'm wrong. We'll see you at one o'clock tomorrow. We won't see you on Sunday. And for the time being, we'll see you at one o'clock on Monday. That'll be subject to the White House.

Again, folks, as you as you celebrate and observe these holidays, again, today is the most solemn day in the Christian calendar for most. For those who are celebrating this weekend, the happier reality of Easter and Resurrection. For those who are celebrating Passover, and for those just living your lives, please stay home. Please keep your distance from others. Please have those memories of what it was in the past and know we will, when we win this thing, we'll have the ability to do that again in the future for many, many years and decades to come. But please stay home, keep your distance. You can see the early sense of the data that we're beginning, one foot in front of the other, this is beginning to pay off. We're not in the end zone yet. Someday we'll get there, assuming all 9 million of us keep doing what we need to do. And we will unequivocally get there and we will be able to come together again as one New Jersey family, stronger than ever before. Thank you all.

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