

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: June 24th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everyone. Joining me today is the woman to my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. In the audience – Ed, forgive me for this – the Department of Health’s Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, Dr. Ed Lifshitz, good to have you with us. To my far left, another name that is familiar to all, Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan. Pat, as always. And we are today particularly honored to have first the gentleman to my left, Dr. Perry Halkitis, the Dean and Professor of Biostatistics and Urban Global Public Health at the School of Public Health at Rutgers University. Perry, great to have you. As well as to my far right, Deandrah Cameron, one of the members of the New Jersey Community Contact Tracing Corps. Great to have you, Deandrah, with us as well.

I've asked both Perry and Deandrah to join us to give an overview of Rutgers School of Public Health efforts as our partner in building our contact tracing corps. Because of this work, New Jersey is creating a model for contact tracing that is unique among our peers. They are creating a thoughtful approach that goes far beyond just dropping contact tracers into a community and hoping for the best, but which is bringing together government entities, nonprofit partners, and the academic sector to better inform the entire process. The 18 hours of training our contact tracers receive before being deployed to county and local health departments as directed by the Department of Health, and obviously under Judy's leadership, as it will be outlined in a few moments, goes deeper than just a rote process. Our contact tracers are being immersed in the culture of the communities in which they will be working, and their curriculum specifically teaches them the vulnerabilities to COVID-19 of our diverse populations. In other words, our contact tracers aren't just being taught to find people, they are being trained to see human faces.

When we first put out the call, as we mentioned, more than 50,000 people registered their interest in becoming a contact tracer with us through the covid19.nj.gov information hub. And so far, Rutgers School of Public Health has moved the ball forward for us, admirably. As of yesterday, more than 2,200 students and public health alumnus have applied through Rutgers School of Public Health to be a part of the first wave of contact tracers. More than 230 are currently being on boarded, adding to the ranks of the 900 who have been working through this emergency. Keep in mind too that the initial application process only opened on June 11th, and more application windows are preparing to open.

Our newest contact tracers come from every one of our 21 counties and speak nearly two dozen languages. They mirror our state in our great diversity, and Deandrah exemplifies that. Deandrah is working with the Newark Health Department. She is an immigrant, having come to New Jersey from Jamaica nine years ago. Deandrah, do I have that right? We met, I believe, when AAUP endorsed me, I recall, right? She is an alumna of Trenton Central High School West right here in the capital city and Rutgers, and also holds a master's degree from Rutgers School of Public Health where she was, by the way, the student government president. She has also served in the US Army Reserves for seven years.

More contact tracers like Deandrah represent the future of public health, and our investment in them is a direct investment in our public health. Our contact tracers represent a vital piece of our future resiliency against COVID-19 and whatever else may come our way, and they are staying here in New Jersey, to be a part of our economic future. As Deandrah and her colleagues continue to hit the ground, and as our contact tracing program expands, I look forward to our being able to give regular updates as to their progress and the data. So to you, Perry, I thank you for putting Rutgers School of Public Health at the head of the class nationally in training our community contact tracing corps. And to you, Deandrah, I thank you for answering the call of service to play such a critical role in our state's restart and recovery.

Before we hear from them, we do have a couple of announcements to make. Earlier today, I held a press call with Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York and Governor Ned Lamont of Connecticut. Working together in so many areas, we have crushed the curves of new cases and of the numbers of our residents in hospitals and connected to ventilators across the tri-state region. We've significantly lowered rates of transmission, put in some of the nation's strongest and best testing protocols, and we are emerging from this stronger. In fact, our three states are among only four listed by researchers and experts at COVID Act Now as being close to containing this virus. We've gotten to where we are today through shared sacrifice. And by the way, you all out there are a huge reason why we have. Together, we are advising visitors to our region from highly impacted states, and those are states with current daily positivity percentages that top more than 10% on a rolling seven-day average; or similarly, Judy, more than 10 cases per 100,000 residents, also on a rolling seven-day average, to join us in this mission by taking proper measures when coming to New Jersey, including a period of self-quarantine upon arrival.

Ours was the most-impacted region in the nation and among the most impacted in the entire world. We welcome everyone to New Jersey but we simply ask you to join us in our shared sacrifice, to keep ourselves moving in the right direction. I think this is common sense. It's the responsible thing to do. It's not part of the tri-state agreement, but as a non-medical expert I would add to that, get tested. We've built the darn capacity. You know, that phrase, if you build it, they will come? We built it. So folks, go out and get tested. It's there for you.

Next, I am pleased to announce another slate of business reopenings. On Thursday, July 2nd, museums, aquariums and indoor recreational facilities will be able to reopen at 25% of their capacity, just as our casinos can. This includes, for you bowlers, indoor bowling alleys, batting cages, shooting ranges, and yes the arcades along our boardwalk. Indoor entertainment venues such as movie theaters, performing arts centers, concert venues and nightclubs will remain closed, and gyms and fitness centers will remain closed as well, although we will allow for individualized training sessions by appointment. The fact that that group of things remains closed gives Judy or me or Pat or none of us no joy. It brings us no joy to say that. We would love to be able to open those things up. We just are not there yet. We just don't think it's the responsible thing to do. If you look at the flare ups, Judy, that we're seeing in other states, we just cannot mimic what we're seeing with clear evidence. And as I say, inside is a whole different reality than outside.

I'm also pleased to announce that our libraries will be able to reopen their doors to their patrons first thing in the morning on Thursday, July 2nd and again, we will be holding libraries to only allow visitors up to 25% of their capacity. Again, as with other indoor activities, we must remain extra vigilant about this virus when we're indoors especially. We know that it is easier to contract the coronavirus in an indoor environment. This is why we will require, not ask but require, all of these places to implement heightened standards of sanitation, as well as other measures to ensure proper social distances and the wearing of face coverings at all times. More detailed standards will be released later this week, but they will very closely track the guidance we have already given for other indoor activities. And again, as with all other indoor activities, the wearing of face coverings or masks is and will be required. This goes not just for customers but for employees too, and there can be no exceptions. This is not a polite suggestion or a gentle reminder, this is a requirement.

When you are indoors, you must keep your mouth and nose covered except if you're sitting down at the table to eat or drink, or for religious purposes, or your personal health and safety requires it. Wearing a face covering is proven to help protect others around you. It is a proven measure for further slowing the spread. We should all be in the practice of wearing a face covering by now, and even outdoors, and especially when we are in areas where social distancing is harder to maintain, like on a crowded boardwalk. But at least when you're indoors, you must be wearing a face covering or a mask and if you are not, you will be refused service, period.

As we continue through the weeks ahead, if we continue to see the progress we need, I anticipate our being able to gradually increase our indoor capacities. But for those who are looking for a place to have some fun, to enjoy our state's tremendous history and cultural heritage, or to find a good book to read, we are ready to take these steps for you. Please do them responsibly.

Additionally, on Monday, July 6th, NJ Transit rail and light rail service will return to its full weekday schedule. NJ Transit is taking this step now before ridership increases to higher levels, with businesses and offices coming back online, to provide the runway that it needs to properly communicate its social distancing protocols among commuters, so they can have trust in NJ Transit to safeguard their rides to and from work. And NJ Transit has put its full set of plans for doing so online at njtransit.com/recovery. But without a doubt, more trains running means that we're getting closer to taking our next steps along the road back.

To ensure we keep on our road back, let's take a look at the latest data. Yesterday we recorded another 317 positive COVID-19 test results. Our cumulative statewide total since March 4th is 169,892. Daily positivity rate is up a bit to 2.83%. That is one of the data points that Judy and team and myself and others watch very carefully. Rate of transmission was 0.86%, still under one which is good, but ticking up a little bit. However, Judy, eight counties as I counted currently have a transmission rate greater than 1.0 and 10 counties have seen their RT rate increase by at least 50% over the past week. We have to continue with our social distancing, folks. We have to wear the face coverings. There are no excuses to let up even one bit. We are far from defeating COVID-19. We are in a good place to contain it and that's overwhelmingly on you for having done the right things, but it is not yet defeated. There is no vaccine, there is no proven therapy. There is only social distancing, wearing your face covering, washing your hands with soap and water, staying home or staying away from others if you don't feel well. It's the basic stuff that's gotten us to where we are today that we all need to continue to do together going forward.

In our long-term care facilities, we continue to see the rate of spread of decline in the numbers of deaths, while fluctuating day to day, they are also down, thank God, from their worst. In our hospitals as of last night's report, the number of patients in our hospitals increased to 1,196. That's the highest total since last Thursday. However, the number of patients requiring intensive or critical care did decrease by nearly 10% to 275. The number of ventilators in use is 214. There were 77 new admissions of COVID-19 positive cases yesterday while 110 live patients left our hospitals. Tracking our overall trends for the past two weeks even with the overall increase in new hospitalizations, the overall numbers remain in a place where we feel comfortable continuing with stage two of our restart.

And we also continue to see our standing improving among all other states, but we need to drop even more, and the only way we can is by remaining vigilant and taking personal responsibility for the overall health of our communities. As I said yesterday, it isn't just about you. It is about all 9 million of us who call this great

state our home. Keep this in mind as you think about this requirement for personal responsibility. We have now lost a total of 12,995 of our fellow residents to COVID-19, as we report today that we've lost another 48 blessed souls from our great and diverse family. Let's remember a few of them now if we can.

We'll begin in South Jersey, Buena Vista, the home of June Ann Davis. She was 76 years old. She grew up in upstate New York near the shores of Lake Erie but in 1980, 40 years ago, June moved to South Jersey with her family, where she ran a residential cleaning service. She was a proud and strong single mom, always taking time to be with her children, always doing what she could do so they would know they were loved and secure, and passing along her personal strength by teaching them how to make their way.

June was an avid vegetable gardener and raised farm animals as well, and also passed along that love to her children. Along with her family, she loved her God. Being with her family and friends was her hobby and June's family noted her saying, quote, "I guess the best was just family and friends and the memories of good days and happy times that interested me more than hobbies." She leaves her children Brian, Barry, Gerald and Laura, and I had the great honor of speaking with Laura. When I asked how she's doing, how are they doing? She said they're getting through and the reason is she, being her mom, she made us strong. She also leaves behind her stepson Thomas and their families who brought 14 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. She's also survived by her sisters, Mabel and Phyllis, and many nieces and nephews. She was the embodiment of New Jersey values, perseverance, and always caring for others. We're glad you chose to be a part of our New Jersey family, June. May God bless and watch over you.

Next up, we remember Jose Luis Calixto of Bridgeton in Cumberland County. Like so many in our state, Jose is the immigrant story. He came to this country and to New Jersey with his family from Mexico, in search of the better opportunities for work for himself and for a better future for his children. Doing more to help his children was always his passion and when COVID-19 struck, in fact, he was studying to improve his English. He leaves behind his wife, Maria, there on the left, with whom I had the great honor of speaking yesterday, and their four children, and I'll walk you through who's who here. Two sons Axel, who's in the back, Alexander who's down front, and I also had the chance to speak to Alexander yesterday. And two daughters, Melissa, who's the graduate, and Melanie who's on the left, and that's Jose on the right. Jose will always be a part of our New Jersey family, and we honor him. Jose was only 52 years old when he passed but today, literally today, June 24, 2020, would have been his 53rd birthday. May God bless him and watch over him and his family.

And finally today, we remember Joseph Joe Manfredi. Born and raised in Elizabeth, Joe was a proud veteran of the United States Navy and in 2019, in fact, was cited for his service by the Veterans Administration. Professionally, he worked at Johnson & Johnson for more than 30 years, rising to become director of marketing for J&J, but his public service was Joe's calling. Throughout a long career, get this, he served as Treasurer for the City of Elizabeth, a member of the Elizabeth City Council, Executive Director of Housing for the City of Elizabeth, and Chairman of the Elizabeth Parking Authority, among the various nonprofit organizations he supported and the community boards on which he served. He was known as a vigorous and passionate supporter of vocational education in New Jersey and was a proud member of the Board of Directors of the Monmouth County Board of Education for over 25 years, where the district's – ready for this, Judy? – nursing program was his focus. I say to a member of the nursing family to my right.

Joe leaves behind only his sister, Dr. Claire Manfredi, with whom I had the great honor of speaking. She herself is a retired professor at Villanova University, and she made a point to say that Joe inherited his passion for public service from their dad. And as we remember Joe, we keep his sister Claire in our thoughts as well, and may God bless and watch over them both.

Three more members of our New Jersey family gone. Please keep them in mind as you go about your days. Our goal is to prevent more families from having to mourn. Far, far too many have already had to do so. Keep them in mind when you see a sign to tell you to put on a face covering before entering a store or restaurant. Only when we have the ability to prevent more of our fellow residents from falling victim to COVID-19 will we have done our part. Wear your face covering, keep a social distance from others, wash your hands with soap and water, stay away and stay home if you don't feel well, get tested. We have built the capacity unlike any state in America. Please go out and get tested. And when Deandrah or one of her contact tracer colleagues being trained by Perry and his tremendous team at Rutgers School of Public Health call you, answer that call. It is about keeping COVID-19 on the run and saving as many precious lives as we can.

With that said, I'll turn things over at this moment to the Dean of Rutgers School of Public Health. Please help me welcome Dr. Perry Halkitis. Perry.

Dean of Rutgers School of Public Health Dr. Perry Halkitis: Thank you, Governor and good afternoon, everyone. Good afternoon, Commissioner, my friend and my colleague, and Superintendent Colonel Patrick Callahan. And welcome to the press and to my friends in New Jersey. It is my honor to be here. As the Governor said, I am the Dean of the School of Public Health at Rutgers University, which is part of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences. I'm also the child of Greek immigrants who made their way to this country some 70 years ago. I'm here as a product of their work to help the people of New Jersey as we battle through this epidemic.

It is also an honor to be here today to speak to you about the New Jersey Community Contact Tracing Corps. Since the onset of the epidemic, I have thought of the disease along these four lines, along a 4-T model: target, test, treat and trace. These four keys provide the pillars by which we will be able to do our work. We must target our testing to those populations that are most affected by the disease, we must test them. We must provide whatever treatment is available, including quarantining and isolation, and we must trace.

Contact tracing, the fourth key, is a prevention strategy with a decade's long history that is widely used, which is why the New Jersey Community Contact Tracing Corps Program is a key step toward slowing the spread of COVID-19 as the state begins to ease its physical distancing guidelines. It is the process by which we will recruit, to begin with, 1,000 contact tracers, adding to the group that is already out there, and 21 social support coordinators who will be rigorously trained by the Rutgers School of Public Health. The program will provide local and county health departments with trained individuals who will support their ongoing contact tracing efforts, which they are already undertaking and have been undertaking for decades for other infectious diseases.

As the Governor said, New Jersey's contact tracing model is innovative because it combines the efforts of his office, the state, county and local health departments with the scholarly expertise of the Rutgers School of Public Health, the state's preemptive institution in this discipline. Once we train the 1,000 contact tracers, they will be deployed by the New Jersey Department of Health to county and local departments of health throughout the state.

Contract tracers will be required to complete a comprehensive 18-hour online training course that includes the following: basic COVID-19 contact tracing, the ins and outs of contact tracing, Rutgers training modules developed by the school which I'll speak to a little bit in a moment, and introduction to and work with the CommCare platform for data collection. The Rutgers training modules has a unique focus on New Jersey and is rooted in health equity and social justice. The needs of the people of New Jersey and their diverse populations are similar to, but not identical to, every other state and so we must train our contact tracers to understand how our state operates and who our populations are.

The course will provide public health 101 concepts, immersion in ideas and training in confidentiality and respect for privacy across all interactions, including a signed agreement of confidentiality, in-depth review of case investigation, contact tracing and key terminology, discussion and work with an understanding of COVID-19 and its effect on vulnerable populations, and cultural humility, essential communication, and interviewing skills. The training was developed using the principles of epidemiology, of course, but linked with health equity and social justice, with content focusing on groups who are most impacted by the pandemic, including older adults, racial and ethnic minority population, migrant workers, refugee communities, low-income households, those experiencing food and housing insecurity, and people living with disabilities.

The training is also focused on the importance of privacy across all contact tracer interactions, covering New Jersey's public health and privacy laws and requiring a signed confidentiality agreement, as I said, by all tracers. The contract tracers will have ongoing access to all training materials, which will be updated as the situation continues to emerge. We all know that every day we're learning something new about this disease. And as the pandemic progresses and we prepare for the future, additional contact tracers and social support coordinators may be needed.

The Community Contact Tracing Corps that we are training are students enrolled in all of New Jersey's institutions of higher education. They will support local and county health departments and staff who, as I said, have been undertaking this work. Contact tracers will possess and do possess a unique set of qualities

and values, most important of which is that they represent the people and populations of New Jersey, often working within the communities in which they live.

The Rutgers School of Public Health is also providing a platform for all local and county health department staff to be trained in the CommCare system for data collection, with CommCare being rolled out on Monday for all COVID-related case investigation and contact tracing activities. So far, 611 local and county health department staff have been invited to take part in the CommCare training. It is important to note that as we roll this out, and it's important for all of us who live in the state to realize that when a contact tracer is in touch with you, they will never ask for money. They will never ask for your social security number or documentation status.

As of Tuesday, June 23rd, 2,152 individuals applied to become part of the Community Contact Tracing Corps. 22 languages are spoken by the contact tracers being onboarded. 21 counties are represented by the contact tracers being onboarded, and 231 contact tracers are onboarded as of June 23rd, with this number rapidly increasing in the following weeks. Ethnicity, race and gender identity of the community tracing corps is of utmost importance, the diversity of those characteristics is of utmost importance. And to date, the population, the sample with which we're working consists of 29% of the tracers who identify as Black or African American, 21% as White, 36% as Asian American, 7% of two races or more, and 7% some other race. In terms of gender identity, 73% identify as female, with 27% identifying as male.

Let me conclude today by saying that if you are interested in doing this incredibly important work, and I call out to all of our students in our population, there is a link here that is available to you, please click on that link, scan that code, and please join us in fighting this horrible disease. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Perry, really well done, with a particular -- and not surprisingly because it's Rutgers and it's you -- but with a particular emphasis on embracing wholeheartedly the great diversity of our state and putting a team on the field, not just a team but a mindset that matches the 9 million residents, both in how we look and our heritages, but also our own mindset as a state. Thank you for your leadership. And with that, please help me welcome one of this great corps, again working at the Newark Department of Health and Community Wellness. I mentioned her background earlier, an extraordinary story in her own right, please help me welcome Deandrah Cameron. Deandrah.

Community Contact Tracer Corps Trainee Deandrah Cameron: Good afternoon, everyone. As the Governor mentioned, I came to the United States, to Trenton, with my family from Jamaica in 2011. I attended Trenton Central High West, went to Rutgers University for my undergraduate degree, and recently graduated from the Rutgers School of Public Health with a Master's of Public Health. Having served as student government president at the School of Public Health, I've always tried to lead by example, in the hopes of motivating others to do the same. Service has always been a part of my life. As a member of the Army Reserves, I always feel like I have a sense of responsibility to my country and if there was ever a time, it is now. So when Rutgers asked us if we would like to volunteer to support efforts for the virus, I signed up to help the people of our state.

I started my contact tracing training as a volunteer at the Newark Department of Health, where I learned how to support our case investigators by contacting individuals who may have been exposed to the virus through a close contact. Using the CommCare system, I am currently becoming part of the Community Contact Tracing Corps, taking the Rutgers School of Public Health 18-hour training. Being a contact tracer is not simply making calls. In training, we receive full understanding of the disease and its modes of transmission. During the work day, we provide health information and inform individuals that we contact about the virus, and explain everything to them in a clear and concise way.

Through our work, we're able to identify at risk individuals in the system and communicate important information effectively, as well as offer support by connecting contacts to local resources. We as contact tracers are able to do a lot of the preliminary work so that our health professionals can do their jobs effectively. We work as a team. The better I do my job, the better they can do theirs. This involves constantly being educated on the latest recommendations and procedures. I urge all residents to be receptive and open

to these calls from tracers, as receiving a call does not mean you have the virus. You may have been in close contact with someone who may have tested positive and we just want to check up on you. Your health is our number one priority, and we can't take any chances.

After my training at Rutgers is complete, I'll return to the Newark Department of Health and continue fulfilling my commitment to the city and the people. Many others like me from the Community Contact Tracing Corps will be deployed statewide. Contact tracing is one of the most efficient ways to contain the virus and ensure the safety of our residents. I'm excited and honored to be a part of a program that will save many New Jerseyans from this horrible virus. I could not be prouder to be a part of this collective effort to save lives, and to help New Jersey get through this crisis, and we will. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Deandrah, so impressive. Thank you so much for not just doing what you're doing for our state, but for being here today. It's an honor to sit with both you and Perry. It's a real treat. I know I speak for Judy and Pat and Ed and the rest of us. I failed to acknowledge Jared Maples, the Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness, so forgive me for that, Jared. Great to have you.

So great update. We wanted to make sure you were hearing more meat on the bones on our one in the nation, unique contact tracing approach. Perry and Deandrah will be with us for questions if you have any. 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. Thank you, Dean Halkitis for joining us today, for your leadership and for the critical work the Rutgers School of Public Health is doing to recruit and train contact tracers, and most importantly, the social support coordinators to identify cases and contain the spread of the virus. And thank you Deandrah for joining us to represent the Community Contact Tracing Corps. You're an example of the future of public health in New Jersey. We're fortunate to have you.

Contact tracing is not new. It's a longstanding, proven public health practice. It's been a vital tool used by health departments everywhere to reach people who have tested positive for an infectious disease like measles or HIV, and connect those that have been in close contact with them. The New Jersey local and county health departments are at the center of contact tracing efforts in our state. The Community Contact Tracing Corps program that we're talking about today is designed to provide trained staff to support the tremendous work our county and local health departments have been doing in the field since this pandemic began. As Dean Halkitis mentioned, we have established a common data reporting platform for contact tracing that will enable the collection of uniform data from approximately 100 local and county health departments.

The data system, CommCare, was chosen to provide a comprehensive view of tracing efforts. This platform will bolster the department's existing lab-integrated program. Through the efforts of our Innovation Center, the Office of Information Technology, and the Contact Tracing Task Force at the Department of Health, we brought up two pilots in a very short period of time. We began piloting CommCare last week with the Camden County Department of Health and Human Services, and also health departments in Essex County. Six additional counties volunteered to participate in the next phase of the CommCare rollout. So on Monday, local health departments in Atlantic, Burlington, Gloucester, Middlesex, Monmouth and Salem Counties will all begin using the platform. The remaining health departments in the state will go live on the CommCare system on July 6th.

As the Governor and Dean Halkitis outlined, we are training and staffing up contact tracers in our communities so we can quickly contain the spread of the virus. But to do this, we need your help. When we ask for the public's help to flatten the curve, you did an incredible job. You stayed home, you social distanced, and you masked up, driving cases down tremendously. Now we're asking for your help again, to ensure we stop the spread of the virus in our state. If a contact tracer calls you, please answer the call. Provide them with the information they need on any close contacts you've had, so those individuals can be reached and protected, and told to get tested and quarantine to break the chain of transmission.

Trained contact tracers will provide information on how you can protect those around you from getting sick, such as isolating yourself. We know that isolating is an inconvenience, but contact tracers can connect you to resources to make it easier. If you need a place to stay so you don't infect your family, there are housing

resources available. If you are worried about your job, contact tracers can also refer you to community supports such as job protection measures and pandemic unemployment benefits. If you are concerned for resources for your families, we can connect you to childcare resources and food assistance through New Jersey SNAP and WIC. So please, answer the call. Tell the contact tracers about who you've been with, who you've had contact with, where you've been, and share with them what help you may need. We need to work together to keep New Jersey on the right track.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 1,196 hospitalizations with 275 individuals in critical care. Thankfully, there are no new cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children reported, so the total remains at 44 cases in our state. The state veterans homes and the psychiatric hospitals' numbers all remain the same.

The overall New Jersey positivity rate as of June 20th was 2.83%. The Northern part of the state is 3.03%, the Central part 1.82%, and the South 3.92%. That concludes my daily statistical report. Stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, get tested and answer the call. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I love, and answer the call now. That's a good watchword for all of us out there. Thank you, Judy, for that and for everything. Pat Callahan, as always, good to have you. Any news to report from the front? I spoke to the trooper yesterday on the phone, he is slowly but what spirit, what spirit. Unbelievable. Welcome.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Governor. Good afternoon. I actually have nothing to report on the overnight for any Executive Order violations, and there are two scheduled mass gatherings today. They continue to be quiet. And I would too just offer my thanks to the doc and Deandrah for that one mission, one team approach and honored to have them on this team as we continue to serve as an example for the rest of the nation. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat, and thank you for that. And to everybody out there, thank you. We're going to start over here, Matt. Thank you to everyone who has been protesting, now in the tens of thousands that have been doing it so responsibly and so peacefully. I believe, with high authority, that there is no White House VTC tomorrow so we're together again at one o'clock tomorrow, Dan, do I have that right? Alrighty, thank you. With that, Nikita, welcome.

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Hi, Governor. So we're seeing new reports basically every day about new technical flaws and other problems related to the July elections. Do you still think that everything is going smoothly there? Are you willing to acknowledge that technical issues may have disenfranchised some voters? Additionally, would you be willing to bring Division of Elections Director Bob Giles and MVC Chief Administrator Sue Fulton to answer questions about these issues?

And further, would you be able to help us obtain the number of registered voters that have had name changes within the last year? We asked the MVC for this information on Tuesday and their response was to submit an OPRA request that likely wouldn't be filled until after the election.

Governor Phil Murphy: Sorry, registered voters who have had a name change since last year?

Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe: Yeah, in case someone gets married or they have a name change for whatever other reason.

And the last one's fully off topic. Amy Klobuchar pulled out of the running for Vice President on the Democratic side a little while back, saying that she thought the pick should be a woman of color. I'm wondering as Chairman of the DGA, whether or not you agree?

Governor Phil Murphy: Was the implication that the first three questions were on topic? Again, I have a very high degree of confidence, although I still want to make sure the Postal Service is doing their job. I've got a call, I think, scheduled with the Chief Operating Officer tomorrow of the US Postal Service. I believe it's tomorrow. As it relates to other technical flaws or problems, it would be helpful offline if we could get some sense of the specifics. But I have a very high degree of confidence. Who we bring up here every day to speak, we consider whoever we think is relevant, and so that's a decision that we make and will make.

I don't carry around the number of folks who have changed their names since last year, but that's something we can follow up with you on. Dan, will you follow up and help me follow up on both these?

And listen, the decision on who the Vice President is Vice President Biden's decision, obviously, but I think there's an overwhelming sense that the pick will reflect the diversity of the Democratic Party and of our nation. Exactly what that diversity, how it actually evidences itself, we'll wait and see who the Vice President picks. But this is a moment in our history that is unlike any other that I can recall, and embracing that diversity, which is a hallmark of our party and of our nation, indeed, full throatedly seems to me to be something that matches this moment in time. We'll follow up with you on the other details. Thank you. Elise, good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi, good afternoon. Can you put some perspective on this increased rate of transmission? Is it within what you had expected for this time, among the reopenings? And also, how will out-of-state quarantine enforcement work? Will folks be pulled over who have out-of-state plates? People will be questioned at the airport? Give me a sense of how that goes. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll address the second, although Judy may want to add to my answer and maybe get Judy or Ed to come in on the rate of transmission. I'll, as usual, practice without a license and make an observation on that as well. I think we've always expected on transmission that as we've opened the state up, I think we've said this ad nauseum, that we would expect to see some amount of flare up. And so the key for me, at least, would be in addition to one day to the next, which Ed will remind us doesn't really tell us anything, if you've got a trend that develops on a rolling average of days, does that, at a certain point, get troubling? And that's something that we're watching very, very carefully.

Ed, I saw an email that you had sent, I think yesterday about taking too much, Judy and I were talking about particular counties as we do every day, drawing too broad a conclusion. I would just say this. As we open up more, our risks go up. There's no question about that, and they go up in particular on the indoor stuff more than the outdoor stuff. And so just ask everybody, please, don't take your foot off the gas, social distance, wear face coverings, wash your hands with soap and water, the basics.

You know, constitutionally, Elise, we're not able to put up border checks around New Jersey. It's just not, to travel from one state to the next is something that is allowed. I think what we're asking folks with a great, you know, this is an advisory so it's more than a recommendation. We're asking folks to take on a big amount of personal responsibility here, to do the right thing for themselves, as well as for their families, communities and the rest of us. Judy and I spoke offline earlier, she reminded me and she can comment on this, she's been in close contact with the health commissioners in New York and Connecticut, that they're going to aggressively pursue a public relations campaign as part of this at airports, on highways, train stations, but it's most importantly, do the right thing.

And Judy has within her powers, not as a blanket population matter, but if she sees a particular non-compliant behavior, she can attack that directly. But again, folks, it is do the right thing. That's not part of the advisory, but I want to repeat, please go out and get tested. We have built this testing machine over 100 and something days, please use it and go out and get tested. So either on rate of transmission, Ed or Judy on quarantining and advisories, anything you want to add?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: Not much. I think the Governor got it just about exactly on track. When we look at these blips that go up, there are a bunch of different reasons why they can go up. It can go up for anything from stuff that really doesn't matter, like maybe all of a sudden a bunch of labs reported on one day because they were backlogged. Or maybe somebody went out and did a mass testing in a particular facility, so you saw more cases because they did more testing. To, maybe there was a party and a bunch of people got infected. To, maybe there really is something going on more wider in the community where spread is continuing.

So as the Governor said, we don't look at any one day or any one of these blips, particularly in too small an area but we do look very closely over time to see those patterns and to see what's developing. And at this point, certainly, we're very early in any of this and we're not seeing anything that I would describe as particularly disturbing, but certainly, we're watching.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, and I think there's magic above one versus below one, as we've said many times. Judy, either on that or on the advisory? You good? Okay. Elise, do you have something else? Please.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Just a quick follow up. Governor Cuomo said that folks who defy the quarantining will be subject to fines. Is there anything like that brewing for New Jersey?

Governor Phil Murphy: As I mentioned earlier, Judy has within her powers the abilities to directly address an individual who is non-compliant, but this is overwhelmingly, this is not a polite recommendation. This is a strong advisory built on the back of the healthcare professionals, Judy and her colleagues in New York and Connecticut to do the right thing. And again, if we see specific instances of flagrant non-compliance, Judy reserves the right to deal with that. Good afternoon.

Reporter: Governor, regarding the quarantine for certain out-of-state visitors, who developed the formula Governor Cuomo said will be used to determine which states qualify? What additional guidance from the Department of Health should we expect and when will it be available? Does the 14-day quarantine apply to New Jersey residents who travel out of state? And if so, are there protections in place for workers who might lose their jobs if they're forced to quarantine?

There are concerns among some local health departments we've spoken to that sending state-trained contact tracers that don't have local connections will not help their tracing efforts as much as funding would for the local tracing teams they've already trained and established. What's your response to that?

Finally, who's monitoring barbershops, stores and restaurants as they reopen to make sure they're following all the necessary precautions to keep customers safe? Is it local health departments? Do they even have enough staff to do all this work? If no one is monitoring, how can the public feel safe going to these places? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: The formula on quarantine was devised by the health commissioners, and as I mentioned, it's a rolling seven-day average of states that have a 10% or higher positivity rate, or a rolling seven-day average of at least 10 positive new cases per 100,000 residents. That was not my idea, or Governor Cuomo's or Governor Lamont's, that was the health commissioners in the three states. Did I get that right? So far, so good.

It does apply to residents, absolutely. It absolutely applies to residents. So it's not just folks who live in other states and come to visit, but it's folks from New Jersey who have been in other states which have the characteristics of the ones that I've just mentioned. You know, I think you've asked the question before on funding versus bodies. I hope it's at the end of the day, both but we believe, and it's not just me, it's people like Perry, it's Judy and others, that we're going to need more, particularly over time as we open the state back up, we're going to need more than the 900 that we already had on the field to deal with this. I think we've sort of given you some sense of a range that could be anywhere from sort of 2,500 to 4,000 in the fullness of time. That's a narrowed range. I think initially we said anywhere from 1,100 to 7,000. I think the range that you've landed on is sort of 2,500 to 4,000. That's not to say we don't need more money, and this is a good chance for me to reiterate, we still need direct federal cash assistance beyond the manpower, but I don't think it's an either/or, it's an and/both.

Judy, barber shops, restaurants, stores, its local health officials, it might be the DCA depending on what the entity is? Anything you want to –

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Primarily local health. You know, I think that the individuals in New Jersey have been so compliant over time, and even with the quarantine order, we're just relying on people to take individual responsibility. But we do rely on our local health departments. I can tell you, the local health officers, we have calls with them every day, we have calls with our 21 county links agencies. They're up to the task, but they're stressed, they're stressed. The call is for everyone to do their part and we'll get through this together.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I think we referred to this a couple of weeks ago, two quick anecdotes. Number one, a friend of a friend who has got a restaurant had a visit paid from someone from the Department of Community Affairs to assess their setting, and they had some concerns about the way they were set up. That was a spot check. That just happened this morning. I happen to know that anecdotally. I

also happen to know someone who runs a hair salon and when they were asked, you must be swamped with three months of backlog, is everyone trying to get in and get an appointment? Her answer was a lot of her older customers have not yet signed up for an appointment. And that gets back to something that we referred to a few weeks ago. Folks want to have the confidence in their bones that we're back up and ready, that they see that the testing capacity, that the contact tracing and isolation plans are in place.

They understand. Folks are smart. They understand this notion that indoors is harder than outdoors, and so particularly with communities that are more vulnerable, and that certainly includes seniors more often than not, communities of color, folks with comorbidities as Judy's has mentioned on so many occasions, it's what government tells them to do versus seeing it with their own eyes is going to be a process here, and we all have to accept that. Thank you. Sir, do you have anything? You good? Hold on. We're gonna come down to you in a sec. Good afternoon.

Reporter: Hey, good afternoon, Governor. Yesterday, you guys talked quite a bit about the rise of coronavirus cases in younger adults and I wonder if you think that has any connection to, or is tied to participation in the George Floyd protests, Black Lives Matter protests?

On gyms, I guess I'm a little bit confused if we're allowing personal training or literally just like one person in the gym, which I think for larger gyms that might be a little bit different.

On contact tracing, it sounds like training begins next week but I wonder if there's anything I might have missed about when people will actually start getting calls from the Corps? And do you still anticipate additional hiring? I think at one time we had said like 5,000 people might be needed.

Let's see, on NJ Transit, when full service resumes, will Executive Order 125 still be in effect? That's the one that limited capacity on trains and buses? I wonder if that's still going to be in effect on Monday, or I'm sorry, when we resume –

Governor Phil Murphy: July 6th, yeah.

Reporter: Yeah. And then last but not least, you had talked, Governor, just a minute ago kind of about the moment that we are in in this reckoning with systemic racism in our country. Last week, you talked on Juneteenth about your commitment to ending it. Your budget cuts \$1.4 million from antidiscrimination, implicit bias training programs and others that encourage education about racial diversity. Do those cuts fit in with your pledges? Several advocates say the cuts are a slap in the face. What would you say to them?

Governor Phil Murphy: You've got a quite a list here. I don't think there's any evidence we have that the George Floyd related protests have led to this. I'm not aware of any evidence. I'm far more convinced that this is intensely close proximity, indoor realities.

Gyms are for literally personal sign-up, prior appointment engagements. I think it could be from the same family, is that correct, Matt? I think if you're in the same bubble, you could be there, so a husband and wife can be there.

Contact tracing, I think I addressed this a minute ago, we still absolutely intend to be hiring more and the range that we've sort of given, I think is 2,500 to 4,000 and that's a range, unless Judy tells me otherwise, that we're still in. Those folks are preparing their training right now, are they making calls yet?

Dean of Rutgers School of Public Health Dr. Perry Halkitis: Tracing has been going on.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, sure. You're starting with a base of 900 folks who've been doing it forever and always, right?

Dean of Rutgers School of Public Health Dr. Perry Halkitis: Right. So once they're through with the 18-hour training, which is asynchronous and allows them to finish at their own pace, which they have to do within a week, they're ready to be deployed right away. So it's going to rev up very quickly, within a week's time. We actually may have 20 who may be close to completing the course as we speak, who are ready to go out.

Governor Phil Murphy: Deandrah, have you called anybody yet?

NJ Community Contact Tracer Corps Deandrah Cameron: Yes. As early as the pandemic started, the Newark Department of Health had set up training on the CommCare system. We've been able to go through that process and contact people, find out what they need to quarantine safely. If they need to set up SMS systems to check in with them for the quarantine process, just to report any symptoms and go through the follow-up process. This has been going on.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, remember for folks out there, it's not as though, notwithstanding Perry's extraordinary leadership and what Rutgers is doing and Deandrah is participating in, remember we already started with a base of 900 folks who are at the local and county level, and we're talking about ramping that number up to a much bigger number. Matt, NJ Transit Executive Order?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: Monitoring the capacity limits and we'll adjust as needed and appropriate.

Governor Phil Murphy: So the moment in time, let me just repeat something that we haven't said in a few weeks. We were able to, working with the Legislators, extend the fiscal year from June 30th to September 30th. It turns out we actually need a budget that adheres to both of those dates and then obviously, we'll be getting to a nine-month budget that would be from October 1st to June 30th of 2021. We have deferred or cut \$5.2 billion of expenditures. On that list, it is littered with some of our highest priorities. Whether it's related to this moment in time, public education, public health, you name it. We have had no choice. Our expenses have shot through the roof. Our revenues have fallen off a cliff. So it is, we're cornered.

There's only two ways out of this. And so the advocates who care about it, as I care about some of those expenditures or other expenditure items that we are not able to afford right now, I ask them to do the following. Please vocally support our ability to borrow money, which we need the Senate to come to and the progress, I'm told, is good in this respect. We need to be able to bond, take advantage at a minimum of the Federal Reserve's program where they're willing to buy investment grade municipal securities. We need to take advantage of that.

And separately, I would like to ask those advocates, as I will do as well because I stand in solidarity with them, to call their Members of Congress in the House of Representatives or in the Senate, to make their voices heard that we need direct federal cash assistance. And the bonding and the federal direct cash assistance or not either/or, it is and/both. One of them is within the four walls of New Jersey when the Senate, God willing, votes on this and it comes to my desk. I will sign it and have the ability to bond. Again, not something I wake up reflexively excited about doing but knowing if we can't bond, we won't be able to fund the very programs that meet this moment in history, as well as a whole ton of other programs.

And secondly, we need Congress to pass and the President to sign a bill which has meaningful, direct federal cash assistance for states not to deal with legacy issues, not just blue states, not just New Jersey, but every American state, particularly those states that have been hammered by this awful virus, and that includes certainly New Jersey. Thank you. Matt, I know you're there, Ed, could you maybe move six inches one way or the other? There we go. Thank you. Don't let it be said that I don't look forward to seeing you.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Thank you. On unemployment, Governor, how does the Department of Labor determine which claims are pulled out of the backlog? How does the department create that order on who's getting called?

I think you touched on this, but can you just clarify with gyms? I mean, is this specifically one on one or families? Or is it you know, five trainers for five people? We've heard from a lot of folks who were questioning, want to know the status of day programs for the state's disabled population. Apparently, there's some question about whether or not these facilities can open.

And lastly, the rate of transmission, as you noted, was 0.86, however, eight counties currently have transmission rates greater than one, as you point out, and 10 counties have seen the rate of transmission increased by 50% over the last week. Curious which counties, I don't think you named them, which counties have a rate of transmission over that one? Have you any cause for concern about the reopening that's going on, given that these figures seem to be edging up?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, let me start with the last one. I think Ed has addressed this largely. It's concerning if it turns into a trend, and so a one day or even two or three day does not make a trend, but seven days would make a trend. And as Ed, I mentioned this earlier, Ed pointed out in a very good note that I read yesterday, county stuff can be really skewed by the dataset. You know, you could literally go from five people to six or something like that, or you could have the concentrated, the shore rental share house that we heard about a couple of weeks ago where folks were going back to Pennsylvania. So this is something clearly we're watching very, very closely. But again, trends matter, unless Ed or Judy disagree. I don't have the counties here but we can get them to you, but that also moves around day to day, so I'm not sure that that's necessarily valuable, Matt, in the sense it could be way up or way down literally one day to the next.

On the unemployment and labor thing, I'm going to have Rob Angelo or one of his colleagues. Dan, could you help me figure out how they – I think the question is, what is the priority protocol for chopping through the backlog?

Gyms are, and we'll put the guidance out on this, I assume in the next couple of days, Matt Platkin, but the gyms are personalized pre, literally appointments that you've pre-wired, and it's with either you or your family, either you alone or with your family. Would you agree with that? But we'll come back to you, and anything new on the disabled. We have heard this question before, Matt. Anything you want to add? Nothing new on that. Can we come back to that? Because this has come up with us before. Dan, will you help me out with that as well? Thank you. And again, we're coming out with the guidance, I assume most importantly, with blessings from Judy soon in terms of a lot of the stuff we talked about today, museums, libraries, gyms, NJ Transit, etc. Ed, you okay with that?

Okay, with that I'm going to mask up and say a few words in parting. Let me say to my regular colleagues, Judy, Pat, Ed, Jared, Matt, Dan, thank you but a particular treat today to have Perry and Deandrah here with us. Perry, thank you for your extraordinary leadership. Deandrah, what a life you are living and bless you for helping us out in our hour of need. I cannot thank you enough, each of you.

And I think what we'll probably do, as we've done with testing, we'll probably from time to time, Judy, come back and do a checkup on where we are on tracing, just to give you all a sense because I know it's a high priority for you all out there. It certainly is for us. Where do we stand at any moment in time? Particularly how many folks are actually out there in the field? How many are in the pipeline, etc.

Folks, to everybody out there, bless you and thank you. Keep doing what you've been doing. Again, let's be responsible. If you're coming into our state or you're coming back to our state, take yourself offline, get tested, do the smart thing. If you're indoors, anywhere, we're not asking you, we're not recommending, we're telling you, have a face covering on. Now if you're eating your dinner or your lunch, obviously you get a pass. If you've got some physical health reason, you can't, there are a couple of exceptions, but there aren't many. You've got to do that. And again, we've said this ad nauseum, inside is a much higher risk than outside. And if you look at museums, libraries, indoor entertainment we recognize and again, you've been able to allow us to do this, our risk profile is going up. There's just no question about that.

Again, we believe we can take the additional risk because of the extraordinary work you all have done in cracking the back of these curves and flattening them. But that does not mean that we're out of the woods. It doesn't mean that this is history. Again, there's no vaccine. There's no proven therapeutic. All we've got is social distancing, face coverings, washing hands with soap and water, staying away from people if you've got any symptoms whatsoever, get tested. We've built the biggest per capita testing machine in the entire United States. Use it, please, please, please go out and get tested.

With that, a thousand thank yous for everything you're doing. We'll be back to at one o'clock tomorrow unless you hear otherwise. God bless and thank you.

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