

## **COVID-19 Update Press Conference**

**Wednesday, May 6, 2020**

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Ed Kelley – Chair, Volusia County Council

Patricia Boswell - Administrator with The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

### **Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County**

Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Captain, interim director of community information for Volusia County Government. Today you'll hear from:

- Ed Kelley, Volusia County Chair
- Patricia Boswell, Administrator with The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County
- And Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer with Halifax Health

Before we begin, there are some very important people we need to recognize this week. First, it's Teacher Appreciation Week, and with schools having abruptly transformed to a virtual platform, we give praise to our teachers. And I think it's safe to say that, after helping children with virtual schooling these past few weeks, parents have an even greater appreciation for all that our teachers do.

Secondly, this week is also Public Service Recognition Week, so it's important we commend those who are committed to public service. That includes all our county staff, from accounting to utilities to everyone in between, as well as other local, state and federal employees.

And, there's one more celebration this week. Today, Wednesday, May 6th kicks off National Nurses Day and National Nurses Week, which runs from through Tuesday, May 12, which is the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of nursing as a profession. Oddly enough, much of Nightingale's work was instituting sanitation and disinfection measures in the hospital to help prevent the transmission of infectious disease. Somehow that's serendipitous with what we're all going through this COVID-19 pandemic. So, if you know a nurse, a doctor, a respiratory therapist or any other healthcare provider, please thank them. And with that, I'd like to introduce Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley.

## **Ed Kelley – Chair, Volusia County Council**

Thanks Kevin and good afternoon to all of you. Yesterday, we had our regularly scheduled Council meeting, and much of the focus was on the reopening and recovery for our county in the midst of COVID-19. So first, let's talk about reopening. Council received a draft of what we are calling Relaunch Volusia plan yesterday, which outlines in detail the process for reopening of county facilities and services. We're currently reviewing that plan—it's a large, detailed document, and we want to ensure it's just right— and we'll discuss that in more detail at next Tuesday's special county council meeting. But just because the overall plan isn't quite finalized, that doesn't mean we're delaying all openings.

For example, the libraries have begun taking appointments for computer use, as we know that's a needed service. Especially now with the schools being closed and some students not having access. We've also started up opening our beach in stages. Currently, the beach is open for regular activities, our coastal parks have opened, and off-beach parking is open. To further facilitate ADA accessibility, we've opened three vehicles access ramps- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in New Smyrna Beach, Dunlawton Boulevard in the Daytona Beach Shores and Williams Avenue in Daytona Beach, and this is for vehicles with a handicap license plate or placard. And, we are expanding the parking there so that all will have a place to park and still practice social distancing.

We know that driving on the beach is important. It's the birthplace of speed; it's the home of racing. It's what made Daytona Beach and this area famous. So, opening the beach to vehicles is being considered for our next phase of access. To make that happen, we're working on parking protocols to ensure that we can appropriately maintain social distancing. Additionally, this next step assumes we maintain a sustained reduction in Covid-19 cases in Volusia County.

Another beach amenity we've been working to reopen is restroom facilities and showers. As I said last week, restrooms present a challenge, as they provide an opportunity for the easy spread of germs and bacteria. You can go to the beach, park your car, walk to the sand, swim the ocean and arguably, not touch a surface anyone else has touched. That's not the same with bathrooms. These facilities see lots of traffic and have many commonly-touched surfaces. But, we also know these facilities are important, especially with the Mother's Day weekend coming up and we're going to be very busy. That's why we've created a plan, and I told one media source last week that we could have delayed the opening by a week, but my plan was to have the restrooms open this weekend. Guess what, we're going to have them

opened this Saturday, May 9. This includes the restrooms and showers at all the inlet parks, as well as coastal parks and parking lots. We'll have porter services at these facilities to frequently wipe down and disinfect surfaces. We're also depending on the public to follow the CDC guidelines, wash their hands thoroughly after using the facilities and have that hand sanitizer nearby, or don't take what we have in there because you decide that you need it.

Now, let's move on to recovery. Yesterday at council, we gave preliminary goal for the council for the staff to come back with us, with a dedicated amount of funding to help small businesses recover. These would be businesses with employees of 25 or less, and things that you may need to reopen. We asked if there are things that you can consider like masks, or hand sanitizers or things you may need. If we can help in acquiring those at a lower cost for you that could be a part of your expenses. This we will be discussing in further detail Tuesday, and I expect that we will be adopting a resolution into bringing something back to the small businesses to help in their recovery.

The county's economic development staff is working with an economic recovery task force consisting of business and chamber groups, city and county economic development professionals and small business organizations. They've been collaborating on the framework of the program, including uses for the money and eligibility and application criteria. The final program criteria, including eligibility, is scheduled, as I said, to be approved at this upcoming Tuesday's meeting.

We know that the weeks, and months, ahead are going to present challenges. But I'm encouraged by what I've seen in our community. We're pulling together to get through this crisis and recover as an even stronger county. And now I'll turn it over to Patricia Boswell, Administrator with The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

**Patricia Boswell - Administrator with The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County**

Good afternoon. Today the Florida Department of Health updated the statistics for our county. We have a total of 520 cases, 91 hospitalizations, 27 deaths, and 16 deaths in the residents of long-term health facilities. These numbers are cumulative. On Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-112, which outlines phase one of the plan for Florida's recovery. COVID-19 continues to pose a threat and requires that ongoing measures be taken to protect the public health. During phase one please remember to protect the vulnerable. If you are elderly or an individual with underlying medical conditions you should avoid close contact with people outside your home. Visits to senior living facilities

are still prohibited. We need to continue to promote social distancing. And in circumstances that do not readily allow for physical distancing, wear face masks for face to face interactions, where you cannot social distance. Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available. As we move forward together by practicing social distancing and other daily habits to reduce risk of exposure to the virus, we need to clean and disinfect our public places, work places, businesses, schools and homes. This is an important part of reopening. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest cleaning and disinfection practices based on normal routine cleaning with soap and water, frequent disinfection of surfaces touched by multiple people and storing and using disinfectants in a responsible and appropriate manner especially out of the reach of children. Thank you.

**Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County**

Thank you Ms. Boswell and Mr. Kelley, and now, we'll move to Dr. Margaret Crossman, who is joining us on today's briefing virtually. She is the is the Chief Medical Officer at Halifax Health in Daytona Beach. Good afternoon Ms. Crossman.

**Dr. Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health**

Good afternoon Kevin. It is a pleasure to be back with your team and thank you for mentioning Nurses Week. We appreciate those who are really the heart of healthcare and I just hope that you will take that opportunity to thank them and show some appreciation to them and especially during this time, so thank you for mentioning them.

Here are Halifax our volumes are still lower than usual. We still have six in our special containment unit, our critical care beds are still 40% empty right now and we have plenty of capacity. Our ventilators are running at about 30% capacity and we have plenty of capacity there. In our special containment unit we have no patients on vent. Yesterday, our last patient on vent was taken off and doing fine. So that is good news that I want to make you aware of.

We are also very pleased here at Halifax that the Governor chose to hold his press conference here. As Florida, and especially Volusia County, enters into phase one, it is important that we make sure that you understand where we are as a hospital system in that we are scrubbed, we are ready. We are ready for the elective surgeries and any emergencies that you may have other than this. Our surgery volumes

have started picking up. We've had about 40 to 50 cases per day starting Monday, when we began having our elective surgeries. In general with these cases I've had a lot of people asking what kinds of cases are we doing now that we weren't doing before, and what was being delayed or postponed? So, these are cancer related surgeries, vascular surgeries, by-passes, aneurism repairs, gastrointestinal procedures such as endoscopy, colonoscopy, hernias, gallbladders; things that were not necessarily urgent but it's nice to get them taken care of because patients are symptomatic. Orthopedic cases, certainly fractures that are a little more acute have been managed right along, but joint replacement, so we are back to doing those now. Gynecologic procedures, dealing with kidney stones, putting in stents, doing lithotripsy, cancer infusion ports for chemotherapy, eye procedures and other procedures that you may do for arthritic conditions and chronic pain syndrome. So, we are back to a lot of those things that were not as emergent or urgent but certainly those individuals are happy to be having those procedures done and we are happy to have them with us.

Our emergency room volumes have gone up, like many other states, in volume by about 10% so we still have plenty of capacity here. We are working closely with our local elderly care facilities to make sure that they have the resources they need to work with isolating cases that they have identified. You know, I can't re-emphasize enough the fear of being exposed to COVID, to this Corona virus, when you come into a hospital is something that we need to beat down a little bit. We've had some interesting cases, for instance, we've had a child that had a ruptured appendix because the parents were afraid to bring their child into the hospital. Usually a parent will bring a child into the hospital much earlier so that you don't have some of these concerning things happen as a result of delaying too long or putting off getting the care you need. So, I would encourage you that it is far better to come in and be cared for, and we have certainly co-horted our patients into our special care unit and any COVID positive patients are being cared for by designated staff, so that you don't have to worry about being exposed. Whether it be in the emergency department or through the hospital. And, that includes both our in-patient and out-patient facilities. Our protective equipment is in great shape. We do appreciate the donations from so many who have done homemade masks; we are using them for our patients and staff who are not directly in contact so that they have that additional mitigation strategy and protection in place. And, that is going to help insure that we have the approved protective gear for our staff and team members who are caring for patients up front and personal, face to face; that is very important. So we had time to prepare and we have a lot more information on how to better manage this illness. There are things that I want to share with you today. Keep in mind that you are needing mammograms or other important screening or diagnostic studies; we're open and ready to provide for that care. Again, all of our units, special care

units, in and outpatient settings as well, have retooled and restructured to make sure that the screenings are happening ahead of your arrival and when you get there, you are going to be kept in an area that is different. The space will allow for social distancing, or timed entry into the facility. So a lot of precautions are being taken so that you feel safe getting the care that you need. So, don't wait to get your care.

I also wanted to share an update on testing. Some of you may have heard that the FDA, that the Food and Drug overseeing entity is imposing more rigorous standards on commercial tests that companies have been using. They are trying to crack down on tests that are out there that are not performing as well; that have a lot of false positives and false negatives. There are misleading statements out there that are not necessarily authorized to make these statements and some are claiming that they are FDA approved and they are not. So they are beginning to crack down on how these tests are navigating out into our communities and making themselves available in the public health sector, many even here in Daytona Beach. It is very important that if you are considering testing it would be important for you to make sure that this is a test that is not undergoing FDA emergency use authorization, and they are on track for that final approval. And, that approval will come in time after more study, more validation is done by the FDA. So, keep that in mind, especially with the antibody tests that are out there. The one that we currently have is FDA emergency use authorized and is meeting the standards of accuracy that have been set by the FDA. And, I just wanted to close by sharing staying safe and in Phase One. As we open up, just like Patricia said earlier, for the vulnerable it is important to stay home as much as you can. And for us to support those individuals, whether it is using Tele help, and helping to get groceries or take care of needs that they have outside of the home, we need to continue doing that. There has been a lot of a terrific activity along those lines.

Let's talk specifically about commuting; to and from work, or where ever you are going. In general, walking, biking, driving your own car, can be preferable to share rides, such as taxis or Ubers. And, also mass transport, which we don't have much of in our area, is the one that you should be most cautious about. For folks that must take one of those alternatives, or you have your own transportation and don't live close enough to bike or walk to wherever you need to go, then just continue to wear a mask when you are in those close contact close settings. Wear a mask, make sure you are not touching your face, you are using hand hygiene, washing your hands frequently and using sanitizer. You know there was a day when taxis had Plexiglas in the back. This would be an ideal day to have that situation if you are a taxi driver out there; keep that in mind.

For offices, some people are returning to work, some of them in shifts and that is great. But, keep in mind elevators; elevators are a contained space where you don't have a lot of ventilation or air exchange and that is where you have an increased concentration of virally infected particles, especially if they've just been coughed out by someone. So, either you want to face the wall, maybe wear a mask in those settings for sure. I would not say maybe, I would say, yes, because there is more than just you in there.

High contact surfaces. Don't forget handles, knobs, printer buttons. Frequently disinfect these areas. Have your own way of continually cleaning them and again, when you are disinfecting, that is where the 70% alcohol solution comes in. If you are using hand sanitizer, that is a 60% alcohol solution. Washing is always best. Washing with soap is always best.

Restrooms; I am glad that Mr. Kelley mentioned the restrooms. In a restroom, assume that every surface is contaminated. With every flush there is forced air up out of that toilet bowl so that can help force things to blow around. Just like those, but not to that extent, like those aerosol generating procedures that we make sure in a hospital setting we are using a specific filtering mask. Whenever you have forced air happening that's a time when you have viral particles being generated into the air for at least for a time. So, assume everything in a restroom is contaminated even if it seems cleaned and disinfected frequently. If there is someone other than you that has used the facility then you have to take extra precautions. Again, hand hygiene and use a paper towel to open that handle as you leave and throw it immediately and re-sanitize your hands.

Movie theaters I don't think that they are open. The concern with movie theaters is you are going to spend a great deal of time in a small contained space with the same audience. So, again, even if you are spaced out you are staying in a space that is probably not designed for a lot of air exchange and ventilation. So those are going to be places where you are going to be continually exposed. There is more opportunity to breath in more particles in a setting like that. I would consider wearing a mask if I went to the movies.

Restaurants, okay. If you have the choice of indoor versus outdoor, again, outdoor again better. Air movement, ventilation, much better. Avoid crowded areas, waiting in lines these are some things to be aware of. I think that most restaurants have done a terrific job in spacing out lines and spacing out their indoor seating and making appropriate room in their indoor settings.

Menus; make your choices in advance or do it virtually, rather than handling menus within a restaurant. And, if a restaurant has an option for throw away menus, that's pretty nice as they are one time use, and that can get costly, I realize. Plastic menus and I anticipate that they are disinfecting them in between each use. But, best thing to do is assume all surfaces could be contaminated. That includes the condiment containers, the salt and pepper shakers, so keep those things in mind. Hand hygiene, before you put foods into your mouth make sure that the last thing you do is wash those hands or sanitize those hands the things with food that will go into your mouth.

Outdoor exercise is one of my favorite topics because it is so important and I thank the officials who have opened up the outdoors to us and said have at it in so many ways. To do it responsibly, and we all have a little bit of responsibility to do it in a smart way. To keep in mind when we go out and exercise we get our respirations up a little bit, we breathe a little faster, we breathe a little deeper, so for those nearby that could pose a risk, if you happen to be carrying this virus. So, you want to maintain your social distancing when you go on your runs or your jogs. In general, running, jogging, golf, and tennis, are going to be pretty nice activities for you to go out and do. That's because you can maintain some degree of distance. It's the gathering at the clubhouse afterwards that might get you in some trouble; make sure you maintain that distance. Use hand hygiene, use sanitizers, wash your hands after touching walls that others have touched and other common surfaces.

Bad news for soccer, basketball and football. It is problematic and you are typically in each other's faces, right? So, you're huffing and puffing. If you want to do these sports get creative. Make sure that there is no contact in your practice; find ways to do this in your practice and I have seen ways to do this. I've seen, and gotten reports on groups getting together and doing this. They are just having a practice but not having that physical contact as they practice.

Swimming, surfing, good sports because you have plenty of distance. Pools, they are chlorinated and that's germicidal. That is a very good place to be. Again, you want to maintain some distance, some space; two arm-lengths away from the next person is a good idea.

Gymnasiums, there's a lot of risk there, especially with the free weights, the weight machines, where a lot of people are handling the same surfaces over and over, and add to that they are huffing and puffing and exhaling as they are working hard. So, you need to be very careful in these settings. I like the way some gyms have opened up virtual classes and they have a lot of the yoga classes and other cardiovascular aerobic type classes available on-line.

Shopping; a lot of people I've talked to can't wait to do more shopping. I would just again, a lot of the retail stores have taken steps to limiting the amount of people coming in to 25% capacity. They are avoiding lines, and they have marked out those spaces to make sure that you have some social distancing. Think about the things that you want to get and make your selections in advance. It's probably not a great time to be going into the changing rooms and trying on a bunch of clothes and trying on a bunch of things in a very small, confined changing room.

Salons and barbershops. I know that we are anxious to get our hair cut, but I would recommend a mask for everyone. Both the customer and the hairdresser because, again, you are going to be in close proximity, for an extended period of time.

And, then finally, returning home from your outings. It is a good idea that whenever you get out and about that you consider yourself potentially exposed. And, I am not saying that you need to go into isolation or quarantine or anything like that, but just be respectful of those around you. Maintain a little space and distance especially when you are dealing with those who are vulnerable.

Just remember that your healthcare systems in your area are scrubbed, we're ready and we are open for business and our capacity has never been better. So, thank you very much.

**Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County**

Thank you so much for that comprehensive report, Dr. Crossman. We certainly want to thank our hospital systems who have been remarkably collaborative throughout this whole process; Halifax Health and AdventHealth.

We will move to questions; are there any Facebook questions?

**Question:** Diane D. would like to know when vehicles will be allowed to access the beach again?

**Ed Kelley – Chair, Volusia County Council**

**Answer:** That is one thing that Council has stressed to the Manager. We want to do that as soon as possible, but as others have said, as we enter back into that, let's make sure that we get this right. Let's make sure that we can have the vehicles access and follow the social distancing. And, the one thing that I have said all along is what better way than to have social distancing but to have traverse and drive on

the beach and in parking spots away from the rest of the people. So, it is very important and it is in the next phase and we will be addressing that very soon. I hope sooner than later, but it is not in this phase but in the next phase. So, the sooner we can get that done the better we will be. This is one thing that the Council stressed yesterday as well. Stay tuned and we will do that as quickly as we can do it safely and we can manage it, because it will take additional beach personnel to make sure everyone is following the guidelines of where to park and so forth.

Is there anything else? Can I just say, wash your hands, and do wear your mask when you are out and contact. I don't wear mine unless I am close enough in contact. I wear mine when I am in contact with people. I am not going to wear it in the parking lot going into the store. I will wear it, and put it on before I go in. But I'm not going to wear it; if you see me, don't criticize me if you see me not wearing it in my car or if I'm walking to the doors to go shopping.

**Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County**

Thank you Mr. Kelley. Any more questions?

**Question:** We had several people who are asking when specific businesses will be opening?

**Answer:** So, the businesses and when they will open is something that is guided by Governor DeSantis. His declaration and all of his new plan is available on [www.Volusia.org/coronavirus](http://www.Volusia.org/coronavirus) listed under the Emergency Declarations. Right there is a box that says "Merchant Information at a Glance." We do daily updates. You can get the link through [www.Volusia.org/coronavirus](http://www.Volusia.org/coronavirus) and you can read through Governor DeSantis's plan. It is a PDF that has all of the information that lists when businesses can open and it describes the phases there of. So, that is a good place to get the information on some of the businesses and when they can open.

Anything else? Well, then that will close today's conference. We thank you for joining us. Take care and stay safe.