

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Thursday, May 7, 2020

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Carmen Hall, Director of Volusia County Community Assistance

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

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

I'm Kevin Captain, interim director of community information for Volusia County Government.

Today you'll hear from:

- Carmen Hall, Director of Volusia County Community Assistance
- And Patricia Boswell, Administrator with The Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Just a quick recap of some of the news we discussed yesterday. Beginning Saturday, May 9, restrooms and showers will open at Volusia County inlet parks, as well as Volusia County coastal parks and parking lots. We'll have porter services at these facilities to frequently wipe down and disinfect surfaces.

That being said, we're relying on beachgoers to follow CDC guidelines when it comes to cleanliness and follow proper handwashing.

We also discussed the county's grant program to help small businesses to recover from the economic fallout caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The final program criteria, including eligibility, is scheduled to be approved at this upcoming Tuesday's meeting.

Also, I'd like to remind viewers about our panel discussion scheduled for 10 a.m. tomorrow, May 8. As we all know, COVID-19 has had widespread medical and economic impacts. But coping with the pandemic also can affect physical and mental wellness. Tomorrow's panel discussion will focus on what residents can do to take care of their overall health during these difficult times.

- Omar Guerrero, health coach, registered dietitian and certified personal trainer with Cigna will discuss healthy eating and physical health.

- Mark Spivey, licensed professional clinical counselor with Halifax Health, will speak to psychological health and mindfulness.
- And Andrew Williams, senior director for residential services at Stewart-Marchman-Act Healthcare will discuss resources available for those in need of mental or behavioral assistance.
- Friday's panel discussion will be broadcast live on the Volusia County Emergency Management's Facebook page.

With that, I'll bring up Carmen Hall, director of the county's Community Assistance division.

Carmen Hall, Director of Volusia County Community Assistance

Good afternoon, I am Carmen Hall. In an effort to assist homeowners who have suffered a loss of income due to COVID-19, Volusia County has developed the COVID-19 Mortgage Assistance Program. This program is designed to assist eligible homeowners with payments for their mortgage for one to three months. This includes past due payments, current payments, or if they remain eligible, future payments. The amount of assistance is capped at \$1,500 per month. In order to be eligible, units must be located within Volusia County, there must be a recent mortgage statement that was current as of March 13, 2020. The applicant must be able to document a loss of income as a direct result of COVID-19. The household income must be at or below 120% of area median income level. For example, a family of four would have an annual gross income not to exceed \$51,900. Applications for the COVID-19 Mortgage Program will be accepted starting at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, May 11th.

In addition, the County has a COVID-19 Rental Assistance Program. This program is designed to assist eligible households for payments of their rent for one to three months. The amount of assistance is also capped at \$1,500 per month. In addition to the eligibility requirements for the mortgage assistance program, the dwelling must be located within Volusia County, excluding the city limits of Daytona Beach and Deltona. Both of these cities are implementing their own programs. They must also have an active rental agreement. Applications for the COVID-19 Rental Assistance Program are currently being accepted.

You may find applications for both programs on-line at www.Volusia.org. Complete application packets may be submitted by a secure upload on our website or by mail. Assistance will be provided on a first ready, first served basis. Thank you.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you, Ms. Hall. We will move on to Ms. Patricia Bowell, 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's statistics we've had a total of 534 cases that includes nine new cases from yesterday. We've had 27 deaths; 16 of those were residents or staff of long-term care facilities. As of the most recent report, six long-term care facilities in Volusia County have had a positive case either in a resident or a staff member.

Florida monitors COVID-19 case data in multiple ways, including emergency room visits, case count and laboratory test data. I have four charts to share with you today. The first illustrates the trend of new cases in Volusia County over the past six weeks. We are on a decline. This chart includes those cases that are associated with confined outbreaks at two of our facilities as well.

The next chart demonstrates Volusia County's positivity rate. This is the number of positive tests each day divided by the total number of tests conducted on that day. This chart illustrates another decreasing trend. Our target rate is below 10%. Currently Volusia County's positivity rate over the past 14 days has been less than 5%.

These next two charts are based on data received from all emergency rooms and free standing emergency departments. We are seeing a downward trend in both of these graphs. The first illustrates the number of visits to emergency rooms for COVID-like illness. This graph shows the same decline in the number of emergency room visits for the influenza-type illness.

The next chart. These charts are available on Florida Department of Health COVID-19 data and surveillance dashboard under the Health Metrics tab. To get to the dashboard visit www.floridahealthcovid19.gov.

That is a very brief review of how data is analyzed when we talk about current downward trends and this indicates that we have achieved critical benchmarks. Thank you.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Ms. Boswell. We will now move to questions. Do we have any Facebook questions?

Question: Kristen asked, "Where can mortgage assistance applications can be found?"

Carmen Hall, Director of Volusia County Community Assistance

Answer: Applications for both the Rental Assistance Program and the Mortgage Assistance Program can be found at www.Volusia.org/community-assistance, there will be on the right-hand side, page links that will direct you to COVID-19 rental assistance and COVID-19 mortgage assistance.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Ms. Hall; are there any other questions? There is a question for Ms. Boswell.

Question: Stephanie Bechara, from Spectrum News 13, had a question with regards to testing. The data shows that there is a downward trend when it comes to new cases. AdventHealth is just now closing their Daytona Beach International Racing test site due to a lack of, or decreasing demand for testing. Is that something that Volusia County is also seeing; a decrease in demand for testing since cases are also diminishing?

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

Answer: So, the testing sites have been established by partners in the private sector. Basically, the demand is monitored by those partners who are offering the services. I think it's, at this point we do see the antibody testing that is happening at the fairgrounds a little bit different scenario in that they plan to be there for most of the day and they are running out of tests by mid-afternoon, is what I understand. So, I think that it is too early to say that the demand for testing is diminished drastically, because we have only offered so many of these sites at this point. I think that there will be opportunity that we will get different areas and different ways of offering the tests.

Question: I understand that it depends on each County when it comes to the private versus the public testing sites. How many private testing sites are there in Volusia County and are there any public testing sites, and if so, is there any step towards opening any of these public testing sites in conjunction with State?

Answer: I will answer the first question regarding private sector sites and the number. AdventHealth as you mentioned in your previous question has been testing at the Speedway. We also had Family Health Source offering the same type of testing in terms of testing for COVID earlier, before they opened the antibody testing. We know that there are Urgent Care Clinics that offer testing as well as private physician offices. Hospitals are certainly offering testing as well. We are working with a regional resource in terms of testing at long-term care facilities and I do think that there is discussion regarding community based testing like you referred to happening in other counties throughout the State. Thank you.

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Ms. Boswell; any other questions? Okay, with that we will close today's briefing. I would like to remind everyone to find the latest on Corona Virus and the COVID-19 response, please visit www.Volusia.org/coronavirus. Again, to remind everybody, we will have a panel discussion here on the Emergency Management Facebook page tomorrow at 10:00 a.m., regarding health, wellness, and mindfulness and psych social health. With that we will close today's session. We will have more information for you tomorrow and in anticipation of Mother's Day Weekend. With that, we ask that everyone take care and stay safe.