

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Friday, August 14, 2020

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information for Volusia County

Patricia Boswell – Administrator, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Kelly Schulz – Director, Community Information for Volusia County Schools

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information for Volusia County

Good afternoon, I am Kevin Captain, Director of Community Information for Volusia County government. Thank you for joining us for today's COVID-19 briefing. Today, you'll hear from Patricia Boswell, the Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County, and Kelly Schulz, the Director of Community Information for Volusia County Schools.

I'd like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the state's COVID-19 testing site, which officially opened today at the Volusia County Fair Grounds. The site is operating from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., Thursdays through Tuesdays. So that means no testing on Wednesdays. Viral testing is up and running, and antibody testing is expected to be available beginning tomorrow. Testing is free, but viral testing does require an appointment. To register, visit DoINeedACOVID19Test.com. It's a quick and easy process, and you'll need that same log in to get your results. And speaking of results, they are expected to be resulted in 2 to 5 days from the day of your test.

Viral testing is available for people five years and older. Adults 18 and older must bring a photo ID and a consent form is required for children ages five to 17. Antibody testing is provided on a first come, first served basis for adults 18 and older. Those results are available in 30 minutes. Again, all of this information, as well as testing locations, and other testing locations besides this State run site at the fairgrounds, can be found at Volusia.org/testing.

And, a quick note about elections. Supervisor of Elections Lisa Lewis couldn't join us today because she has a very busy day in front of her, as she and her team are in the midst of early voting, which runs through tomorrow, Aug. 15. But, she did ask for us to pass along a couple of important reminders. If you didn't cast your vote by mail or during early voting, you can still vote for the primary election on

Tuesday, August 18. Poling information, as well as other election and voting information, can be found at VolusiaElections.org.

And a last reminder that the county's COVID-19 rental and mortgage assistance is still available. Applications can be obtained by calling Volusia County Community Assistance Division at 386-736-5955, or you can also visit Volusia.org.

With that we will now turn it over to Patricia Boswell, with the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County. Ms. Boswell?

Patricia Boswell – Administrator, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Good afternoon, I am Patricia Boswell, the Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County. So, let's start with reviewing data that we monitor to determine spread, and how effective our mitigation measures are. Today the Florida Department of Health is reporting 8,307 cases of COVID-19 in Volusia County. That is an increase of 110 cases since yesterday. As a reminder, people are only counted once, no matter how many times you are tested.

The next data point is the positivity rate. That is the number of new people who have tested positive divided by total number of tests reported that day. People who have previously tested positive are not included in these numbers. To monitor the trend we look at the 14 day positivity rate. At this time last week it was 7.4%. Today it is 6.97%. We are moving in the right direction, down. But, the numbers are still much higher than we'd like to see, and much higher than, let's say, mid-June, when the 14 day positivity rate on June 15th was 2.3%.

When looking at hospitalizations in Volusia County, 8% of the people who test positive were hospitalized. The number of admissions for COVID-19 across our hospital systems are on the decline. Emergency room visits for COVID-like or influenza-like illnesses have also decreased. We have been reporting new deaths every day. Today we have had none. Up to this point 151 people have died from COVID-19. This number is 2% of all of our cases.

To summarize the data, the number of new cases every day, the number of new hospitalizations, and the positivity rate, is in a downward trend. This decline is due to everyone's effort at social distancing, mask wearing and hand hygiene. This is how we can continue to slow this virus in our community.

Please remember, if you think or know you have had COVID-19 with symptoms, you can be with others after at least 10 days after symptoms first appeared, and at least 24 hours with no fever, and your symptoms are improving. If you tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms, and continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others 10 days after the date you tested positive. And, if you have had close contact with a person who has had COVID-19, please stay home for 14 days after that last contact. For more information, please visit [CDC.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19).

Thank you, and with that I'd like to introduce Kelly Schulz, our spokesperson for the Volusia County Schools.

Kelly Schulz - Director of Community Information for Volusia County Schools

Thank you very much, and thank you for having me here today. I'm Kelly Schulz, Community Information Director for Volusia County Schools. We are two and a half weeks from the start of school. We've spent the summer planning and preparing, and we are ready with options for students to learn, either virtually, or in a traditional classroom setting. As of today, about one third of VCS students have selected a virtual learning option. For those students returning to the traditional classroom, our schools are preparing.

We have kits with hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies that have been delivered to classrooms. We've removed non-essential furniture from classrooms so desks can be socially distanced. Hallways have been converted to one-way traffic in many cases. Lunch times have been lengthened so that fewer students are in the cafeteria at the same time.

We're implementing new procedures for bus transportation and parent pickup. We've adopted a face-covering policy. This requires students and employees to wear face coverings anytime social distancing is not possible. And, we have 50,000 Plexiglas partitions on their way for students' desks.

For our health and safety guidelines, Volusia County Schools has been working closely with the Volusia County Health Department. Our teachers returned this week and will have two extra weeks of pre-planning this year for training, as we all learn how to deliver our new learning options.

For the virtual options, our tech services department has spent the summer upgrading our technology infrastructure, increasing our licenses for our learning management system, Canvas, and we are

uploading all of our media resources into that system to ensure all students and teachers have virtual access to textbooks and other instructional materials.

We have also established protocols for how to handle COVID-19 cases in our schools, and training is being provided now. If a student attending the traditional classroom setting becomes sick or needs to be quarantined, they will be able to easily transition to the virtual “Volusia Live Learning” option while they are at home. We are constantly updating our roadmap to reopening website at VCSEDU.org. It’s a great resource for general information on all of these topics and more. We also are posting information to our social media accounts. And, for specific, school-based questions, parents are encouraged to check their school website and social media pages for information. We will be in close contact with families as we approach the start of school on August 31st.

And, I’d like to close by saying, we all know it’s a challenge to go back to school in a pandemic. We want to assure our community that we are ready. We ask that you be patient and flexible in the coming weeks. We ask that you support our students and teachers, and model a positive attitude to help us provide the best school year possible. And, as our Superintendent likes to say, “Together we are stronger.” Kevin?

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information for Volusia County

Thank you Ms. Schulz, thank you Ms. Boswell. We thank everyone for joining us. As always, for the latest updates and information can be found at Volusia.org. And, if you’d like the testing information again, that’s Volusia.org/testing.

And with that, we’ll close today’s conference. Take care, stay safe and help your neighbors.