

## COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Friday, August 7, 2020

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

**Brad Harris** – Operations Manager, Economic Development of Volusia County

**Adam Leath** – Director, Animal Services of Volusia County

**Holly Smith** – Communications Manager and Government Liaison, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

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

Good afternoon, I am Kevin Captain, Community Information Director for Volusia County government. Thank you for joining us today for this COVID-19 update, Friday, August 7th. Today, you will hear from Brad Harris, the Operations Manager for Volusia County's Division of Economic Development; Adam Leath, the Director for Volusia County Animal Services, and Holly Smith, the Communications Manager and Government Liaison for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

I'd like to take this opportunity to provide an update with the state's COVID-19 testing site, slated to open next week. The Florida Division of Emergency Management will operate the site at the Volusia County Fair Grounds, daily, Thursday through Tuesday. So, six days a week, without Wednesdays. The site will provide both viral and antibody tests, by appointment only. They will be required by appointment. The county is fully cooperating with Florida Division of Emergency Management and assisting with logistics to aid in the opening. And, we also send a special thanks to the Clay County Fair Association's Board of Directors, and General Manager Ronnie Hull, for permitting the use of their site at the Fairgrounds for the testing. Again, the official start date has not yet been finalized, but more information will be provided as it becomes available, likely early next week.

Supervisor of Elections Lisa Lewis couldn't join us today, as she and her team are very busy gearing up for the elections this month. But, she did ask us to pass along a few important reminders. So, tomorrow, August 8, is the last day to request a vote by mail ballot to be mailed to your primary residence, for the primary election. You can request a mail ballot at [VolusiaElections.org](http://VolusiaElections.org). And, if you're planning to vote in

person, early voting begins tomorrow, August 8, and runs through Saturday, August 15. The hours for early voting are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Again, all of this information can be found at [VolusiaElections.org](http://VolusiaElections.org).

Also, an important update about the county's COVID-19 rental and mortgage assistance programs. At the Aug. 4th County Council Meeting, the council allocated an additional \$2.5 million to help aid local residents struggling to make payments for their housing, mortgage or rental, if they have had financial impacts with the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing the total amount earmarked for the program to \$12.5 million. To qualify for one of the programs, the rent or mortgage must be current as of March 13, 2020. From there, the dwelling must also be located in Volusia County and be the applicant's primary residence. And applicants must meet income eligibility criteria to qualify and certify that they've suffered a loss or reduction in income due to the pandemic. For applicants who meet the eligibility requirements and are approved for the grant, the county will make payments directly to the landlord or to the mortgage holder. Applications can be obtained by calling Volusia County's Community Assistance Division at 386-736-5955 or, just as easily by visiting [Volusia.org](http://Volusia.org)

And to speak about the county's COVID-19 business assistance programs, I'll invite Brad Harris up, who is the Business Manager for Volusia County's Division of Economic Development.

**Brad Harris – Operations Manager, Economic Development of Volusia County**

Thank you Kevin. This afternoon I'll be providing a brief update and reminder of our COVID-19 related grant programs available to Volusia County businesses. Some of these programs have been around for two months now so many who are listening may have already taken advantage of these generous programs. But, for those of you who have not taken advantage of them, I encourage you to do so. I know that the Corona virus has gone much farther into the summer than we had thought it would, and maybe you thought you could get through. Here's an opportunity to help meet some of those financial needs that have been created by the Corona virus. So, let me quickly review those four programs for listeners so that you know what they are and where to find them. And again, we encourage you to apply.

The first one is the Small Business Reopening Grant Program. This is a grant program that is targeting for-profit businesses that are located in either commercial or in industrial locations. It is for employers who have no more than 50 employees, and it can be either \$3,000 for businesses with 25 employees or

less, or it can be for \$5,000 for those who employ 26 to 50. So, that is the Small Business Reopening Grant Program.

The second one is our Home-based Business Program. This is a newer program. It is one that has been in place for several weeks now, but again, I encourage you to look into it. This program is also for for-profit businesses, but it is designed for in-home businesses for resident businesses. It is also for employers who have no more than 50 employees. But, it has another qualifier, which is you have to have revenue or gross receipts of \$6,000 or more. If it is a hobby business for \$2,000 a year, you won't be eligible for this program. But, it is a home-based business grant program. It is \$1,500, so if you qualify, that is the grant amount that you will be eligible for. So, those are the two primary ones and so far we've had over 3,000 businesses in our community take advantage of these grant programs.

The third program for businesses is our PPE Distribution Program. That's personal protective equipment. So we have already been through one event with personal protective equipment distribution. That happened in the second week of July. And this program is designed to help our businesses with the difficulty in trying to acquire personal protective equipment like gloves and masks. The County has stepped up and offered their purchasing power to provide these kinds of things free of charge, in kits, for our businesses. Now, we haven't established a firm date for our next giveaway event but it will be late August or early September. It will be at multiple locations around Volusia County, and it will include a kit per business, that will include gloves, masks and sanitizing cleaning products. So we'll announce that through the County's communication mechanisms. It will also be announced through the Volusia Chamber Alliance who is sponsoring and coordinating this, and you will get it through some of the social media channels as well. So, again, that will probably be late August or early September, but it is for Volusia County businesses and it is to help with those personal protective equipment needs you have.

And finally, I will mention it; it is our Not-For-Profit businesses. This is a program that is being administered through the United Way of Flagler and Volusia County. That program is still available to our businesses and I encourage you to look into that. Again, it is through the United Way, but all of these programs you can find on our website which is [VolusiaBusinessResources.com](http://VolusiaBusinessResources.com). Again, it is [VolusiaBusinessResources.com](http://VolusiaBusinessResources.com), and right at the top of that webpage you will find links to all of these programs. And, as you explore them, I encourage you to go farther into the website, there are instructions in there on what you need to do to be prepared when you do apply. So, take advantage of the opportunities. The four programs are still active and we encourage you to be part of that.

All right, I think up ahead we have Adam Leath, he is going to join us now and talk about some interesting programs for our animals.

**Adam Leath** – Director, Animal Services of Volusia County

Thank you Brad, and good afternoon everyone. My name is Adam Leath. I am the Director for Volusia County Animal Services. I am here today to talk about an exciting program that we are going to be offering to the public this Sunday at the Volusia County Fairgrounds. If you or someone you know has pets that are in need; everyone during this difficult time has been impacted by COVID, and the last thing that we want to see happen is individuals choosing between the ability to afford items for their pets. Things like pet food, between that and resources that you need for you and your family.

So, Volusia County Animal Services wants to be a resource for the community. And, we want you all to come out to the Fairgrounds this Sunday, beginning at 9:00 a.m. We will be providing both free pet food, that's dog and cat food, as well as free microchipping. We can't underscore the importance of microchipping your pet, especially with the current hurricane season upon us. We were just reminded just last week that hurricanes are an inevitable act here in Volusia County. And, what we want to do is to insure that you don't have to bear that incredible burden of not being able to reunite yourself with your pet should they become lost. The best way that we can overcome that is to permanently identify your pet. And, we are here to offer it to you free of charge.

Again, if you come to the Volusia County Fairgrounds this Sunday, August the 9<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 9:00 a.m., we will have our talented men and women of Volusia County Animal Services there and excited to greet you and your pet. Common questions that have come up is, "Do we restrict species." We will be able to microchip all species, except for exotic birds, and some of the stress on that we want to avoid. And, "Can you bring multiple pets," and the answer is yes.

We would ask that your pets be inside of a container to ensure that they are appropriately safe during the transport, and they will be removed from your vehicle. So, we want to ensure that you have a leash on your pet, or an enclosure, or a kennel for your dog or cat, and we will be happy to implant those microchips directly there for you, and our talented veterinary staff will be there to assist you.

So, we are really excited; come one, come all. Tell your friends, tell your family, and most importantly tell your dog and your cat to load up this Sunday, and that we look forward to seeing them.

With that I want to introduce you to Holly Smith, with the Department of Health of Volusia County.

**Holly Smith** – Communications Manager and Government Liaison, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Good afternoon, Holly Smith, Communications Manager and Government Liaison with the Florida Department of Health here in Volusia County.

I'd like to begin today with a brief look at a few data points. The first one is the number of new cases. Today the Florida Department of Health is reporting 7,654 total cases of COVID 19. That's an increase of 166 cases since yesterday. As a reminder, people are only counted once no matter how many times they are tested. So that number I gave you is the number of people, the number of individuals, because people are not counted more than once.

The next data point is the positivity rate. To get this calculation, the number of people who tested positive in a day is divided by the 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 9.4%. Today it is 7.3%. We are moving in the right direction, down, but numbers are still much higher than we'd like to see and much higher than where we were in mid-June. To compare with where we were in mid-June, the 14-day positivity rate on June 15 was 2.3%, so we still have a ways to go. And, it had been 2.3% since about mid-May.

When looking at hospitalizations across our systems in Volusia County, the number of admissions for COVID-19 and the number of emergency room visits across our hospital systems all are on the decline. 7% of Volusia's cases are people who tested positive for COVID-19 AND are hospitalized at some point. 2% of the people who test positive for COVID-19 in Volusia County are dying.

As of today 126 people have died from COVID-19 in Volusia County. That number of deaths, again 2% of the total positive cases, follows the increase in cases. So we can expect to see the number of deaths continue to grow as the number of total cases continues to grow as well.

To summarize the data, the number of new cases every day, the number of new hospitalizations and the 14-day positivity rate are all declining. This decline is due to everyone's efforts at social distancing, mask

wearing and hand hygiene. This is how we can continue to slow the virus. So that means wash up, back up and mask up.

One last note, we continue to hear that there's confusion over what someone who's tested positive should do, or if you've been exposed to someone who tested positive, what you should do. The Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention has a webpage with very clear guidance. You can get there by going to [Cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19), that is [Cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19), then click on the button that says "What to do if you are sick," and, then look over on the left side of the page that opens, and go to the last tab that says, "When you can be around others." This page has information on when you can be around others if you think you had COVID, if you know you had COVID, or if you were exposed to someone who had COVID-19.

Also the CDC no longer recommends general clearance testing for most people who tested positive. If you tested positive, the CDC now recommends a time and symptom-based clearance, not getting tested again and looking for that negative result. This information is also on that CDC webpage. Again the address to the main page is [Cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19). Thank you. Kevin . . .

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

Thank you Holly, Adam and Brad. Thanks to all of our speakers today, and we thank everyone for tuning in. If you have any questions, okay, we don't have any questions on Facebook today.

As always, for the latest updates the best place to look is [Volusia.org](https://www.volusia.org). And, if you're out and about this weekend, we encourage you to take a drive over to the newly opened Tom Staed Veteran's Memorial Bridge. The 1,885-foot-long bridge features plaques at 28 scenic overlooks commemorating conflicts in America's military history. In addition to the scenic overlooks and the visually striking series of grand arches, other features of the bridge include sidewalks, fishing piers on both sides of the bridge and the river. And if you're able to take it at night, it looks beautiful at night when it is all lit up.

So with that we will close this afternoon's conference. Take care, stay safe and help your neighbors.