

Town of Middlebury
Emergency Management Bulletin
7-28-2020

School Opening

State officials set September 8 as school start date to help ease transition

State, school and health officials acknowledged the difficult decisions around the reopening of schools this fall, but said at Tuesday's press conference the data still supports in-person learning that can be done in a safe and measured way.

"Of course, there are risks," said Health Commissioner Dr. Mark Levine. "When I weigh the health risks against the educational, developmental, social and emotional risks for young children, I come to the same conclusion as the pediatricians and education experts: now is the right time for Vermont to re-start in-person learning."

We know our situation in Vermont could change, and we should expect to see new cases, clusters or even limited outbreaks in our communities, Dr. Levine said. But we have demonstrated our strong public health protocols for handling these situations.

Governor Phil Scott announced he will sign an executive order calling for a universal school start date of September 8, 2020, which will give schools more time to test and fine-tune their plans.

Dr. Rebecca Bell, a pediatrician and president of the American Academy of Pediatrics - Vermont Chapter, also spoke in support of reopening schools, reminding Vermonters that our main priority is to work to keep virus levels low in the community.

"What happens in our schools is a reflection of what's happening in the community," Dr. Bell said. "We keep our schools safe by keeping our communities safe."

To Thine Own Self Be True

School starting, College reopening, summer visitors and people from "red" areas relocating here and all the while the COVID horde is creeping eastward while still lurking in Vermont. A good cause for uncertainty? Maybe, but remember, the infection is spread PRIMARILY through airborne droplets in aerosols expelled from the lungs through the mouth and nose of an infected person.

Back to basics. If you are not protecting yourself and your loved ones, it matters not if there are 2,000 students or one asymptomatic person roaming all the public areas or work places. Once again, sounding like a broken record (for you millennials out there, recordings used to be done on grooved vinyl discs, that when scratched, the needle would keep jumping in the same groove, repeating over and over a line in a song- rather annoying) keep yourself safe. Wash your hands- often, and do it right; use hand sanitizer and follow up with hand washing; don't let your face covering become a biology experiment- remember, it's collecting aerosols hanging in the humid air; cover up in public places when you can't socially distance, and even if you can, cover up indoors; disinfect surfaces in your home. And with that,

you can still pick up an infection, so harden yourself. If you smoke, quit; take a walk, exercise your lungs. If you can't get aerobic exercise, use an incentive spirometer to work your lungs. Do it when you're watching a ballgame, even if the BoSox are getting clobbered again.

Disinfectants and hand sanitizer are plentiful again. And keep some aloe-based or other skin cream around to deal with the drying effects of soap and sanitizer.

Testing Information from the CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/index.html>

This link to the CDC site will help you interpret test results. It also includes a self-checker on getting tested and symptoms as well as explains the different types of tests- antigen, antibody, viral. You've heard all this stuff on the news- what kind of test are you getting? Anyway, it's a helpful link to give you information.

Compliance Checks and Follow Ups

For all those who report non-compliance, the police collect the data and do follow-up visits to the offending entity. While there are no sanctions to compel compliance, these visits follow the Governors intention of obtaining compliance through education, not coercion. It also lets entities know that we are paying attention. Compliance follow-ups are underway this week. These include, at the behest of the State visits to 1st and 3rd class liquor licensees to ensure they are likewise following the Governor's orders. Over reaching government? Hardly, we're asking for help to keep the "wolf" (in this case COVID) outside the door.