

COVID-19 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



Community Call resources and questions 2/25/2021

Questions asked during the call:

Why is Northampton testing at almost 10% positivity?

- Northampton county houses several colleges, more than in the surrounding counties. This likely accounts for the higher percent positivity compared to neighboring counties

Any child clinics taking place?

- St. Luke's – mobile health unit is still operating, although remote learning has caused the van-based clinic to stop going to schools and is not appointment-based
- LVHN – similar challenges to St. Luke's cause of school and has shifted to a traditional practice setting

Requests for additional sites for vaccine clinics?

- Both LVHN and St. Luke's are exploring all options to make public vaccinations more accessible

What does the timeline look like for vaccinating educators verses kids returning to school?

- CDC released operations strategy guide that said teachers do not have to be vaccinated to reopen schools. Health networks reaching out to teachers within 1A to make sure they are vaccinated. No universal standard around teachers being vaccinated, encouraging teachers who have the chronic conditions to register for an appointment. Not sure when inventory will be ready to mass vaccinate all teachers

After you get the vaccine, will it be possible to distinguish virus antibodies from vaccine antibodies in blood test?

- Depends on the type of antibody test. Both health networks look at spike protein, which is what is produced in the vaccine. So, it could be either from the vaccine or from virus antibodies. Other types of antibody tests that looks for a different

protein that would show from natural infection and not the vaccine – not sure who offers this specific test

With growing human service needs, where are the challenges with the budget deficit and what should service providers be focused on with advocacy and restructuring service delivery models?

- Federal government has passed a pretty robust package and the governor's budget is focused on protecting vulnerable populations. For advocacy, keep up with legislators and make sure that human services are not on chopping block when things need to be cut. BUT government is for one-time funding, and a good chunk will likely be for budget holes that we won't feel the negative effects of for a few years. Advocating for human services to be sustained after this money runs out. Additionally, asking legislators to help make changes with regulations that take away flexibility to using dollars to cover necessary costs.

Allentown School District sees charter school costs as main source of budget shortfall for school district, any updates on charter school reform?

- From an expenditure standpoint, charter schools are largest budget item, but in reality, the structural issue of how we spend money is the real issue. There are always talks of reform, but not too optimistic of about being able to pass proposals All the reforms take money that we don't have. Potential movement on cyber charters but not optimistic. Allentown will spend \$70-80 mil on educating kids not in school district. Charter school reimbursement would alleviate almost all of Allentown structural deficit, but no dice. Until deficit in school districts is addressed, no way to address the deep needs of kids in schools

Any predictions on fracking tax or weed legalization revenue?

- Short answer: no. Shale tax has not been able to pass in last 7 years, and legislature is more against it now than before. Also, it probably would not generate as much money as we hope. Weed legalization has potential, maybe in next 10 years. Public is there but legislature is not. According to Schlossberg, marijuana legalization is difficult to talk about solely in revenue perspective. Because it needs to be focused on racial equality, criminal justice reform, police alignment, etc. just focusing on revenue gets lost in weeds. Neither is a panacea; both have consequences we need to prep for.

Where are the revenue streams that we need to keep up with spending?

- Schweyer and Schlossberg both believe a tax hike would work, but that likely will not happen. COVID is demonstrating that the vast inequality in PA, which would also be supported by a tax hike. But they cannot speak for other legislators.

Resources shared during the call:

St. Luke's Resources:

Star Community Health will be testing at the following locations/dates from 10am-2pm. Testing is FREE, does not require an appointment, and people do not need ID.

- 3/9: Sigal Center (Allentown)
- 3/10: Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley (Bethlehem)
- 3/11: Easton Area Neighborhood Center (Easton)

To Schedule a Vaccine go to: <https://www.slhn.org/covid-19/protect-yourself/covid-19-vaccine>

View the recording of the PPL & St. Luke's Health Equity & Education: A Discussion with the Community: Covid 19 & Vaccinations at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIHB-6QuKew&feature=youtu.be>

Listen to the St. Luke's Region's General Public COVID Vaccine Forum in Spanish at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KknloVM9Ag>

LVHN Resources:

Information specific to those 18-64 with high-risk conditions <https://www.lvhn.org/how-get-your-covid-19-vaccine/covid-19-vaccines-people-age-18-64-qualifying-medical-conditions>

LVHN Vaccine Phone Line: 833-LVHN-CVD (833-584-6283)

Central information hub: <https://www.LVHN.org/vaccines>

Job statistics from the Independent Fiscal Office: <http://www.ifo.state.pa.us/>