



Report of April 19, 2021

As always, the #1 Health & Wellness Issue is the pandemic. While there have been some major/positive developments again over the past month, there were some negative developments, as well. We need to constantly remind ourselves that we are not close to being out of the woods just yet and extreme caution still needs to be taken.

- **Adult Vaccinations** – Despite the current problems with the Johnson & Johnson “one & done” vaccine, which is currently “on pause”, vaccinations are currently available to anyone 16 years & older here in New York State and appointments, once extremely difficult to get, are now much more readily available. Unfortunately, there are still some concerns about the effectiveness of the current vaccines when it comes to the Covid variants being discovered (such as the UK variant) and just how long lasting these vaccines are. Pfizer has indicated that a 3rd shot and/or a yearly booster (much like an annual flu shot) may be required to stay protected from Covid. Another development to be aware of is that College Campuses are now being provided with vaccinations, with a strong push on getting as many college students vaccinated, as possible. In fact, a number of private colleges have already announced that students who are planning on attending in person classes this fall will need to be vaccinated before being allowed on campus. SUNY schools are not yet making this a requirement.
- **Children’s Vaccines** – Currently there is only one vaccine available for those 16 & 17 years old, but there is a possibility that an adolescent vaccine (12-15 yr. old) may be made available within the next few months, as Pfizer continues with their trials and appears to be close to seeking approval for distribution. There is still no timetable for when an “under 12” vaccine may become available, but there are trials already started for that vaccination, as well. Neither Moderna or Johnson & Johnson have yet to publicly announce their intentions, if any, regarding developing a vaccine suitable for those under 18 years of age.
- **Effect on Our Schools** – Last week New York State issued updated guidelines that included several changes in previously established protocols. Everyone should have received an email from New York State PTA regarding this, but if you need a copy, just provide me with your email and I will forward this information to you. The State also issued relaxed guidelines for June graduations and some districts are even considering allowing Senior Trips and/or Proms based on current positivity rates & precautions taken. It should be noted here that just because it may be allowed doesn’t mean there’s no risk associated with these activities. A perfect example is the resumption of High School athletics where a number of teams needed to cancel games due to players either having Covid or being quarantined due to exposure.

- **Legalization of Recreational Marijuana** – As most of you are aware, despite the best efforts of the NYS PTA, the use of recreational marijuana has been passed by the State Legislature and signed into law. While it will take some time for legal sales of cannabis to start taking place in the state, possession of less than 3oz of the substance is now legal and the criminal justice system has already started to expunge any prior criminal records of people convicted of marijuana offenses that would now be allowed under the new law. As a result of this legalization, I’ve been working

with our Advocacy Committee to see what local options we may have to limit the exposure of our children to marijuana in public spaces and we will be voting tonight on taking our concerns to Suffolk County with some requests for both new legislation and to more actively enforce existing laws on the books, such as the penalties allowed under Drug Free School Zones.

Should anyone have any questions regarding this month's report, please don't hesitate to contact me via email at: **gerardbringmann@gmail.com**

Respectfully submitted ... Gerry Bringmann