

Saturday, March 21, 2020

COVID-19 Response Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charlie Baker declared a State of Emergency to support the Commonwealth's response to coronavirus. On March 14, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the creation of a new COVID-19 Response Command Center. Secretary Marylou Sudders is leading the cross-secretariat response to the outbreak.

The Command Center is the Commonwealth's single point of strategic decision making and coordination for the Administration's comprehensive COVID-19 response.

In support of the Command Center, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Framingham has activated to Level 2 (Partial Activation). In addition, MEMA's Regional EOCs in Tewksbury, New Bedford, and Agawam have also been partially activated to support local communities.

Important protective measures to be aware of:

- [Gatherings of over 25 people are prohibited](#) until April 6th.
- On-premises consumption of food and drink at bars and restaurants is prohibited until April 6th.
- Elementary and Secondary Schools are closed until April 6th.
- Colleges and universities, both public and private, are urged to reduce the need for students to be on campus.
- Employers are encouraged to support alternative work arrangements, including allowing employees to work from home.
- Some government offices are closed, you should check the website or call ahead, to confirm hours of operation.
- MBTA trains and buses are running a [reduced service schedule](#).
- Public & Private daycare providers will be closed effective March 23, and Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs will be established to provide priority access for families of emergency personnel, medical staff, and others critical to confronting COVID-19.
- Professional Licenses for individuals in good standing will be extended for 90-days after the end of the public health emergency.

See a list of all [Public Health Orders & Guidance](#) Issued During the State of Emergency



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts *current as of 3/21*
525 Total Cases

2 Deaths

3,031 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory

2,176 additional tests performed to date by commercial laboratories

United States *current as of 3/20*
Total Cases Reported to CDC*:

** Includes Confirmed & Presumptive Positive*

15,219 Total Cases (+4,777)
337 Travel-Related (+47)
321 Close Contact (+11)
14,561 Under Investigation (+4,719)

201 Deaths (+51)

54 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, and US V.I.)

Social Distancing Basics:

If you go out:

- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and loved ones.

State Actions Today

Second COVID-19 Death in Massachusetts:

This evening, DPH announced that a woman in her 50s from Middlesex County was the second person in Massachusetts to die from COVID-19 related illness. She had a pre-existing condition predisposing her to more severe disease.

At a press conference this afternoon, Governor Baker provided information on several COVID-19 response matters, including:

Assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

- The Army Corps has the expertise and skills to design and build critical infrastructure in times of need.
- Commonwealth is working with the Corps on various topics including identifying existing facilities that could be converted or retrofitted into structures like hospitals or shelters.
- Governor also said that he would enlist support from our own Massachusetts National Guard for assistance.

Testing Update from Command Center

- The Command Center is carefully monitoring the Commonwealth's testing capacity and ways that we can increase testing for more residents.
- Significant progress in testing this week.
- The number of tests completed in a day in Massachusetts has more than doubled since Wednesday, from 520 to 1,116 today.

Drive Through Test Sites:

- The Governor spoke about the first privately owned urgent care center in Massachusetts starting to conduct drive thru testing for COVID-19. AFC Urgent Care in Waltham is testing pre-screed patients waiting to be tested.
- This new site is in addition to the CVS Shrewsbury pilot location announced Thursday — 1 of 40 CVS drive thru locations in the US - and they play an important role in our overall effort to expand testing capacity across the Commonwealth.
- The Commonwealth will continue working on the testing issue around the clock with the federal government, private labs, our health care providers and local health care authorities to further increase our capacity.

Emergency Childcare Centers Update:

- Last week, the Commonwealth announced that effective Monday, March 23, all early education centers and family childcare providers will be closed.
- Starting Monday, selected sites will open to serve as emergency drop-in childcare services for families with no other options to continue going to work to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of the Commonwealth's residents.
- Child Care is meant to be for those who must report to work. Outside of the obvious emergency responders and medical professionals, this includes critical service workers like grocery store employees.
- As of Friday, the Commonwealth had approved over 300 sites to start operations on Monday. We expect more to come online eventually, **but this needs to be implemented safely and the sites should only be used as a last resort.** (For more visit the [Department of Early Education & Care website](#))

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DAILY SITUATION REPORT

Protections for Individuals Covered by MassHealth & the Health Connector:

- Yesterday, the Administration announced important protections for MassHealth members and individuals covered by the Health Connector effective March 18, 2020.
- MassHealth and the Health Connector will protect coverage for all individuals who have Medicaid coverage as of March 18, 2020 and for all individuals approved for coverage during the national emergency.
 - This protection will extend to one month after the national emergency is over.
 - Coverage will only end if an individual requests termination of eligibility or if they are no longer a resident of the state.
 - Members will not lose coverage or have a decrease in benefits for any other reason.
 - For individuals who have received notices that their coverage ended after March 18, 2020, no change in coverage will occur. These individuals do not have to send in any paperwork to keep their coverage, it is protected. This will ensure all MassHealth members have access to testing and treatment they may need related to COVID-19.

Recent MBTA Actions:

- **Commuter Rail Capacity Changes to Service Critical Healthcare Workforce:** Increased early morning trains currently being planned for on Lowell, Fitchburg, and Newburyport/ Rockport rail lines, effective TBD.
- **Limited Restoration of Ferry:** Initiate limited ferry service from Hingham to Charlestown with no plans to stop at Islands etc., effective mid-week next week.
- **Rear Door Boarding with Front Door Accessibility:** “rear door boarding” is being planned on the light rail lines, bus and on the Mattapan High Speed Line. Front door will be reserved for those passengers requiring an accessible egress. This temporary step is effective at the start of revenue service on Saturday, March 21.
- **RIDE Passengers Limited to No More Than 2-Person per Vehicle:** Limiting the number of people on RIDE paratransit vehicles to no more than two, with an increased frequency of sanitizing protocols.
- **Bus Lobby /or vestibule cleaning:** immediate increase in frequency of sanitizing & cleaning of bus vehicle lobbies. The current plan being negotiated calls for cleaning to occur every four service hours in addition to the overnight cleaning.

Stay Informed

Key Public Health Messages for All Residents:

- Protect yourself by following public health advice about keeping your hands clean and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home if you are sick. If you need to consult a health care provider, call ahead first or use telehealth services.
- Protect others who are most at risk of COVID-19 by keeping your distance from people (at least 6 feet away from others), especially those who are older, and people living with chronic health conditions.
- If you are outside, avoid crowds.
- Don't shake hands or hug.
- Stay connected to friends and loved ones by phone or through other technology.
- Get information from trusted sources. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid19> for the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results.

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- Take care of your emotional health and help others do the same. If you need emotional support during these stressful times, call 2-1-1 and choose the “CALL2TALK” option

Communications Resources:

- New [Social Distancing](#) infographic released on website.
- Social Distancing messages are now on billboards and will soon be available on public transit. They are also now translated into multiple languages.
- There is [a new video on Social Distancing](#) specifically targeted specifically at youth.

COVID-2019 infographic for posting in all public places: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/stop-the-spread-of-germs-respiratory-diseases-like-flu-and-covid-19/download>

A short video for social media, waiting rooms, and other locations: <https://youtu.be/HhUpkGxyjS4>

Social media – follow and retweet DPH on Twitter @MassDPH, updated several times per day.

Massachusetts 2-1-1 - Massachusetts residents are urged to use 2-1-1 for information, resources, and referrals regarding COVID-19. Operators are staffing this hotline 24/7 and translators are available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cellphone or use the live chat option on the [Mass 2-1-1 website](#).

- 2-1-1 answered nearly 1,800 calls on 3/20, bringing the total number of calls to **12,856** since activation.