

Friday, April 17, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

State Actions in Today's Report:

- Daily Case Update (Link in sidebar)
- Ongoing Steps to Address Homelessness during COVID-19, and New Childcare Actions
- Focus on Food Security
- Distribution of PPE to All Emergency Responders in Massachusetts
- Update on Mobile Testing Program & Cases in LTC Facilities
- Update on Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes

Baker-Polito Administration Announces PPE Distribution to Emergency Responders (Details Below)



Helpful Links:

- [Jobs Available to Assist Long Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Mass.Gov/covid19](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [FrontlineMA.org](#)
- [Emergency Childcare Site](#)
- [MBTA.com/covid19](#)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)
- [Complete List of Emergency Orders & Guidance](#)

Background on the Command Center

The COVID Command Center, under the leadership of Secretary Marylou Sudders and reporting to Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, is the Commonwealth's single point of strategic decision making and coordination for the Administration's comprehensive COVID-19 response.



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts **current as of 4/17**

34,402 Total Cases ([click here for more information](#))

1,404 Deaths

148,744 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.

United States **current as of 4/17**

Case numbers are updated regularly at noon. Saturday/Sunday reports are preliminary and have not been confirmed with state/territorial health departments.

Total Cases Reported to CDC:

661,712 Total Cases

33,049 Deaths

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

Social Distancing Basics:

- ✓ Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and loved ones.

If you go out:

- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug

State Actions Today

Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders to provide several updates on the Commonwealth's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. [\(See video here\)](#)

Ongoing Steps to Address Homelessness during COVID-19, and New Childcare Actions [\(News Release\)](#)

The Baker-Polito Administration today outlined its ongoing comprehensive strategy to address homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Administration also announced additional support for foster families and a new emergency order authorizing the creation of emergency childcare sites.

Comprehensive Steps to Address Homelessness: The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes that the challenges of COVID-19 are being felt especially hard among most vulnerable populations, including the 18,000 Massachusetts residents experiencing homelessness. Massachusetts was among the first states to create designated isolation sites for COVID-positive homeless individuals, the result of a partnership between the Commonwealth, homeless shelters and municipalities that has been underway for weeks.

The Administration's strategy to support homeless individuals and families includes five key initiatives:

- 1. Establishing Isolation and Recovery Sites For COVID-19 Positive Homeless Individuals:** The Administration has opened five state-operated isolation and recovery sites across the state to provide regional solutions for people experiencing homelessness that need a safe place to isolate and recover after testing positive for COVID-19. Statewide, these sites have a capacity of 550 beds and are staffed with 24/7 security and nursing staff, and are located in Everett, Lexington, Northampton, Pittsfield, and Taunton. These sites augment medical facilities at the [Boston Hope field hospital](#) and [Newton Pavilion](#), which offer 732 respite beds for individuals who are homeless. As of April 15, over 160 people experiencing homelessness have been served by a state-operated Isolation and Recovery Site.
- 2. Deploying Supplies to Support Local Quarantine Solutions:** With the Administration's support, communities across the Commonwealth are standing up quarantine sites to provide a safe place for homeless individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 but are not symptomatic. Exposed individuals quarantine for 14 days to ensure they do not develop symptoms of COVID-19. The Administration created an expedited process for homeless shelters and municipalities to request equipment and supplies for quarantine solutions, such as tents, beds, and portable showers. Additional information on requesting support can be found [here](#). To date, eleven communities have received supplies from MEMA to support their quarantine efforts: Brockton, Cambridge, Fitchburg, Framingham, Greenfield, Hyannis, Lowell, Southbridge, Taunton, Waltham, and Worcester.
- 3. Supporting Families in Emergency Assistance and Domestic Violence Shelters:** The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) have instituted practices outlined by the CDC to mitigate COVID-19 outbreaks within congregate shelters. Shelter coordinators have implemented health screening procedures during the placement process and have reinforced social distancing and infection control practices for shared spaces. DHCD has increased the state's scattered site capacity to enable additional depopulation, quarantine, and isolation of families at various stages of COVID-19 exposure. Extended leaves from shelter have also been approved for families that have temporary alternative housing available with relatives. DHCD has developed

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protocols for shelters dealing with families that have tested positive for COVID-19, especially when some family members test negative. This group has also convened a case team to triage unique circumstances.

4. **Expediting PPE Distribution to Shelters:** The Administration has established an expedited [process](#) for homeless shelters to request PPE and other supplies necessary to maintain appropriate cleaning and sanitation practices. As of April 15th, Massachusetts has distributed masks, surgical masks, face shields, gloves, partitions, temperature strips, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies to 84 shelter sites.
5. **Providing Technical Assistance to Organizations, Municipalities Seeking Funding through FEMA's Public Assistance Program:** FEMA will reimburse 75% of municipality and non-profit organization costs associated with qualifying quarantine and isolation services for people experiencing homelessness. Massachusetts has established a dedicated portal to support municipalities and organizations through the grant application process, developing robust partnerships across the state to ensure all applicants are well-supported. As of April 15, 236 applicants have been processed and approved by MEMA.

Foster Care Relief: The Administration recognizes that as result of schools closing and closure of non-essential businesses, foster families are incurring increased costs. Foster parents are vital to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and its mission to keep children safe, as they care for some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable children who have been abused and neglected.

To support foster parents providing departmental foster care, DCF will be making a \$100 monthly payment for each child in placement on the 15th of April, May and June. Currently, on average, foster parents are reimbursed between \$830 to \$975 per child per month, depending on the age of the child in their care. This \$100 additional payment represents a 10% - 12% increase over current reimbursements for foster parents. The relief will benefit the approximately 4,500 foster families who provide departmental foster care for 6,700 children. This includes unrestricted and kinship foster families.

Emergency Childcare: Yesterday, Governor Baker issued an emergency order authorizing the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to establish emergency sites for children and youth living in residential homes that have tested positive for COVID-19 and need to be cared for in quarantine or isolation. [Read the Order](#)

[Read More from EEC](#)

Focus on Food Security

At today's daily briefing, Secretary Sudders provided an update on the pandemic's impact on the SNAP and WIC programs, and the work of the Department of Transitional Assistance and Department of Public Health to meet increased demand for these important safety net programs.

Prior to the current public health crisis, one in nine Massachusetts residents were receiving SNAP benefits, of which 34% were children, 36% identifies as having a disability and 22% were seniors. Since the beginning of March, DTA has seen the **weekly average of SNAP applications increase by nearly 400%**. That is from about 4000 to 17,000 applications.

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children—otherwise known as WIC—is a nutrition program that provides healthy foods, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, and referrals to other health and social services, free of charge, to Massachusetts families who qualify. WIC similarly provides benefits to recipients on an EBT card. WIC serves pregnant women and new mothers, infants, and children up to the age of five.

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- While SNAP and WIC have applied flexibility to program operations – moving services entirely online, processing rising applications efficiently and remotely – there continues to be demand for these programs during this pandemic. DTA is in the process of transitioning its case processing functions to fully remote work to protect the health and safety of DTA staff while strengthening the agency’s ability to process applications and support the stability of benefits for existing clients.
- DTA has explored all flexibilities to meet the needs of households during this trying time:
 1. DTA received approval from the USDA to issue **additional SNAP payments** to bring families’ benefits up to the maximum monthly amount for those families not already receiving the [maximum benefit amount](#).
 - **Initial payments began the last week of March to more than 240K households, and** infused \$42 million in federal funding into our economy.
 2. DTA received approval from the USDA to **extend certification periods for six months** for any SNAP recipient due to recertify in March, April and May, adding benefit stability for existing clients, and freeing staff time for new applications.
 3. DTA received approval from the USDA to **modify the application process** by forgoing the traditional interview if certain conditions are met at the time of application.
- While DTA offices are closed to in-person services, applicants and clients are able to connect with DTA online and over the phone for all services.
 1. Potential clients can check eligibility in about 10 seconds and/or apply for SNAP benefits online at [DTAConnect.com](#).
 2. Clients can check their case status, see an EBT card balance, upload and submit documents and more on [DTAConnect.com](#) and DTA Connect mobile app.
 3. Project Bread’s FoodSource Hotline offers free, comprehensive statewide food assistance. Help is offered in 160 languages & there is a line dedicated to helping those that are hearing impaired. For more information & hours, visit <http://projectbread.org/gethelp>.

Massachusetts WIC

- Ordinarily, WIC services are provided at nearly 120 locations across Massachusetts. During the COVID-19 emergency, all WIC appointments are being conducted by phone and WIC food benefits are being issued remotely. To connect with the WIC Program,
 - Visit www.mass.gov/wic. New applicants are encouraged to click “Apply Online for WIC” to get started. After the online application is completed, it will automatically be sent to the local WIC program closest to the family’s home, and WIC staff will reach out.
 - Interested families can also contact a local WIC program directly by phone or email; the complete list of contact information can be found on the WIC website. Information is also available by calling 1-800-WIC-1007 or 617-721-6601.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Massachusetts WIC has received several waivers from USDA to allow more streamlined, remote WIC services for participants.
 - All WIC services are being provided by phone by nearly 500 staff across the state. These services are not just eligibility screens but include dietary assessments, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to any identified needed health or social services.
- Massachusetts WIC is seeing small but steady growth in caseload, and a significant improvement in retention of participants already engaged in WIC. The numbers of online applications have at least doubled compared to last year at this time. Local programs report that they are able to keep up with the demand.

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Distribution of PPE to All Emergency Responders in Massachusetts ([News Release](#))

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced the distribution of approximately 200,000 respirator masks for all local law enforcement officers and firefighters to ensure they have the protective equipment during the COVID-19 crisis. These FDA-approved respirator masks will be distributed to all local law enforcement officers, including sheriffs and college and university police, and firefighters starting today through a coordinated effort by the COVID-19 Response Command Center and MEMA. Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers are continuing to receive these types of masks and other PPE.

To facilitate quick distribution of these masks, MEMA is employing a regional point of distribution (POD) model where communities can pick up their supply of masks at their designated MEMA POD. These POD sites are open today and have already distributed tens of thousands of masks to first responders in the first few hours.

This new distribution will ensure that local law enforcement and firefighters will have five respirator masks each, equivalent to a one month's supply. Including conservation methods currently being used by some organizations, this will provide each individual a mask per week and a spare, allowing the mask to dry overnight and reuse for up to one week.

The Baker-Polito Administration and its COVID-19 Response Command Center continue to prioritize the procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment for front-line workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of yesterday, the Commonwealth has delivered over four million pieces of PPE statewide. This includes over 2.3 million gloves, over 370,000 masks from the "AirKraft" shipment, almost 190,000 gowns and 380 ventilators.

Update on Testing

As today, **148,744** tests have been conducted; **7,971** new tests conducted today. Daily test reporting data, including number of positive cases, can be found at [here](#) at 4:00 PM each day.

Update on Mobile Testing Program for Long Term Care, Assisted Living Residences and DDS Group Homes

The Mobile Testing Program has expanded and can now test both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents and staff at nursing homes, rest homes, Assisted Living Residences, and the Department of Developmental Services group homes. Facilities with clinical capacity, can also order test kits to perform themselves. The program operates under the auspices of the Massachusetts National Guard, in partnership with the Department of Public Health and Broad Institute of Cambridge, See a summary below of activity today and since the launch of the program.



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Onsite Testing

Date	Number of Tests Completed	Facilities Visited
4/16	655	8
Total (as of 4/16)	6,500	287

Testing Kits Provided

Date	Number of Kits Sent	Facility Count
4/16	771	16
Total (as of 4/16)	11,766	119

Cases in Long term Care Facilities (as of 4/17)

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	5142
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	240
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	702

Expanded Data Reporting

The Command Center continues to provide the most updated data related to cases, planning and response at the links below.

- Daily dashboard data [are published here](#)
- Cases, city/town, & hospital facility data [are published here](#)
- PPE distribution data [are published here](#)
- Hospital capacity published data [are published here](#)

Other Important Updates

Holyoke Soldiers' Home

- The Clinical Command continues to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak while bringing on additional executive consultant/management staff for nursing, facilities, operations and administration to help support and complement the existing staff on an interim basis and to ensure there is sufficient management and subject matter expertise. This work is being led by Administrator Val Liptak, RN, who continues to lead the Soldiers' Home through this work, including enforcing quarantine zones for COVID-19 positive residents, enforcing use of PPE and monitoring supply, and ensuring increased disinfection protocols.
 - The Home is maintaining strong staff-to-resident ratios with continued presence of the Massachusetts National Guard trained medical and operational staff, and will recruit new staff and monitor staffing plans.
- Additional staff with nursing and facilities expertise are being brought onboard, including four additional nursing executives coming next week to focus on training and development, monitoring infection control procedures, staffing, quality improvement. There will also be a facilities expert starting today as Interim Safety and Operations Director.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home is closely tracking personal protective equipment (PPE) closely, and this week received deliveries of 50,000 surgical masks and 3,000 gowns from the Department of Public Health. The PPE supply will continue to be closely tracked and proper use will continue to be enforced.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home is regularly communicating with veteran residents' health care proxies and is scheduling regular updates for families, which is made possible through the additional clinical case management nursing staff that was brought on board.

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- Families can call the Family Hotline at 413-552-4764 Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., and Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.; Families can also request updates via email at CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov.
- Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file. If a family member requests an update and is **not** the health care proxy, the name of the health care proxy will be shared and it will be suggested that the health care proxy should call and request the update.
- **The total numbers at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home as of Friday:**
 - 56 veteran resident deaths (47 positive, 7 negatives, 1 pending, 1 unknown)
 - Today's deaths include 4 positive DNH, DNR
 - 92 veteran residents have tested positive
 - 73 veteran residents have tested negative
 - 5 veteran residents have pending tests
 - 81 employees have tested positive

Chelsea Soldiers' Home

- Chelsea Soldiers' Home is continuing conversations with the Veterans' Administration and is preparing additional veteran residents for proactive transfer to another VA facility for additional monitoring and care.
 - All veteran residents have been tested and the results have been received. If residents are positive, they are being isolated and their health is closely monitored, and if they test negative, they are appropriately cohorted and monitored.
 - The Soldiers' Home is accepting Veterans back who tested positive and were proactively sent out to other facilities, but who have been medically cleared to return to the facility. They will temporarily stay on a dedicated ward, where their health will be monitored before returning to their respective wards.
 - Additional wards have been established for veterans who are symptomatic but had negative tests.
- Staffing levels continue to be monitored closely by the Chelsea clinical command and they are being augmented by contract staff, and as staffing needs have been identified, 42 slots have been filled through contracts with staffing agencies.
 - Staff who have tested positive and are therefore quarantined/out from work in accordance with CDC guidelines.
 - The Chelsea Soldiers' Home clinical command continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including regular coordinating calls with the VA Health Care System, daily monitoring of personal protective equipment (PPE) supply, and continuously reviewing and implementing infection control policy.
- Superintendent Poppe and Deputy Superintendent Sheehan held a Question and Answer session with Veterans who reside in the domiciliary building - a dormitory style residence - yesterday to offer clarity on the ongoing situation, including discussing the new curfew. Social Distancing was observed during this session.
- There have been more than 50 video visits between veteran residents and their loved ones complete with support from the Chelsea Soldiers' Home Social Work team.
 - Brighton Marine has generously donated 25 iPads to help our Veterans stay connected.
 - Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting the Home at CSH@mass.gov and through phone and video conversations. Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical

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information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.

- **The total numbers at Chelsea Soldiers' Home as of Friday:**
 - 12 veteran resident deaths (8 tested positive, 4 tested negative)
 - 28 veteran residents who have tested positive
 - 207 veteran residents who have tested negative
 - 51 staff tested positive

How to Help Out

- [Donate](#) to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.
- Volunteer opportunities for health professionals: [Please click here.](#)
- Volunteer for the new Community Tracing Collaborative by visiting the [PIH Ma-Response](#) page [Or DIRECT link](#) to recruiter web.
- Donate or sell personal protective equipment: [Please click here.](#)
- Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here.](#)
- Apply for Jobs at COVID-19 Temporary Care Sites ([Details Here](#)).

Give Blood:

As you are aware, the COVID-19 virus has caused the cancellation of blood drives across the Commonwealth. There is an urgent need ***now***. The Governor has deemed "Blood and plasma donors and the employees of the organizations that operate and manage related activities" as an essential service. Your support is needed to communicate to your residents that the need is urgent, and donating is a necessity to supply the hospitals with the blood our neighbors require. Donating blood is safe and people should not hesitate to give. In addition, there is a need for community blood drive sites in the eastern part of the state. Identifying donation sites is vital to meet the demand as we go forward. Your local knowledge, suggestions of sites, and potential partners are crucial to meeting the needs of our neighbors who need blood and blood products. To schedule a new blood drive contact Bill Forsyth at (617) 699-3808 or at email William.Forsyth@redcross.org.

Those who are healthy, feeling well and eligible to give blood or platelets, are urged to make an appointment to donate as soon as possible by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Resources

Disaster Recovery Information

On March 27, the President [declared](#) a Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts related to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Through this declaration, federal aid will be made available to cities and towns, state agencies, and certain non-profits in all Massachusetts counties to help pay for emergency protective measures (response costs) related to the COVID-19 pandemic. MEMA's Recovery Unit has developed a [website](#) with information and guidance regarding the disaster declaration, eligibility criteria, and the application process.

Massachusetts Frontline Worker Resources

In an effort to connect frontline workers with various supports such as free/discounted meals, guidance on accessing PPE and priority testing, emergency child care, and alternate housing options, the Attorney General's Office developed the Frontline Workers Resource website. The website can be accessed at [FrontlineMA.org](https://www.frontlinema.org).

COVID-19 Public Resources Map

MEMA, together with MA VOAD and other partners, has developed a [COVID-19 Public Resources Map](#) showing the location of resources available to the public, such as food banks, houses of worship, and Project Bread site locations. Please note that this map is not inclusive of all resources, and is only as accurate as the information that has been provided to MEMA.

Massachusetts COVID-19 Response Dashboard

MEMA has developed and maintains a public-facing COVID-19 ArcGIS Online dashboard, available [here](#). This dashboard is continuously updated and captures information about current COVID 19 case counts, cases by age, cases by county, hospital status, hospital bed status, death tolls, and deaths by age. Users should refresh the dashboard on a daily basis as enhancements are continuously being added.

Stay Informed

- Get information from trusted sources. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid19> for the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results. Call 2-1-1 with questions. Text the keyword **COVIDMA** to **888-777** to receive notifications to your phone. To receive these notifications in Spanish, text **COVIDMAESP** to **888-777**
- 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.
 - Samaritans is continuing operations 24/7, as always. During this unprecedented time, it can feel overwhelming to receive constant messages about COVID-19. Call or text their 24/7 helpline any time at 877-870-4673.
 - The Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990, is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster, including disease outbreaks like COVID-19. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories.

Please share our Communications Resources

Infographics

- [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
- Social distancing: for [youth](#) for [general audience](#)
- [Coping](#) with stress or fear
- What to do [if you are sick](#)
- 10 tips for at-home [quarantine or self-monitoring](#)

Short videos:

NEW: [10 Tips for at home quarantine or self-monitoring](#)

[Stop the Spread of Germs like Seasonal Flu and COVID-19](#) (:30)

[Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing](#) (:30)

[How Young People Can Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing](#) (:30)

[Coping with Stress and Fear from COVID-19](#) (:30)

[Stay Home - Save Lives](#) (:06)

Spanish Radio Spots (available on request):

- Prevent the Spread of Germs
- Social Distancing
- Stay Home. Stay Safe. Save Lives.

Social media – please continue to follow and re-tweet DPH on Twitter @MassDPH, updated several times per day.

Requests for Red Cross Emergency Response

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross (ARC) of Massachusetts is committed to fulfilling our Mission of providing emergency relief to our neighbors following a home fire or other disaster. In order to maintain our commitment to assisting to those affected while balancing our volunteer workforce safety, we have implemented the below temporary changes to our response protocols. ARC we will be responding to your requests for service with a virtual response and ask your assistance in sharing this information with your Incident Commanders and Dispatch Center personnel.

Notification: Continue to request a response by contacting our long-standing emergency line **800-564-1234**.

When calling: Please have contact information for the head of household for each displaced family unit.

A point of contact from the Fire Department or Emergency Management on-scene that we can coordinate with if needed. Quick assessment as to extent of damage.

What we will do:

- Contact each head of household by phone or video chat. Open a virtual case for each affected family.
- Arrange for lodging if needed.
- Deliver a Client Assistance Card (financial assistance) to hotel, family member's home, etc.
- Provide Recovery guidance and assistance in the days following the incident.

If a virtual response is not possible, we will send a minimal number of Red Cross volunteers to the scene to orchestrate the virtual intake process. We value our partnership with your department and encourage you to contact us with any questions.