

Friday, March 20, 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. Representatives from the following agencies and organizations were present in the SEOC today: American Red Cross, Dept. of Environmental Protection, Dept. of Fire Services, FEMA, HHS / Dept. InfraGard, MA Dept. of Public Health, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, MA National Guard, MA Office on Disability, MA State Police, MassDOT/MBTA, Northwest Incident Management Team, and Salvation Army.

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 3/20*
413 Total Cases

1 Death

2,266 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory

1,425 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)

150 Deaths (+53)

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

At a 2:00 PM news conference today, Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, Secretary Sudders, and Commissioner Bharel provided an update on the current situation and announced the following:

First COVID-19 Death in Massachusetts: ([News Release](#))

A man in his 80s from Suffolk County is the first person in Massachusetts to die from COVID-19. The man had been hospitalized and had pre-existing health conditions that put him at higher risk for COVID-19.

Financial Support for Health Care Providers: ([News Release](#))

The Administration's COVID-19 Response Command Center continues to identify and prioritize efforts to ensure the Commonwealth's health care system has the resources it needs to support the response to COVID-19. Today, the Administration announced a \$200 million infusion in cash at MassHealth for critical, acute care and safety-net health care providers, as well as for certain health care providers required to help ensure that our members receiving care in the community or nursing facilities do not need to go to the hospital. These will be accelerated payments and cash advances for immediate, stopgap relief to ensure the front-line health care system is able to provide necessary resources to patients.

Life Sciences Emergency Supply Hub:

Life sciences industry leaders joined the Administration today to highlight the new [Massachusetts Life Sciences Emergency Supply Hub](#). MassBio, in partnership with MassMEDIC, the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, and the Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals, launched the Supply Hub to help coordinate efforts aimed at bringing additional supplies and resources to the Commonwealth's health care institutions as they test and treat patients with COVID-19. The initiative calls on life sciences and health care organizations in the state to donate supplies needed to combat COVID-19. MassBio will share information with the Department of Public Health to triage and connect supplies with those healthcare providers that need them.

New Drive-Through Testing Site:

On Thursday, the Commonwealth's first large-scale drive-thru COVID-19 testing site launched at CVS in Shrewsbury. The new site is the result of an ongoing partnership between the Baker-Polito Administration, the federal government, local health authorities, and CVS. The site is designated for emergency personnel and first responders, expanding testing access to front line workers. Currently, this site is one of over 40 sites launching throughout the country over the next week, with test kits supplied by the federal government.

MassHealth Waiver and Other Requests:

Massachusetts is filing a waiver request today with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that will give the state and its Medicaid program, MassHealth, more flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 public health crisis. If allowed, the waiver would enable the Commonwealth to fast-track MassHealth enrollment, streamline administrative requirements for providers, and deliver critically needed health care services easier during the COVID-19 emergency. Through the waiver request and other federal requests, the Commonwealth is seeking flexibility to address key areas of need:

- Allow for non-traditional sites of care to expand surge capacity, such as use of testing tents and overflow hospital sites
- Allow new providers, including out of state providers, a streamlined pathway to practice in the state including caring for MassHealth members
- Allow physician assistants to practice independently
- Provide flexibility to hospitals and skilled nursing facilities to meet increasing demand

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- Expand MassHealth Hospital-Determined Presumptive Eligibility to all individuals – which MassHealth already expanded through a public health order last week – including children, older adults, and individuals who have received MassHealth benefits within the past 12 months
- Allow medications to be delivered to members, and waive a signature requirement for these prescriptions
- Waive face-to-face requirements for certain services, including Home and Community Based Services, and behavioral health evaluations for Schedule II-IV prescriptions

The Administration announced important protections for MassHealth members and individuals covered by the Health Connector effective March 18, 2020. (Guidelines forthcoming.)

Expanded Small Business Resources:

Earlier this week, the Administration announced a [\\$10 Million Small Business Recovery Loan Fund](#) to provide financial relief to small businesses and non-profits impacted by COVID-19. Today, the Administration announced that MassDevelopment's Board of Directors will meet next week to vote on a partnership that will make an **additional \$10 million available for the Small Business Recovery Loan Fund.**

The state-level emergency loan fund is aimed at providing crucial resources for small businesses that will supplement important federal relief. Governor Baker on Tuesday [formally requested](#) disaster relief from the federal Small Business Administration, and with this week's [announcement that that request had been granted](#), Massachusetts businesses impacted by COVID-19 may now apply for low-interest loans.

Tax Relief for Businesses:

The Baker-Polito Administration is announcing tax penalty relief to support businesses affected by COVID-19. The Department of Revenue today announced that it will waive any late-file or late-pay penalties for returns and payment due for meals and room occupancy taxes between March 20 and May 31, 2020.

Limiting Need for In-Person RMV Visits:

The Administration today is taking further action to limit the need for customers to visit the Registry of Motor Vehicles in person. Today, Governor Baker [issued an order](#) allowing the Registrar to extend vehicle registrations and modify the conditions of registrations, plates and titles. It also enables the waiver of certain inspection requirements.

Workforce Guidance for Schools:

Earlier this week, Governor Baker [ordered all elementary and secondary schools to close](#) for educational purposes until April 6. Recognizing that local school districts employ a significant number of hourly employees, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education today is issuing guidance to local school districts recommending they continue paying hourly employees, while suggesting they continue to engage in professional development.

Smoke Alarm Inspections:

Governor Baker today [issued an order](#) making a change to the inspection statutes that require a smoke and carbon dioxide alarm inspection prior to a residential real estate transaction. The Order would permit the inspection to be deferred if the buyer contractually assumes responsibility for installing the detectors and the subsequent inspection happens within 90 days of the conclusion of the COVID-19 emergency.

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.
- 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.

- DPH working on an infographic focusing on behavioral health.

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 2,650 calls on 3/19, bringing the total number of calls to **11,063** since activation.