

Thursday, January 14, 2021

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

The Command Center Situation Report is published weekly.
The next report will be published on Thursday, 1/21/21.



During a visit to a vaccine clinic in the city of Worcester on Monday, Governor Baker greets a health care worker helping to vaccinate area first responders. COVID-19 vaccinations for first responders kicked-off across the Commonwealth this week.

In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
 - \$78.5 Million in Additional Grants for Small Businesses
 - Congregate Care Announcement, Updates to Vaccine Phase Two
 - First COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Site at Gillette Stadium
 - Governor Baker Signs Health Care Legislation
 - Pooled Testing Initiative for Massachusetts Schools, Districts
 - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
 - Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes Weekly Update

Helpful Links:

- **NEW:** [When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine in Massachusetts](#)
- Apply for jobs at COVID-19 Alternate Care Sites:
 - [UMassMemorialResponds.com](#)
 - [LowellGeneralResponds.com](#)
- [Public Messaging Resources for Municipalities & Businesses](#)
- [Mass.gov/findfoodhelp](#)
- [HandHoldMA.org](#)
- [Reopening Massachusetts](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts **current as of 1/14**

433,297 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

13,156 Deaths among confirmed cases

12,064,398 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States **Last Updated 1/14**

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:

22,965,957 Total Cases

383,351 Deaths

57 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Marianas, Marshall Islands, American Samoa, and US V.I.)

Social Distancing Basics:

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

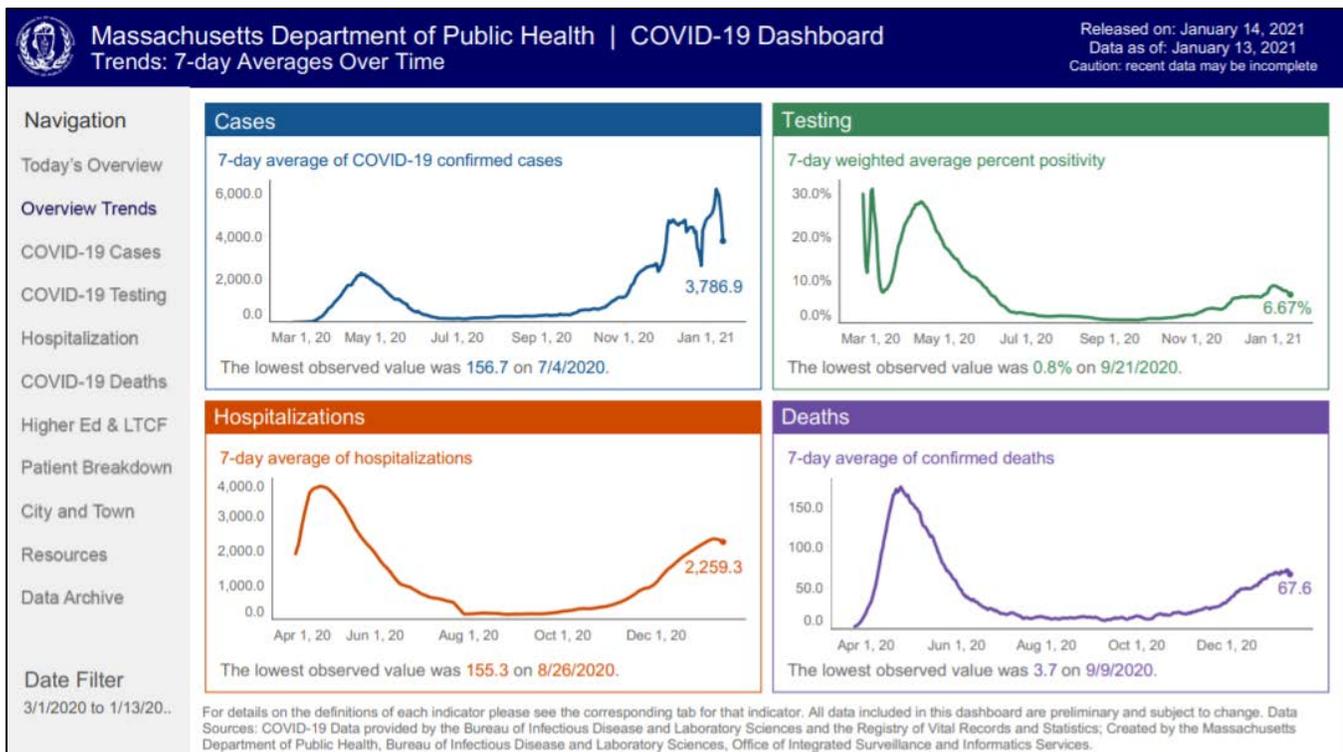
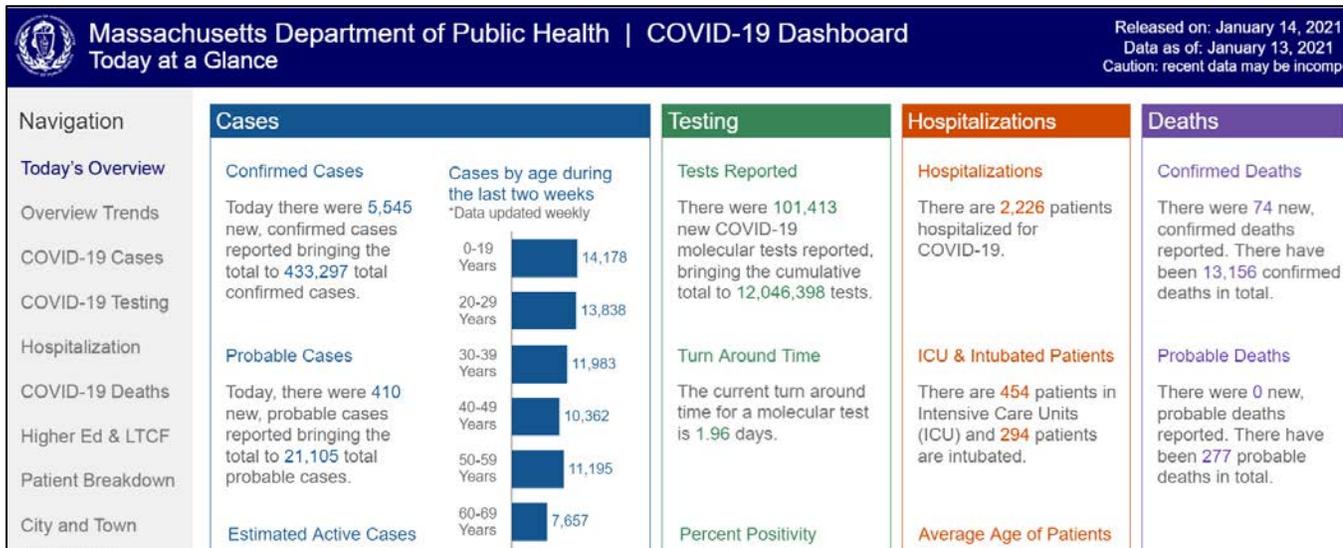
If you go out for essential needs:

- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Wear a face covering or mask if physical distancing is not possible.

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Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update

Key indicators from today's interactive dashboard are below.



Weekly Public Health Report:

The Command Center released the [Weekly Public Health Report, with town by town information, including the weekly listing of city and town risk levels](#) on Thursday, 1/14. The report also includes granular information on cases by county, biweekly testing rates, contact tracing information (including active COVID cluster information

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by Exposure Setting Type), hospitalization data, race and ethnicity data, information about cases in long term care facilities, and PPE distribution data.

Week in Review: State Actions

\$78.5 Million in Additional Grants to 1,595 Businesses Most Impacted by the Pandemic

Yesterday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced \$78.5 million in awards to 1,595 additional small businesses in the third round of grants through the COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation.

To date, the Baker-Polito Administration has awarded close to \$195 million in direct financial support to 4,119 small businesses out of a \$668 million fund set up to support small businesses across the Commonwealth.



Additional grants will be announced in the coming weeks for thousands of additional businesses.

“Our administration set up a \$668 million grant program to support small businesses statewide that are struggling from COVID-19 impacts,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.** “Today, we are awarding our third round of grants, for a total of \$195 million in direct financial support for over 4,000 small businesses, with more yet to come. Supporting small businesses is vital to our economic recovery, and we’ll continue to expedite this grant process to send out funds to provide some much needed financial relief.”

“Understanding how significant the need for financial assistance is, we’ve taken important steps to ensure these resources are directed toward the businesses that have historically been at a disadvantage even before the pandemic, or are located in communities, especially Gateway Cities, that have suffered disproportionately because of this virus,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** “I’m grateful for the partnership with MGCC to provide this important assistance, and I look forward to the coming weeks when we can award even more support for the economic sectors that are most in need.”

“Through each of the three grant rounds, small businesses are receiving essential support at a critical time in our fight against COVID-19,” **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy.** “I want to acknowledge the team at Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation for their efforts to stand up this impactful program. It is important that we as a Commonwealth continue our dual paths of combating the virus and supporting economic recovery.”

“At our core, MGCC has the responsibility to create economic opportunities and provide support for small businesses, and the pandemic has given our mission an enhanced importance,” **said MGCC President and CEO Larry Andrews.** “As we transition from targeting small businesses to specific economic sectors affected by COVID-19, I want to express my gratitude to all of the partner organizations who helped raise awareness among the businesses with the greatest need and those serving communities that have traditionally been at a disadvantage.”

Representing key industries that have been especially impacted during the pandemic, restaurants and bars, personal care, retail, and health care businesses received the highest number of individual grants this round. These industries have been particularly hard hit during the pandemic. Other grant recipients include women

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owned businesses, businesses in Gateway Cities, businesses in underserved markets and businesses that have previously received no other forms of financial assistance.

New Grant Program Application Deadline: Friday Night, Jan. 15

In addition to administering the small business grant program, MGCC also oversees the Sector-Specific Small Business Relief Grant Program, which was launched as a component of the \$668 million [relief package announced in late-December 2020](#).

Prospective applicants to the Sector-Specific Small Business Relief Grant Program are reminded that the deadline to [submit an application](#) is 11:59 PM on Friday, January 15. Awards are expected to be announced in February.

The [Sector-Specific Small Business Relief Grant Program](#), which targets industries experiencing the most significant economic hardship and a loss of revenue, will offer grants up to \$75,000, but not more than three months' operating expenses, to be used for payroll and employee benefit costs, mortgage interest, rent, utilities and interest on other debt obligations.

The Sector-Specific Program will give preference to the following:

- Restaurants, bars, caterers and food trucks;
- Indoor recreation and entertainment establishments;
- Gyms and fitness centers;
- Event-support companies (photographers, videographers, etc.);
- Personal services (nail salons, barbershops, independent pharmacies, etc.);
- Independent retailers.

Program details, application instructions, eligibility and documentation requirements, and more are available at www.empoweringsmallbusiness.org.

Plan to Begin Vaccinations for Congregate Care Facilities, Updates to Phase Two

The Baker-Polito Administration outlined plans to start vaccines for congregate care settings, the next priority group within Phase One of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan.

The Command Center also made updates to the first priority group in Phase Two of the distribution plan to include residents and staff of low income and affordable senior housing. (Press release [here](#)).



Beginning Monday, January 18, vaccinations will begin at residential congregate care and shelter programs and correctional facilities within Phase 1 of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 distribution plan. This will include over 94,000 eligible individuals, both residents and staff, across the Commonwealth.

This wave of vaccinations includes residential congregate care programs, including group homes, residential treatment programs, community-based acute residential treatment programs, and clinical stabilization service programs, emergency shelter programs including homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and Veterans' shelters, and approved private special education schools which offer residential services and are approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and correctional facilities. Correctional facilities will also begin vaccinations for staff and inmates. This week, congregate care vaccinations began at some facilities that enrolled in the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program with CVS and Walgreens.

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Congregate Care facilities can vaccinate their residents, clients, and staff over the age of 16 through one of three vaccination options:

Option #1: Program “Self-Administration”

Organizations that have the capability to directly receive and administer COVID-19 vaccines can request vaccine from the Department of Public Health if they meet certain requirements.

Self-administering organizations must plan to vaccinate 200 individuals. However, the scale can be achieved by partnering with other organizations. For more information, visit the [Congregate Care Vaccine page](#).

Option #2: Leverage Existing Pharmacy Partnerships or other Medical Provider Relationships

Programs with existing pharmacy partnerships can leverage these partnerships to administer COVID-19 vaccines. This includes programs that work with pharmacies to administer the regular flu vaccine clinics, and/or other existing relationships with local hospitals, health care practices, community health centers, university health centers, or VNAs.

Option #3: Mass Vaccination Sites

Mass vaccination sites can also be utilized by congregate care settings. Yesterday, the Commonwealth announced the opening of the first mass vaccination site at Gillette Stadium that will launch on Monday.

The Command Center is working to finalize plans for additional mass vaccination sites and expects additional provider and pharmacy vaccination sites to launch. These sites will require appropriate identification to establish you meet the congregate care prioritization criteria.

Correctional Facilities

Vaccination of staff and inmates of correctional facilities will also begin next week.

For the Department of Correction (DOC), vaccinations are expected to last for three weeks to inoculate all residents and staff. The total population of DOC inmates and civilly committed persons is about 6,500 and the total number of staff is about 4,500, for a total of about 11,000.

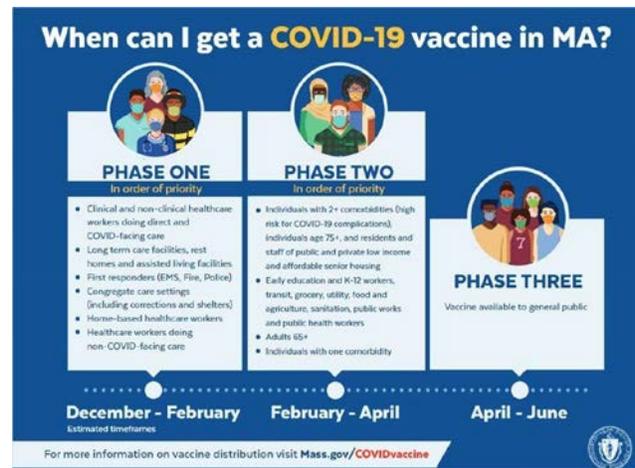
Inmates will receive their vaccines from DOC’s medical provider, Wellpath, in the facilities. DOC is also working to establish regional vaccine sites for staff, who will receive their vaccines from Armstrong and Brewster Ambulance staff. Houses of Correction run by the sheriffs will follow a similar procedure, with medical staff providing vaccines.

Updates to Phase Two

Residents and staff of public and private low income and affordable senior housing will now be included in step one of Phase Two of the vaccine distribution plan.

Similar senior facilities are already receiving vaccines through the FPPP as part of Phase 1 of the plan, so this change will bring the timetable for the other facilities more in line.

The revised vaccine distribution timeline can be found on mass.gov/covidvaccine.



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First COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Site at Gillette Stadium

On Wednesday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the first location for a COVID-19 mass vaccination site in the Commonwealth, located at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough. (Press release [here](#)).

These sites will initially be available to first responders and later other eligible individuals as the Command Center works through the Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan. This site will open with the capacity to do 300 vaccines per day, ramping up to administering up to 5,000 vaccines per day over time.



City of Lawrence Dep. Fire Chief Robert Wilson, and Lawrence Firefighter Jose Ortiz receive their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination clinic run by Lawrence General Hospital on Monday.

CIC Health will operate the site, with Brigham & Women's Hospital as the medical director and Fallon Ambulance supporting the clinical staffing. Eligible vaccine recipients will be able to schedule appointments on the state's COVID vaccine website at mass.gov/COVIDvaccine and CIC Health's website at cichealth.com/vaccines.

The COVID-19 Command Center is working to set up additional mass vaccination sites throughout the Commonwealth, and more details will be available soon.

Governor Baker Signs Health Care Legislation

Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders to participate in a ceremonial signing of S.2984, *An Act Promoting a Resilient Health Care System That Puts Patients First*.

Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito were also joined by Senator Cindy Friedman, Senator Julian Cyr, and Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr to participate in the ceremonial signing. The Governor also acknowledged the work of Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano, Senate President Karen Spilka, and other legislators for their work in advancing this comprehensive health care legislation.



The new law increases insurance coverage for telehealth services, expands the scope of practice for nurse practitioners, other specialized nurses, and optometrists, and takes steps to protect consumers from surprise medical bills. Recognizing the continuing impacts of COVID-19, the law also extends requirements for all insurance carriers in Massachusetts to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment. In addition, the legislation takes several steps to increase MassHealth member access to urgent care sites, including eliminating referral requirements before urgent care visits and requirements for care coordination with the member's primary care physician.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the new law.

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Pooled Testing Initiative for Massachusetts Schools, Districts

The Baker-Polito Administration announced weekly COVID-19 pooled testing will be available within the next month to schools and districts across the Commonwealth, expanding on a rapid testing initiative that began in schools in December.

Through collaboration with the COVID-19 Response Command Center and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), participating school districts providing in-person or hybrid learning will be prioritized for testing kits. Schools in remote learning, looking to bring students back to classrooms, can also participate in the pooled testing program. Interested districts and schools have until January 15 to notify DESE of their participation in the program.



Pooled testing involves mixing several test samples together in a “batch” or “pool,” and then testing the pooled sample with a diagnostic, PCR test for detection of SARS-CoV-2. This approach increases the number of individuals that can be tested using the same amount of laboratory resources as a single PCR test.

The test is performed at least once per week on an anterior nasal swab and results are delivered within approximately 24-48 hours. If a pooled test result is negative, then all individuals within that pool are presumed negative and may continue to remain in school. If a pooled test result is positive, then everyone in the pool is given an individual diagnostic test. Once positive individuals are identified, they must follow isolation guidance. Students, teachers, and staff that were close contacts of the positive case must quarantine according to current requirements.

Under a state contract being developed, districts and schools will work with pooled testing service providers who will coordinate with testing labs, implement a technology platform for tracking results, and provide training for school staff, and technical assistance. Tests will be analyzed at a CLIA-certified laboratory.

DESE will assume the costs for the testing initiative during the initial start-up of the program, estimated to cost between \$15 million and \$30 million which will be funded by federal stimulus funds. Following the initial launch, districts and schools may continue using pooled testing by purchasing the tests and any other accompanying testing materials and software from a statewide contract using their federal stimulus dollars.

The testing strategy announced builds on a [rapid testing initiative](#) launched at schools across the Commonwealth in December. Massachusetts received Abbott BinaxNOW tests from the federal government, some of which are currently being used in public school districts and other educational settings to test students and staff showing symptoms. Abbott BinaxNOW tests are currently provided to more than 100 schools at no cost.

Important Updates

Department of Public Health Updates:

- A new toolkit for hosting vaccine information sessions is on the way. Meanwhile, your source for vaccine-related graphics and materials is here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-covid-19-vaccine-graphics>

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- The weekly public health report publishes on Thursdays at 5pm with city and town data. Look for it [here](#).
- View the latest updates on COVID vaccine in MA in our [vaccination dashboard](#) which also posts Thursdays at 5pm. It includes doses of vaccine shipped and administered; people vaccinated; distribution by county, age, race, ethnicity breakdowns.
- MA211 received 4,841 calls from Monday 1/4 through Sunday 1/10 for a new total of 188,542.
- DPH received Cycle 8 allocations on 1/6 as follows: Bamlanivimab 1600 doses and Regeneron 200 doses. This allocation is for a two-week period. The Therapeutics Working Group is recommending an equitable allocation strategy.
- As of 1/12/21, the Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps has 296 volunteers supporting 48 local boards of health. For more information about the Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps, please visit the [APHVC webpage](#) on Mass.gov.
- Beginning Monday, January 18, vaccinations will begin at residential congregate care and shelter programs and correctional facilities within Phase 1 of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 distribution plan. In addition, residents and staff of public and private low income and affordable senior housing will now be included in step one of Phase Two of the vaccine distribution plan.
- Vaccination of the Commonwealth's first responders began on Monday, January 14.
- Planning continues relative to the allocation and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- DPH issued an [Order of the Commissioner of Public Health Regarding Temporary Laboratory Licenses for COVID-19 Testing](#) and related [guidance](#).
- DPH issued Guidance to Skilled Nursing Facilities regarding the [Allocation](#) of COVID-19 Monoclonal Antibody Therapeutics in Non-Hospital Settings and shared a new process for facilities to request Bamlanivimab.
- A new, centralized [webpage](#) is available with resources, information and a support line to assist hospital case managers with discharging and transitioning patients to the most appropriate care setting.
- A new Long-Term Care Discharge Support Line is available to assist hospital staff who are working with current patients in need of facility-based long-term care post discharge. You can reach the Discharge Support team by calling (617) 660-4800 or emailing EHSDischargeSupport@Mass.gov.
- The following customizable patient communication resources are available regarding hospital capacity constraints during the current COVID-19 surge:
 - [What to Expect When You Visit an Emergency Department Customizable PDF](#)
 - [Customizable PowerPoint](#)
- All Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC) regions are at Tier 4 status. In Tier 4, the hospitals in each region meet at least daily, and continue to collaborate across regions where necessary, to address growing capacity constraints and continue to load balance as needed.
- For the date range of 1/1/21 – 1/7/21, 95 of 96 Massachusetts hospitals were 100% compliant in their COVID-19 data submissions to the DPH WebEOC portal which is submitted to the federal HHS Protect portal daily.
- There are currently 14 Rapid Response Teams deployed to nursing homes across the Commonwealth. Teams are also helping nursing homes on the day of their Vaccine Clinics to ensure staff and residents are monitored after vaccination.
- There are also 10 National Guard Teams deployed and supporting nursing and rest homes.
- Clinics started at rest homes, assisted living residences and congregate care settings as part of the Federal Pharmacy Partnership on Monday, January 11, 2021.
- DPH collaborated on the establishment of [alternate medical sites](#) (or "Field Medical Stations") to mitigate stress on health care systems as cases increase. The [Lowell General Hospital Alternative Care Site](#) opened on 1/4/21, and the [UMASS Memorial Medical Center DCU Center Field Hospital](#) opened on 12/6/20. In addition, DPH has contracted with ambulance services in each of the five EMS Regions to help ensure transport capability to alternate medical sites.

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Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:

Mass Care

- 4 state contracted isolation/recovery hotels in the cities of Everett, Taunton, Pittsfield, and Wakefield continue to receive client placements: 208 individuals are currently housed in the program, an increase of 48 since last week.
 - Top 5 referring cities:
 - Boston (233)
 - Springfield (139)
 - Brockton (101)
 - Worcester (117)
 - Cambridge (98)
 - To date, a total of 1,605 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery.

Community Food Box Program Update (as of 1/14/21):

MEMA is partnering with the Salvation Army, and a vendor, to bring in shelf-stable food boxes each week to support communities in their effort to deliver food to individuals and families in quarantine and isolation who require assistance accessing food. Each week MEMA’s warehouse receives a delivery of shelf-stable food boxes. Distribution of food boxes is coordinated between MEMA and communities in need via a request through WebEOC. The table below reflects the current food box inventory, and number of food boxes distributed to communities during the weekly reporting period (data is updated every Friday).

| Total Number of Food Boxes in MEMA’s Inventory | Total Number of Food Boxes Distributed to One or More Local Communities During the Reporting Period | Total Number of Communities that Received Food Boxes During the Reporting Period |
|--|---|--|
| 3,356 | 100 | 1 |

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 21 Orders prepared for pickup or delivery out of the MEMA State Logistics Warehouse from 1/8-1/14.
- An additional delivery to the Worcester Field Hospital at the DCU Center was made on 1/13.
- Weekly orders continue to be delivered to the isolation hotels in Pittsfield, Taunton, and Everett for PPE and beverages (soda, juice, water, shelf stable milk). A hotel kit, supplying the new Wakefield hotel with two weeks of supplies, was made on 1/12 to prepare for their opening.
- Two additional orders were requested for the DPH Community Grant Program and will be delivered in the coming days. This order includes 20 KN95, 50 surgical masks, 250 cloth face coverings, 3 thermometers, 3 packs of AAA batteries, 200 face shields, 250 bottles of hand sanitizer, and 210 containers of disinfectant wipes.
- Supporting the Salvation Army, the MEMA State Logistics Warehouse received 1,088 pillow pillows and 1,725 king size comforters via three shipments this week, all of which are being sent out via Salvation Army Transportation providers to deliver to those in need.
- DPH coordinated 64 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (1/12) (21 PPE/8 testing supplies and 35 BinaxNOW kits); 29 deliveries were made on Wednesday (1/13) (8 PPE/3 testing supplies and 18 BinaxNOW kits); 23 deliveries were made on Thursday (1/14) (4 PPE/4 testing supplies, 14 BinaxNOW kits and 1 HFNC); 12 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (1/15) (3 PPE/1 testing supplies and 8 BinaxNOW kits).

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Disaster Recovery

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 [webpage](#) with information and guidance on, but not limited to, disaster declaration, eligibility criteria, and the application process. Highlights from the Disaster Recovery process include the following:

Data as of: 1/8/2021

MEMA COVID-19 EXECUTIVE DASHBOARD AGGREGATE PROGRAM VIEW

Note: Financial data represents 75% federal cost share; figures do not include MEMA management cost allowance

| Overall (Best Available Estimate) | Submitted (Eligibility & Cost Review) | Approved* (by FEMA) | Paid (by MEMA) |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------|-------------------|
| \$653.1M +\$1.12M | \$462.3M +\$487.52K | \$290.6M +\$237.49M | \$7.3M \$0 |
| 859 Projects +6 | 584 Projects +2 | 80 Projects +12 | 37 Projects 0 |

Approved Applicants: 637

- Online Applicant Technical Assistant Requests: 499
- Request for FEMA RPA Applicants: 670
- FEMA obligated seven municipal PW's this week totaling \$ 279,869.41 (Federal Cost Share- \$ 209,902.06.
- MEMA is has three large priority projects the Recipient Final review queue this week: MassPort, Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, and City of Boston Food and Distribution projects.
- Followed up on surveys to determine local non-congregate sheltering operations. Surveys were disseminated last week to ensure that all ongoing operations are included in the January FEMA report.

| COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 1/14) | |
|---|---------------|
| Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities | 32,461 |
| LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19 | 418 |
| Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities | 7,694 |



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FAMILY RESOURCE LINE**

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Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 1/12/21)

- Veterans residing at Holyoke Medical Center since April 2020 will be returning to the home over the next several days in a project known as **Operation Bring'em Home**, as Phase II of the Refresh Project nears completion. The refresh project is an important initiative to ensure infection control standards are met throughout the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. The veteran residents will be returning over the next two weeks, and the Soldiers' Home is currently planning a welcome home celebration.
- CVS will return to the Soldiers' Home on January 19 to administer the second dose of the vaccine and will also provide vaccinations to those who were not vaccinated in the first round. On Tuesday, December 29, the first veteran residents and staff at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke received the COVID-19 vaccination. So far 118 veterans and 166 staff have been vaccinated at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke.
- The Home is strongly encouraging all staff to receive the vaccine, but it is voluntary. Staff are being provided with educational information about the COVID-19 vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccine FAQ sheets. The materials are available in both English and Spanish. In addition to written materials, the Home's Nurse Education Team and Medical Team will hold a vaccine informational forum on January 11 and 12.
- The Soldiers' Home is working with Home Base, a veteran support organization, to help improve the quality of life, increase psychosocial interventions to address isolation during the pandemic. Home Base has linked us to virtual concerts provided by professional and amateur volunteers. The concerts are interactive—featuring musical performances and conversation between the Veterans and musicians. The concerts occur every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. The team at Home Base is working with Social Work, Recreation and Nursing to provide other opportunities for virtual activities.
- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke continues to prioritize virtual visitation and family communication as visitation and movement throughout the facility have been suspended, per infection control protocol, since November 20 for all units until further notice, and PPE protocols have been heightened. Families are encouraged to continue video visits for regular family communication through video chat, and the Family Line is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff. Virtual visits can be scheduled by calling the Family Line at 413-552-4764 Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Families can also request updates via email at CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov. Note: The Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- The Soldiers' Home leadership is committed to ensuring the safety of the Veteran residents and restoring the Home to its rightful place that treats them with dignity, honor, and respect. The Soldiers' Home leadership is moving into the Transition & Rebuilding Phase that is focused on rebuilding staff leadership and team and positioning the facility to move forward safely.
- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke is taking every precaution to mitigate COVID-19 entering and spreading at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. Based on guidance from DPH, and in consultation with infection control experts, the Home is continuing mandatory 2 times per week testing for all staff and residents. Increased testing frequency will allow us to detect COVID-19 early and will continue until the Home receives 14 consecutive days of negative results.
 - The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke has been intently focused on following infection control procedures and maintaining best practices for the safety of veteran residents and staff. All



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veteran residents' health is being monitored and retesting is being conducted for veterans both on- and off-site as clinically appropriate. The Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following [the latest CDC guidance](#), which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus.

- In addition to mandatory testing at state-operated 24/7 facilities, daily symptom checking and routine staff surveillance testing are important tools to protect staff, residents and visitors and will remain in place until such time there is a medical breakthrough or a safe and effective vaccine for COVID 19. Staff who are not feeling well are instructed not to come to work and to contact their health care provider. If staff show any signs of COVID-symptoms, they are required to self-quarantine at home, per CDC guidance for health care workers.
- The Commonwealth has been making capital investments to address the short and long-term needs of the Home. This includes a short-term Refresh Project and a longer-term Rapid Planning Capital Project for a future Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. While the expedited capital project will address long-term facility needs, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans' Services, and Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance have been addressing immediate capital needs, including a \$6 million refresh of units, to significantly improve infection control for the residents and staff.
 - On Veterans Day, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the next steps for the expedited capital project for the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. Following the conclusion of the 12-week [Rapid Planning Phase](#) of the project, the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance released the [needs assessment report](#), and announced the selection of Payette Associates for the next phase as the design firm to lead the design and planning phase, the next step of the expedited capital project. Payette will build on the evaluation they previously completed, and will develop a full project scope, refine the plan, and confirm the budget, timelines, and ensure conformity with the regulatory process. One of the early deliverables is the preparation of the submission for the VA State Home Construction Grant by its April 15, 2021 deadline. The website for the project is www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject.
- In June, the Baker-Polito Administration released the independent report ordered by Governor Baker to investigate the COVID-19 outbreak at Holyoke Soldiers' Home, and announced a series of reforms to strengthen its governance and oversight of the Home, improving staffing processes, providing quality care for our Veterans, and planning for significant capital improvements.
- The status of all residents as of January 12 is as follows:
 - Status:
 - 3 veteran residents are positive and not clinically recovered
 - 13 veteran residents are negative
 - 35 veteran residents have a pending test. Please note that all veteran residents and staff are now being tested twice weekly, which will increase the number of pending tests.
 - 77 veteran residents have been determined clinically recovered
 - 0 veteran residents have refused testing
 - Resident locations:
 - 102 veteran residents are onsite
 - 24 veteran residents are offsite
 - 21 veteran residents are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
 - 3 veteran residents are receiving acute care offsite
 - Since March 1, there have been 77 deaths of veteran residents who tested positive
- Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing, there are:
 - 2 staff positives
 - All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

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Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 1/12/21)

- CVS Health will return to the Soldiers' Home on January 19 to administer the second dose of the vaccine and will also provide vaccinations to those who were not vaccinated in the first round. On Tuesday, December 29, the first veteran residents and staff at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea received the COVID-19 vaccination, and CVS Health returned to do additional staff vaccinations on Wednesday. 150 veterans and 156 staff have been vaccinated at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea continues to prioritize virtual visitation, as visitation and movement throughout the facility remains suspended for all units until further notice per infection control protocol. The Home remains vigilant in its infection control, including enhanced precautions throughout the facility and strict infection control protocols to keep veteran residents and staff safe, including continuing staff education, screening, and testing. Visitation will resume after 14 consecutive days without a new positive test.
- Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting their assigned social worker, or emailing the Home at CSH@mass.gov. They can schedule virtual visits by video or phone call. Medical information can only be shared with an authorized health care proxy.
- Clinical staff closely monitor any changes in residents, and the Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following [the latest CDC guidance](#), which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus. The CDC recommends making medical decisions regarding when to end isolation and determine that the patient has recovered based on symptoms and time elapsed.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea currently weekly staff surveillance testing. In accordance with [CMS rules](#), the Soldiers' Home is now conducting weekly testing until the facility is 14 days without positive test results. These tests are provided at no cost to employees.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea monitors the PPE supply, and continues to receive shipments of PPE. The Incident Command team at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home continues to enforce staff use of personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as source PPE to ensure that residents and staff have access to critical safety equipment. The team continues to coordinate closely with the VA Health Care System.
- The status as of January 12 is as follows:
 - Residents
 - 4 veteran residents are positive, all in independent living
 - 129 veteran residents are negative
 - 44 veteran residents have recovered, meaning they previously tested positive and are now clinically recovered
 - 0 veteran residents have pending tests
 - Since March 1, there have been 31 deaths of veteran residents who tested positive
 - Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing:
 - 22 employees are positive
 - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

Communications Resources

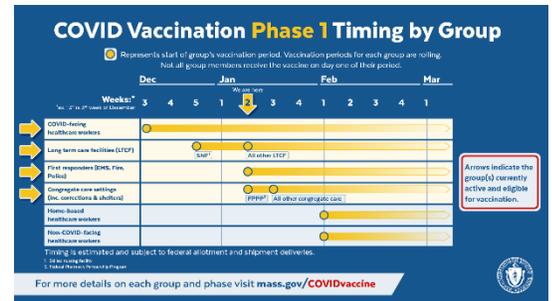
Public Messaging Resources for Communities:

The COVID-19 Command Center has produced many communication resources aimed at helping communities inform and educate residents on recent executive orders and guidance related to COVID-19.

[Visitors to the Stop COVID-19 Public Messaging webpage](#) will find both printable flyers, posters, and digital resources in multiple languages on topics such as:

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- **NEW:** [When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?](#)
- **NEW:** [Vaccine Graphics](#)
- Statewide guidelines, advisories, and orders
- Staying safe in the community
- Using local public alert systems for COVID-19 information
- Materials for Business
 - [Return to work guidance](#)
 - [Employee Screening Questionnaire](#)
 - [Business guidance – New, Temporary Capacity Limits](#)
 - [Updated safe store tips for retailers](#)



DPH Communication Materials in Multiple Languages

- [Facts Sheets](#)
- [Videos](#)

Resources

MassSupport

MassSupport is the Massachusetts Crisis Counseling Program funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and managed in partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health and Riverside Trauma Center, a program of Riverside Community Care.

Contact MassSupport by phone at **888-215-4920** or by email at MassSupport@riversidecc.org

Red Cross Virtual Family Assistance Center

In order to provide support to families and communities who have suffered loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Red Cross has developed a Virtual Family Assistance Center (VFAC), staffed by a team of specially trained mental health, spiritual care, and health services volunteers who are:

- Connecting with families over the phone to offer condolences, emotional and spiritual support, and access to available resources
- Providing support for virtual memorial services for families, including connecting with local faith-based community partners
- Hosting online classes to foster resilience and facilitate coping skills
- Assisting families with access to national, state, or local resources such as grief counseling, legal resources, funeral information, financial information services, or veterans' assistance
- Additional state- and local-specific resources are available.

People can visit: <https://www.redcross.org/virtual-family-assistance-center/ma-family-assistance-center.html>

to access this resource with special virtual programs, information, referrals, and services to support families in need. People without internet access can **call toll-free 833-492-0094** for help. All Family Assistance Center support will be provided virtually and is completely confidential and free.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) now reports on the number of positive COVID-19 cases as reported to the DESE by school districts (including charter schools), collaboratives, and approved special education schools. The data only represents what has been reported to DESE. For more information and to view the report people can visit: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/positive-cases/>

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

COVID-19 Test Site Locator

MEMA, in conjunction with the COVID-19 Command Center, has developed an [interactive map](#) that shows the locations of COVID-19 testing sites around the Commonwealth.

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 daily as enhancements are continuously being added.

Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here](#).

Stay Informed

- Get information from trusted sources. Get notified by text, email, or phone call in your preferred language. Visit <https://member.everbridge.net/index/406686158291020/#/signup> to sign-up for **AlertsMA** for the latest news on the Commonwealth's response to COVID-19
- Take care of your emotional health:
- 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.

How to Help Out

- Work at an Alternate Care Site in either [Worcester](#) or [Lowell](#)
- [Donate](#) to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund

The Need for Blood Donations Continues, and Recovered COVID-19 Donors Can Help Save Lives

In coordination with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Red Cross is seeking people who are fully recovered from the new coronavirus to sign up to donate plasma to help current COVID-19 patients. People who have fully recovered from COVID-19 have antibodies in their plasma that can attack the virus. This convalescent plasma is being evaluated as treatment for patients with serious or immediately life-threatening COVID-19 infections, or those judged by a healthcare provider to be at high risk of progression to severe or life-threatening condition. Interested individuals can visit [RedCrossBlood.org/plasma4covid](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org/plasma4covid) to learn more. The Red Cross follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and volunteer donors are the only source of blood for those in need. To make an appointment to donate, please visit www.RedCrossBlood.org