Wednesday, November 25, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

Note: Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, this week's Command Center Situation Report is being published on Wednesday.



In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
  - Launch of "Get Back Mass" Public Awareness Effort
  - Over $4.7 Million Awarded to Support Food Security in Massachusetts
  - $650,000 in COVID-19 Community Grant Funding Awarded
  - Abbot BinaxNOW Testing Program Expansion
  - UPDATE: New Long-Term Care Resources for Families
  - DPH Safety Guidance for Town Meetings
  - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
  - Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes Weekly Update

Helpful Links:

- **NEW:** Get Back Mass
- Mass.gov/holidays
- Tips for a Safe Thanksgiving
- Mass.gov/findfoodhelp
- Stop the Spread
- HandHoldMA.org
- Reopening Massachusetts
- Mass.Gov/covid19
- Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
- Unemployment & COVID-19
- Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal
- Emergency Childcare Site
- COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance

Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts current as of 11/25

207,284 Total Confirmed Cases (click here for more information)

10,372 Deaths among confirmed cases

8,130,694 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States Last Updated 11/25

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:

12,498,734 Total Cases

259,005 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:

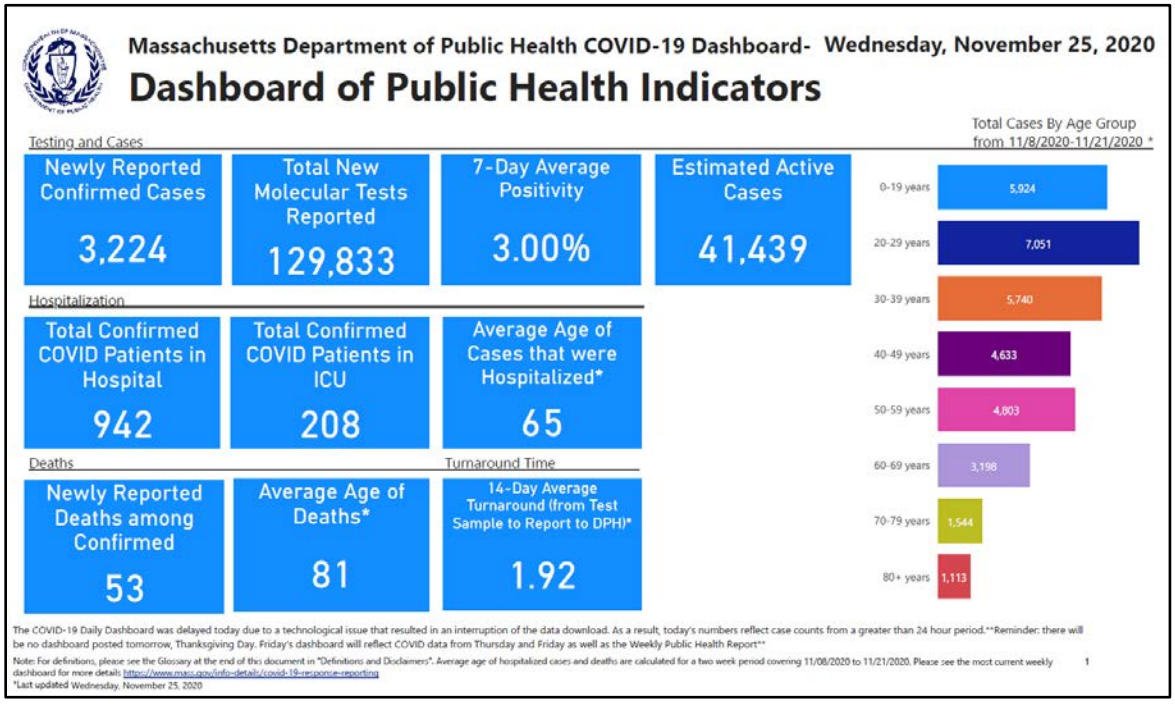
- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Wear a face covering or mask if physical distancing is not possible.

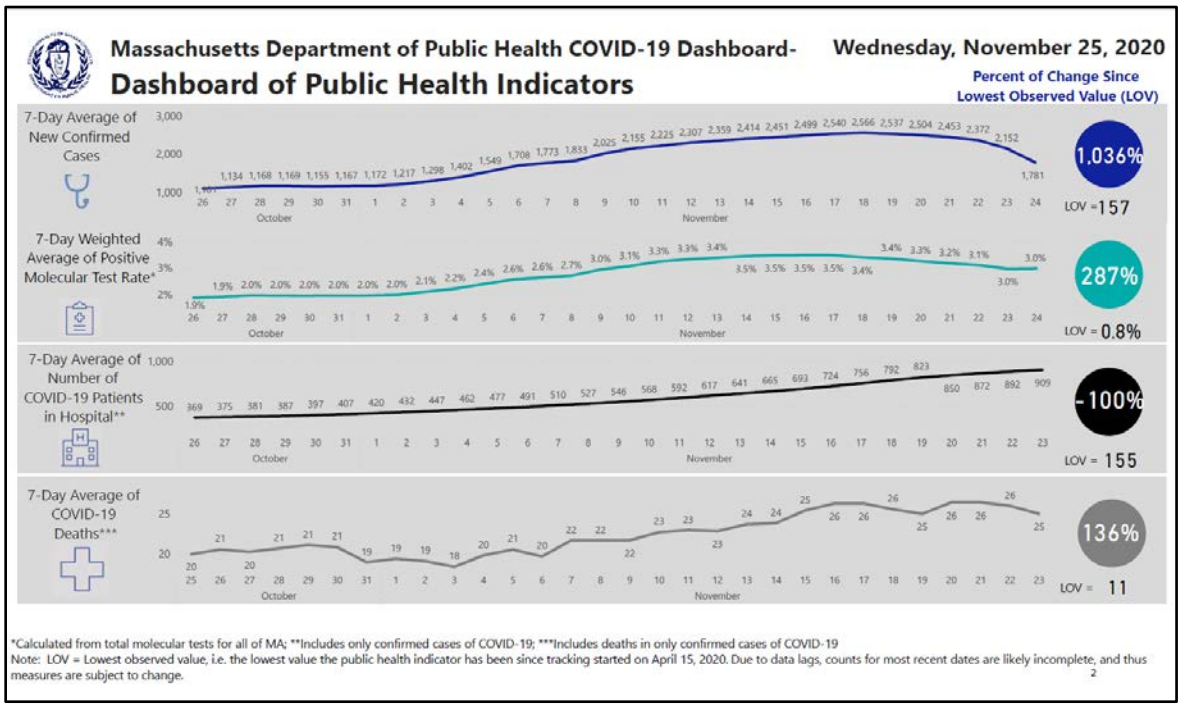
Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update

***Testing Update**:*

Today, over **129,000** new molecular (viral) tests were reported in Massachusetts with **3,224** newly reported confirmed positive cases. The total number of molecular tests administered to date is over **8.1 million**.

***Hospitalizations & Capacity Update**:* As of today, **942** people are hospitalized, with **208** reported to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Key indicators from today's Daily Dashboard are below.



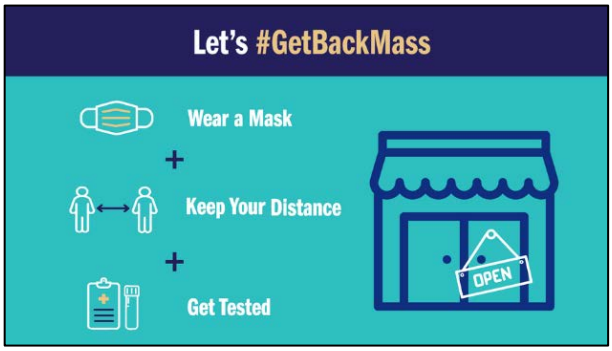


COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Note Regarding today's Dashboard and the posting of Thursday's COVID-19 Dashboard:
The COVID-19 Daily Dashboard was delayed today due to a technological issue that resulted in an interruption of the data download. As a result, today's numbers reflect case counts from up to a 30-hour period. The Department of Public Health's Daily and Weekly COVID-19 Dashboards will not be published on Thanksgiving, Thursday, November 26. **Both the daily and weekly reports will publish on Friday, November 27. The Friday daily report will include two days (11/26 and 11/27) of COVID-19 data.**

Week in Review: State Actions

Launch of "Get Back Mass" Public Awareness Effort:
On Monday, the Baker-Polito Administration launched a new public awareness effort to encourage residents to continue to stay safe and remain vigilant. The statewide campaign "Get Back Mass" highlights the critical steps everyone should take – wearing a mask and practicing good hygiene, keeping a safe distance, and getting tested – to protect themselves and their loved ones. The multilingual campaign will run on several platforms including television and digital ads.



The campaign features residents from across the Commonwealth who, in their own words, draw the connection between taking precautions so that they can "get back" to the activities, people, and experiences they enjoy – like attending live sporting events or concerts, throwing their child a birthday party, going out dancing with friends, or going on a "real" date. The campaign underscores the importance of taking precautions like wearing a mask so the Commonwealth can slow the spread of the virus and keep our communities safe while COVID-19 remains with us.

The Get Back Mass campaign launched with social media messages that highlight safety tips, digital animated videos in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese (simplified and traditional) and Vietnamese, and information posters that will be displayed in convenience stores. Television advertisements in English and Spanish will run on broadcast and digital channels, continuing through February. All campaign components lead to a landing page, mass.gov/GetBack, which highlights the three key behaviors it takes to **#GetBackMass**:

- **Wear a mask.** Wear a mask or face covering in public to slow the spread of COVID-19. Learn about how and when to wear one.
- **Keep your distance.** No matter what, six feet or more is best. Learn about ways to lower your risk when you are around others.
- **Get tested**. Find out when and where to get a COVID-19 test.

The Get Back Mass campaign is the latest in a series of public awareness efforts the Commonwealth has taken to curb the spread of COVID-19, including the September launch of mass.gov/stopCOVID19 following the Administration's establishment of the COVID-19 Enforcement and Intervention Team (CEIT), awareness for the "Stop the Spread" testing initiative, and #MaskUpMA, a continuous campaign that reminds residents to wear face coverings to stop COVID-19 spread.

Over $4.7 Million Awarded to Support Food Security in Massachusetts:
On Tuesday, the Administration announced over $4.7 million in grants to address urgent food insecurity for residents across the Commonwealth as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is being awarded as part of the fifth round of the new $36 million Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program, created following

recommendations from the Administration's COVID-19 Command Center's Food Security Task Force, which promotes ongoing efforts to ensure that individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth have access to healthy, local food.



The goal of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program is to ensure that individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth have equitable access to food, especially local food. The program also seeks to ensure that farmers, fishermen and other local food producers are better connected to a strong, resilient food system to help mitigate future food supply and distribution disruption.

The fifth round of the grant program includes 54 awards for a total of $4,742,293 to fund critical investments in technology, equipment, capacity, and other assistance to help local food producers, especially in the distribution of food insecure communities. When evaluating the applications, considerations included equity, economic impact and need, sustainability and scalability of efforts, and ability to support producer readiness to accept SNAP and HIP benefits. In the program's first four rounds, the Administration awarded over $17.7 million to more than 137 recipients. Click here to see a complete list of awardees.

The Administration also announced the COVID-19 Command Center's new food program for isolating and quarantining individuals in collaboration with local boards of health and the Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC), which invests nearly $1.2 million to support residents in isolation. Communities across the Commonwealth have developed innovative, local solutions to support families who are dealing with the direct impacts of COVID-19, for which access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food is crucial. For a portion of low-income households, and in certain geographic areas, food security remains a top concern while isolating. This new program will be coordinated with local health departments, the CTC, food pantries, municipalities, and other local partners to assess needs and gaps in service at the individual and community level, and develop and deploy local solutions to ensure the foods security needs of those isolating and quarantining can be met.

As part of the announcement, Secretary Kathleen Theoharides and Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner Jim Montgomery visited the Melnea A. Cass Recreational Complex, which has been used by the YMCA of Greater Boston as a distribution location for its food bank services beginning in October 2020. The site is used as a delivery point for pallets of food which are broken down and repackaged into donation bags which are distributed to neighborhood organizations and Massachusetts residents in need. The space in the Melnea A. Cass Recreation Complex supports the efforts of the YMCA while furthering DCR's efforts to serve the community, an excellent example of public-private partnership.

The YMCA of Greater Boston is also receiving a $183,847 grant in this round of the Food Security Infrastructure Program, which will enable it to establish mobile food pantries to deliver food to underserved neighborhoods in Boston. The mobile food pantry will provide full-service food pantry operations and will rotate on a weekly basis to deliver to as many neighborhoods as possible.

Eligible grantees include entities that are part of the Massachusetts local food system including production, processing and distribution, the emergency food distribution network, Buy Local, community and food organizations, school meal programming, urban farms and community gardens, non-profits, and organizations that provide business planning, technical assistance and information technology services. The Request for

Responses for project proposals closed on September 15, 2020. Applications submitted before the proposal deadline will continue to be evaluated for future rounds of funding.

This grant program implements the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force, which was convened by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center in response to increased demands for food assistance. The task force is composed of a broad group of public and private members charged with ensuring food insecurity and food supply needs are addressed during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The Food Insecurity Infrastructure Grant Program was announced in May 2020 as part of a $56 million investment by the Baker-Polito Administration to combat urgent food insecurity for some Massachusetts families and individuals as a result of COVID-19. The Administration also announced a $5 million increase for the Healthy Incentives Program to meet increased demand for local produce and to increase access points that process SNAP and HIP benefits, $12 million for the provision of 25,000 family food boxes per week through a regional food supply system, and $3 million in funding as an immediate relief valve to food banks.

Several new HIP vendors are receiving funding through this round of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program to purchase new equipment to process SNAP and HIP benefits. Everett Community Growers, a coalition of Everett residents who sell culturally significant produce for the area, including collards, squash, and radishes, and Mycoterra Farm, which runs Mass Food Delivery, an online ordering platform sourcing local farms. As HIP vendors, they will be able to home deliver local produce to low-income households, several senior centers, and housing facilities throughout multiple counties, using minimal/contactless delivery service.

In addition to expanding HIP, the Administration continues to leverage federal food and nutrition resources during COVID-19, including federal flexibilities for SNAP to ensure individuals and families have stable access to these critical benefits. Over $16.4 million has been spent by households using their SNAP benefits to buy food online from Amazon and Walmart since launching the SNAP Online Purchasing Program in May. Since March, SNAP households have received extra benefits to bring their monthly benefits up to the maximum amount for their household size, providing over $335 million in food support to over 280,000 households. The most recent federal appropriation extended Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) through the entire 2020-2021 school year. To date, Pandemic EBT has helped over 550,000 students buy food.

In August, the Baker-Polito Administration launched the MassGrown Exchange, an online platform designed to facilitate business-to-business connections within the local food system for products and services. Developed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), in collaboration with the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), this platform was established to both address COVID-19 disruptions to the local food supply and to serve as a helpful tool and resource for Massachusetts growers and producers in accessing markets beyond the duration of the COVID-19 emergency.

$650,000 in COVID-19 Community Grant Funding Awarded:
On Monday, the Administration announced the awarding of $650,000 in grant funding to community-based and faith-based organizations to help prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 among communities of color in the cities and towns hardest hit by COVID. The COVID-19 Community Grant Program was previously announced in September and supports non-profit, community-based and faith-based organizations in raising awareness of COVID best practices in marginalized communities across the commonwealth. Twenty organizations are receiving grant awards ranging from $10,000 to $50,000. Each receiving organization demonstrated deep engagement with their communities and understanding their needs, and a readiness to quickly implement their proposed projects. Awardees will engage in culturally appropriate community outreach, communication, and education, in the languages spoken in the communities they serve. Strategies include

engaging youth peer leaders, trusted community leaders, and those with shared lived experience to increase the understanding of the impact of COVID 19 in their community. Click here to view a full list of awardees.

Abbot BinaxNOW Testing Program Expansion:

On Monday, the Administration announced the expansion of the Abbott BinaxNOW testing program to include Massachusetts Long Term Care facilities. This expansion builds on last week's announcement of this program for K-12 schools. Under the program, Abbott BinaxNOW test kits can be used in Long Term Care facilities for the purpose of testing individuals entering the facility who are not regularly reporting staff. Those who test negative may be allowed to enter the LTC facility, provided, that they meet the screening criteria (e.g. are not exhibiting any COVID-19 like symptoms) and comply with other in-person visitation requirements such as wearing a mask and distancing.

UPDATE: New Long-Term Care Resources for Families:



In response to the latest guidance from the Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and rising COVID-19 cases across the country, **the Command Center has updated its guidance to families** celebrating the holidays with their loved ones in a congregate setting. EOHHS Secretary Marylou Sudders, director of the COVID-19 Response Command Center, recently wrote a letter to families of individuals in long term and congregate care facilities. **The letter**, available in multiple languages, provides important tips and considerations when planning holiday celebrations with a loved one who lives in a congregate setting. Many people living in congregate settings are uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19 and may have health conditions putting them at a higher risk of becoming sick, or even severely ill, with COVID-19. Additionally, the Command Center has also developed a new **COVID-19 Family Information Center webpage**, with the latest information and resources for families and loved ones of residents in nursing homes.

DPH Safety Guidance for Town Meetings:

The Department of Public Health posted updated guidance this week to provide COVID-19 safety recommendations for Town Meetings. The guidelines were issued to provide municipalities with instructions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19 during in-person sessions. The guidance document and other resources can be found here.

Important Updates

Department of Public Health Updates:

- MA211 received 5,508 calls from Monday 11/16 through Sunday 11/22 for a new total of 157,208.
- DPH received a Week 3 allocation of Bamlanivimab on 11/23 of 560 doses. The Therapeutics Working Group is recommending an equitable allocation strategy.
- For the date range of 11/13-11/19, 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.
- Resurgence planning meetings were conducted this week with all HMCC regions completed. All regions remain in Tier 1.

- COVID-19 vaccine planning continues and the first exercise to review the interim plan occurred on November 20, 2020. The interim plan is being updated to reflect additional elements needed to operationalize the plan.
- DPH issued guidance to hospitals to assist in preparing for COVID-19 vaccination of healthcare professionals.
- DPH issued guidance regarding Updates to Long-Term care Surveillance Testing. and BinaxNOW Rapid Point of Care COVID-19 Testing for Long-Term Care Facilities.

Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:

Mass Care

- 2 state contracted isolation/recovery hotels in the cities of Everett and Taunton continue to receive client placements:
  - Everett: 58 residents housed (-10 change since last Thursday)
  - Taunton: 20 residents housed (opened 11/20)
  - To date, a total of 882 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery.

Emergency Food Box Program Update (as of 11/25):

Location	Total Number of Food Boxes Distributed to Date	Total Number of Food Boxes Remaining in Inventory
Food Bank of Western MA	31,259	0
Greater Boston Food Bank	204,480	2,112
Merrimack Valley Food Bank	3,312	0
Worcester County Food Bank	1,440	0
MEMA Warehouse (Reserve)	36,869	3,456
Total Food Boxes	**275,920**	**5,575**

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 30 orders were prepared for pick up or delivery from the MEMA warehouse between 11/20 and 11/25.
- The first of four tractor-trailer loads of equipment was delivered to the Alternate Care Site (field hospital) at the DCU Center on 11/23. The remainder of the equipment will deploy on 11/30.
- DPH coordinated 15 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (11/24) (5 PPE/10 testing supplies), and 51 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (11/27) (3 PPE/7 testing supplies and 41 BinaxNOW kits for long term care facilities).
- Beginning next week (11/30) DPH will expand deliveries to 3 days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) to accommodate the increase in requests.

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:

FEMA Public Assistance Program

Data as of: 11/20/2020

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)
$602.2M +$1.41M	$422.7M +$2.27M	$7.7M +$147.70K	$6.9M $0
828 Projects +20	545 Projects +16	45 Projects +4	26 Projects 0

Approved Applicants: 615

- MEMA submitted requests to FEMA to extend the Emergency Feeding Program and the Non-Congregate Medical Sheltering Program for additional 30-day periods.
- MEMA will be hosting a series of applicant webinars starting next week to review ongoing support available to municipalities, schools, and certain nonprofit organizations through FEMA's Public Assistance Program. The webinars will cover cost eligibility and documentation requirements, as well as guidance for applicants to determine what costs can and cannot be covered under the program. The webinars have been organized by applicant type to provide information on common questions and concerns of specific sectors. Click here for a schedule of webinars as well as information on how to join.

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 11/25)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	**27,053**
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	**400**
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	**6,727**



Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 11/24/20)

- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke will be celebrating Thanksgiving with a full traditional Thanksgiving meal being served on all units, including Turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy, cranberry sauce, peas & carrots, and rolls. There will also be pumpkin pie for dessert.
    - The recreation staff will be at the Home on Thanksgiving Day to go room to room to help our veterans enjoy fiddle playing by Sarah, apple cider, coffee, tea, and Atkins apple cider donuts. In the afternoon, more room to room visits will happen with ice cream and music.

  - Additionally, the Soldiers' Home will have staff on hand on Thanksgiving Day to place FaceTime and phone calls for families to connect with their loved ones while visitation is suspended. You can contact the Family Line at (413)-552-4764 to schedule a virtual visit.
  - Families are welcome to bring premade food in containers to the Home for their loved one to enjoy throughout the day.
- On Friday, November 20, positive COVID-19 test results were received for a direct care employee of the Home following weekly routine staff testing. The staff member was last on site on the 17th and has been at home since Wednesday, November 18.
  - Beginning November 20, 2020, the Soldiers' Home has suspended visitation for all units. Visitation is anticipated to resume on Wednesday, December 2, 2020, pending facility wide testing results.
  - Movement throughout the facility has been suspended until further notice and PPE protocols have been heightened.
  - Veterans, families, and staff have been notified.
- 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.
- Phase II of the Refresh Project to enhance residential units, an important initiative to ensure infection control continues to be met and that care areas are clean, safe, and comfortable, began for the second floor on Monday, October 19. Phase I of the Refresh Project is complete and the veterans from the second floor have successfully and safely moved to their new rooms on the third floor.
- 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. Over the past weeks, the Home welcomed new permanent leadership and staff positions including a Nurse Practitioner, two Recreational Therapists, and four Certified Nursing Assistants.
- Veteran and Family Advisory Council meetings have resumed. The Veterans Advisory council met on Thursday, November 12, 2020, and the Family Advisory Council met on Thursday, November 19, 2020. The Veteran and Family Advisory Councils are run by veterans and families with assistance from the Soldiers' Home.
  - The Advisory Council helps the Home partner with veterans and families to provide constructive guidance amongst diverse perspectives and lived experiences.
  - Through the feedback from the Veterans and Family Council, the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke hopes to integrate ideas into service delivery and quality improvement efforts to positively impact family and veteran-centered care.
- 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 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 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. The CDC recommends making medical decisions regarding when to end isolation and determine that the patient has recovered based on symptoms and time elapsed.
  - Since the start of the pandemic, more than 80 residents had been determined clinically recovered, which means that they at one point tested positive for COVID-19 but are now considered clinically recovered as defined by federal CDC guidance.
- 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 a vendor for the next phase.
  - The Rapid Planning Phase was launched in August to identify a sustainable, public health, implementation roadmap to provide significant upgrades to the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. The architecture firm that led this project, Payette, wrote a report detailing its findings and recommended next steps. This report represents the culmination of research gathered by a broad group of veterans, families, veterans' organizations, the community, and other stakeholders through focus groups, interviews, and surveys. These recommendations reflect the learnings from those engagements, and the analysis of demographic data and services in Western Massachusetts. Read the full report here.
  - Payette has been conditionally selected pending execution of a contract 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 November 24 is as follows:
  - Status:
    - 0 are positive and not clinically recovered
    - 17 residents are negative
    - 38 residents have a pending test
    - 75 residents have been determined clinically recovered
    - 0 residents have refused testing
  - Resident locations:
    - 104 veterans are onsite
    - 26 veterans are offsite
      - 22 veterans are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
      - 4 veterans are receiving acute care offsite

Since March 1, there have been 76 veteran deaths of veterans who tested positive
From the most recent round of staff surveillance testing
1 tested positive
All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 11/24/20)

- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea will be celebrating Thanksgiving with a full traditional Thanksgiving meal being served on all units, including Turkey, butternut squash, stuffing, gravy, cranberry sauce, peas & onions, baked stuffed sole, and rolls. There will also be assorted pies for dessert.
    - The recreation staff will be at the Home on Thanksgiving Day to engage with the Veteran residents throughout the day.
    - As always, families are encouraged to contact their Veteran's respective ward to arrange for virtual visits on platforms such as FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype.
    - On Saturday, the Quincy Elks are sponsoring a catered Thanksgiving meal for Soldiers' Home Long-Term Care Veterans.
    - Domiciliary Veterans will enjoy a Thanksgiving themed Bingo on Saturday.
- Long Term Care veterans have moved into their new private spaces following the completion of a short-term ward conversation project at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea to enhance infection control and resident safety. This project will also incorporate negative air pressure to improve airflow, which will be utilized until the opening of the Community Living Center (Fall 2022). The Home has released a live link for families and staff to virtually tour newly designed private spaces for veteran residents in the Long Term Care: Click here to view a virtual tour of these areas.
- Beginning on Wednesday, November 18, the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea suspended visitation and movement throughout the facility for all units until further notice after receiving positive COVID-19 test results for staff. Veterans and families were immediately notified of the situation.
    - Visitation will resume after 14 consecutive days without a new positive test, and movement throughout the facility has been suspended until further notice. With the new positive test, it restarts the 14-day period.
    - On Tuesday, November 17, a direct care employee notified the Home that they had been in direct contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. The employee was immediately sent home upon notification. On Wednesday, November 18, 2020, the employee tested positive for COVID-19 at an offsite location.
    - On Saturday, November 21, positive COVID-19 test results were received for a direct care staff member following this week's routine staff surveillance testing. The employee was asymptomatic and had tested on-site.
- Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting the Home at CSH@mass.gov and through phone and video conversations. 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.
    - Since the start of the pandemic, more than 40 residents had been determined clinically recovered, which means that they at one point tested positive for COVID-19 but are now considered clinically recovered as defined by federal CDC guidance.
    - Individuals are determined recovered according to CDC guidance, and may test positive even after being clinically recovered. This is a known consequence of the PCR test, which is extremely sensitive to picking up virus or viral remnants even weeks after recovery.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea currently conducts bi-weekly staff surveillance testing. In accordance with the recent CMS Interim Rule, 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 November 24 is as follows:
    - Residents
        - 0 veteran residents are positive
        - 143 veteran residents are negative
        - 40 residents have recovered, meaning they previously tested positive and are now clinically recovered
        - 0 residents have pending tests
        - Since March 1, there have been 31 deaths of veterans who tested positive
    - Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing:
        - 3 employees are positive
        - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

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 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.

Communications Resources

Public Information Resources on Targeted Health Measures Available for Communities:
The COVID-19 Command Center has produced new resources aimed at helping communities to inform and educate residents on recent executive orders and tips for less risky Thanksgiving gatherings.
New Website: Mass.gov/holidays

Executive Orders + Stay at Home Advisory one-pagers/flyers

- Available in multiple languages at the links below:
  - Public gathering guidance
  - Private gathering guidance
  - Face Mask order
  - Stay-at-home Advisory
  - Early business closure & alcohol guidance
- **Social Media posts on Thanksgiving Tips**
  - https://www.facebook.com/massgov/posts/1728164364021213
  - https://www.instagram.com/p/CHQSE5Egi4B/
  - https://twitter.com/MassGov/status/1324736982275313664
  - https://nextdoor.com/post/167003750?init_source=copy_link_share

Public Messaging Resources for Higher-Risk Communities

- Public messaging graphics & guidelines for use in your community

DPH Communication Materials in Multiple Languages

- **Facts Sheets**
- **Videos**

How to Help Out

- Donate to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.
- Volunteer opportunities for health professionals: **Please click here**.

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 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