Thursday, January 7, 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, 1/14/21.



Today, the Baker-Polito Administration shared an update on its support for the health care system as it faces a surge in COVID-19 patients, including steps to promote capacity planning and communication, ICU staffing flexibility options, and ongoing capacity support from field hospitals in Worcester and Lowell.

In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
  - Administration Outlines Vaccination Plans for First Responders and Provides Vaccine Update
  - Extension of Gathering and Capacity Limits
  - New Hospital Guidance
  - Governor Signs Health Care Legislation
  - Administration Awards $67.4 Million in Additional Grants to 1,366 Businesses
  - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
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Helpful Links:

- 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
- Stop the Spread
- HandHoldMA.org
- Reopening Massachusetts
- Mass.Gov/covid19
- 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 1/7

393,188 Total Confirmed Cases (click here for more information)

12,634 Deaths among confirmed cases

11,417,197 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States Last Updated 1/7

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:

21,259,997 Total Cases

359,849 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.

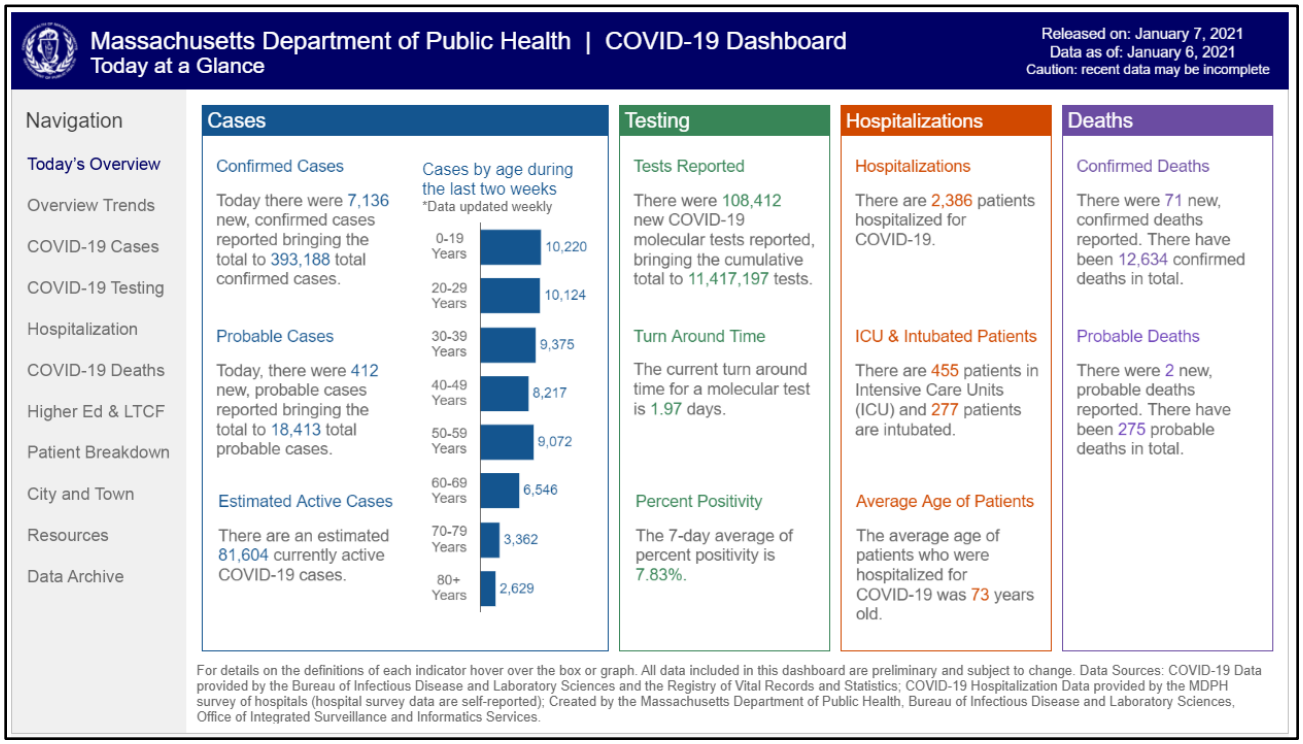
If you go out for essential needs:

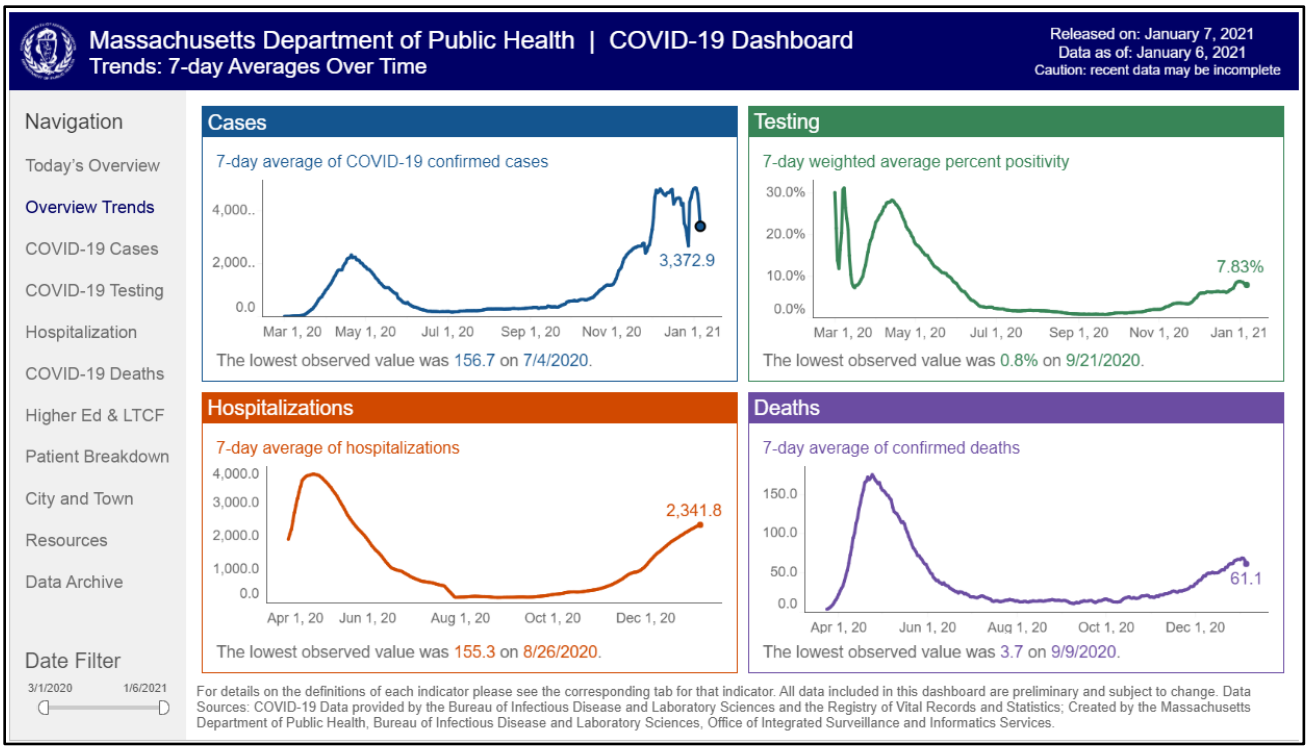
- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Wear a face covering or mask if physical distancing is not possible.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update

Key indicators from today's interactive dashboard are below.





COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Weekly Public Health Report:
The Command Center will release the **Weekly Public Health Report, with town by town information, including the weekly listing of city and town risk levels** on Thursday, 1/7. The report will also include granular information on cases by county, biweekly testing rates, contact tracing information (including active COVID cluster information by Exposure Setting Type), hospitalization data, race and ethnicity data, information about cases in long term care facilities, and PPE distribution data.

Interactive COVID-19 Dashboard Launched
The new interactive COVID-19 dashboard contains all the data elements of the current daily dashboard in addition to some of the elements from the weekly dashboard, such as the positivity rate and the testing rate for cities and towns. This interactive feature will allow users to view all the data points from the daily dashboard and several from the weekly dashboard live on the website, with an added ability to customize the data view. For example, users may explore data by focusing on certain data points or a specific period of time.

New interactive features offer the ability for users to:

- select specific timeframes through a date filter
- hover over certain sections for further explanation and more details
- view specific information like the positivity rate and the testing rate for different cities and towns by both map and bar chart

While the new interactive format has been designed to improve the user experience, the many data points currently being reported remain the same, including:

- COVID-19 overview and trends
- cases, testing, hospitalization, and deaths
- higher education and long term care facility data
- breakdowns by city and town

The new dashboard, powered by Tableau, will be available on the current webpage at www.mass.gov/covid19.

The Commonwealth's latest weekly vaccination dashboard was posted today. It includes doses of vaccine shipped and administered; people vaccinated; and vaccine distribution by county, age, race, ethnicity breakdowns.

Week in Review: State Actions

Baker-Polito Administration Outlines Vaccination Plans for First Responders and Provides Vaccine Update
On Monday, the Baker-Polito Administration outlined plans to vaccinate the Commonwealth's first responders, the next priority group within Phase One of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan.



The Administration also launched a new interactive COVID-19 daily dashboard to provide a more user-friendly tool for the public to access data on the impact of COVID-19 in Massachusetts.

First Responder Vaccinations: Vaccinations for first responders, the third priority group within Phase 1 of the

Commonwealth's vaccine distribution timeline, will begin Monday, January 11. There are over 45,000 first responders across the Commonwealth, a diverse group that includes fire, police and EMTs, who serve state, local and regional entities.

The Administration, through the COVID-19 Command Center and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, has worked with first responder organizations and departments about the best ways to vaccinate first responders effectively and safely. **Based on these conversations, the Commonwealth has announced three options for first responder vaccinations:**

1. Qualifying departments may request vaccines to be administered on-site. Departments that would like to vaccinate their own first responder staff must follow the guidance for the Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Program (MCVP) and have the capacity to vaccinate 200 individuals.
2. First responders can schedule an appointment at a first responder vaccination site. View a list of locations here.
3. Mass vaccination sites will also be available for first responders to access the vaccine, which will be launched by the Commonwealth in the coming weeks.

First responder departments and organizations can visit www.mass.gov/firstrespondervaccine to learn more about these options.

Vaccine Phase 2 Priority Group Adjustment: The Commonwealth has updated its Vaccine Distribution plan. Based on this recommendation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory group, we are updating prioritization so that individuals age 75+ are included in Phase 2, Group 1, along with individuals of all ages with 2+ comorbidities. This follows revised recommendations from the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) issued on December 22. Following the ACIP change, the Commonwealth's COVID-19 Advisory Group convened December 23 and 30 to discuss any changes to its previous recommendations were warranted. The Group came to consensus on a single change to the current recommendations, taking into particular consideration ACIP's highlighting of individuals age 75 and older as being at particular risk of serious complications of COVID-19.

The revised vaccine distribution timeline will be reflected on www.mass.gov/covidvaccine.

Extension of Gathering and Capacity Limits

Today, the Administration announced that the industry restrictions for capacity limits and reduced gathering limits that went into effect on Saturday, December 26th will now be extended for at least two more weeks to January 24th.



Read a summary of the restrictions here.

Read the emergency order here.

Capacity Limits: Under the current restrictions that are being extended today, most industries in Massachusetts remain subject to a 25% capacity limit:

- Restaurants (based on permitted seating capacity)
- Close Contact Personal Services
- Theaters and Performance Venues
- Casinos
- Office Spaces

- Places of Worship
- Retail Businesses
- Driving and Flight Schools
- Golf Facilities (for indoor spaces)
- Libraries
- Lodging (for common areas)
- Arcades and Indoor Recreation Businesses
- Fitness Centers and Health Clubs
- Museums, Cultural Facilities and Guided Tours
- Workers and staff will not count towards the occupancy count for restaurants, places of worship, close contact personal services, and retail businesses.

All other rules and restrictions in each sector-specific guidance will continue to remain in effect.

Gatherings Limit: The current gathering limits in place since December 26 are also being extended. Indoor gatherings will remain limited to 10 people. Outdoor gatherings will remain limited to 25 people outside. The gatherings limit applies to private homes, event venues and public spaces.

New Hospital Guidance

Today, the Administration issued new hospital guidance to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth:



Hospital Tier Escalation: The Department of Public Health's hospital guidance, issued in early November, establishes a regional tiering system for hospitals to support continued collaboration among hospitals and sustain capacity. Since early December, all regions across the Commonwealth have been in Tier 3 status, which established a framework for greater coordination to balance patient load and ensure capacity.

Today, in response to the continued rise in hospitalizations, all regions across the state will be escalated to Tier 4 status. In Tier 4, the hospitals in each region will meet at least daily, and will continue to collaborate across regions where necessary, to address growing capacity constraints and continue to load balance as needed.

ICU Nurse Staffing Ratios: To support the health care system's continued response to the surge in cases and hospitalizations, the Commonwealth is allowing the deployment of acute nursing staffing under certain circumstances. Starting today, hospitals with severe capacity constraints may request a temporary exemption from the mandated nurse-to-patient ratios in the ICU. This option will only be available to hospitals with capacity of less than 20% who first attest to DPH that they have suspended all nonessential elective invasive procedures, including those conducted in an outpatient setting under the hospital's license. Additionally, hospitals must take every reasonable step to expand capacity prior to requesting a temporary exemption. If a hospital's bed capacity increases, or if the hospital re-starts nonessential elective invasive procedures, the hospital must resume compliance with the ICU staffing requirements.

PPE Guidance Updated: Also today, Secretary Sudders announced that DPH has issued updated Comprehensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance to clarify information regarding the PPE that health care personnel (HCP) use in clinical care areas.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Governor Signs Health Care Legislation



Last week, Governor Baker signed comprehensive health care legislation that promotes key priorities initially included in the Administration's health care legislation filed in 2019. 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.

The legislation contains several priorities initially included in the Baker-Polito Administration's health care legislation which was introduced in the fall of 2019, including requiring coverage of telehealth services and expanding the scope of practice for Advanced Practice Nurses. The legislation also extends, and in some instances codifies, critical measures taken through executive action throughout the pandemic to ensure timely access and coverage for COVID-19 treatment and services.
In addition to these provisions, the recently signed Fiscal Year 2021 budget includes several provisions that correspond to proposals initially introduced in the Administration's health care legislation. These proposals require all Massachusetts insurers to use a standard credentialing form and prohibit additional costs for same-day billing for multiple primary care and behavioral health visits.

The key provisions of the new law include:

- Requiring coverage of telehealth services including behavioral health care
- Expanding Scope of Practice for Advanced Practice Nurses and Optometrists
- Increasing disclosures around provider costs and network status to protect consumers from surprise medical bills
- Removing barriers to urgent care centers for MassHealth members
- Extending insurance coverage and access to COVID-19 testing and treatment
- Directing a study and report of the impacts of COVID-19 on the health care system

Strengthening Telehealth Coverage: At the start of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Baker-Polito Administration, through emergency order, required insurers to immediately cover telehealth to ensure the continuity of services remotely when it was not safe to do so in person. This led to a rapid shift to remote delivery and significant uptake in telehealth services. The legislation builds on these emergency flexibilities and requires coverage parity for telehealth services and implements permanent telehealth rate parity for behavioral health services. Additionally, it requires rate parity for telehealth coverage for primary care and chronic disease management services for two years, and rate parity for all services for 90 days past the state of emergency.

Expanding Scope of Practice: During the public health emergency, the Administration implemented emergency orders to increase health care system capacity, including temporarily expanding the scope of practice for several types of practitioners, and streamlining licensure requirements before independent practice. The new law makes permanent certain measures to expand scope of practice for nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, psychiatric nurse mental health specialists and optometrists.

Taking Steps to Address Surprise Billing: The new legislation takes steps to protect consumers from surprise bills, including a provision that requires providers to notify patients in advance as to whether a procedure is in or out of network. Additionally, it directs the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to work with the Health Policy Commission, Center for Health Information and Analytics, and Division of Insurance to recommend a default rate for out of network billing by September of 2021.

Increasing Access to Urgent Care for MassHealth Members: Retail clinics and urgent care centers provide important access points to health care beyond the traditional hours and sites of physician offices, community health centers, and hospitals. This 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.

COVID-19 Related Provisions: The bill extends requirements for insurers in Massachusetts to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment. Under this legislation, insurers, including MassHealth, are required to cover all COVID-19 related emergency, inpatient, and cognitive rehab services. Additionally, coverage is required for medically necessary outpatient COVID-19 testing, including for asymptomatic individuals under specific circumstances outlined by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The legislation also directs the Health Policy Commission and Center for Health Information and Analytics to analyze and report on the effect of COVID-19 on healthcare accessibility, quality and fiscal sustainability in both the short and long term as well as those effects on long term policy considerations, including an examination of existing healthcare disparities due to economic, geographic, racial or other factors.

Administration Awards $67.4 Million in Additional Grants to 1,366 Businesses Impacted by the Pandemic

Last week, the Baker-Polito Administration announced $67.4 million in awards to 1,366 additional small businesses in a second round of grants through the COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC). Additionally, the new Sector-Specific Small Business Relief Grant Program, also administered by MGCC, is now accepting applications from businesses from sectors most impacted by the COIVD-19. Both grant programs are part of a new $668 million relief package.



The businesses being notified of their successful grant application include many that are owned by minorities (50%) and women (48%). Restaurants and bars, beauty and personal services, health care and retail are among the top sectors receiving relief in this second round of awards. The first round of grants totaled nearly $49 million in support of 1,158 Massachusetts small businesses. MGCC is continuing to review existing applications and will make awards over the coming weeks to companies that meet demographic and industry preferences. Businesses that have already applied to MGCC's Small Business Grant Program do not need to reapply to the new program.

New Grant Program Accepting Applications
In addition to providing grants to businesses within the existing pool of applications for the Small Business Grant Program, applications are now being accepted for a new Sector-Specific Small Business Relief Grant Program that targets industries experiencing the most significant economic hardship and a loss of revenue. Industries given preference in this new program include:

- 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

This new business relief program 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 online application portal for the new program opened on December 31, and will close on Friday, January 15. Awards are expected to be announced in February.

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

Important Updates

Department of Public Health Updates:

- DPH launched the new phase of the #StateWithoutStigMA campaign to remove barriers to treatment of substance addiction. The campaign debuts amid a small rise in overdose deaths during COVID. Read the release.
- The daily COVID dashboard is now in an interactive format, enabling users to focus on particular metrics, timeframes, and more. The interactive dashboard and weekly public health report publish Thursdays at 5pm. Look for both here.
- View the latest updates on COVID vaccine in MA: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-program#latest-vaccine-update-in-ma-
- A new single page website includes all vaccine-related graphics and materials, being updated regularly: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-covid-19-vaccine-graphics
- MA211 received 4,170 calls from Monday 12/28 through Sunday 1/3 for a new total of 183,701.
- 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.
- There are currently 294 volunteers with the Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps supporting 47 local boards of health. For more information about the Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps, please visit the APHVC webpage on Mass.gov.
- Planning continues relative to the allocation and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- DPH issued guidance to provide Clarification of Federal and State Hospital Transfer and Discharge Requirements
- For the date range of 12/25/20 - 12/31/20, 92 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.
- 161 nursing homes held clinics last week as part of the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Vaccine Clinics.
- 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

- 3 state contracted isolation/recovery hotels in the cities of Everett, Taunton, and Pittsfield continue to receive client placements: 144 individuals are currently housed in the program, a decrease of 6 since last week.
    - Top 5 referring cities:
        - Boston (197)
        - Springfield (133)
        - Brockton (98)
        - Worcester (96)
        - Cambridge (93)
    - To date, a total of 1,458 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery.

Emergency Food Box Program Update (as of 1/7/21):

Food Bank/ MEMA Warehouse	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	205,920	0
Merrimack Valley Food Bank	3,312	0
Worcester County Food Bank	1,440	0
MEMA Warehouse (Reserve)	36,969	3,356
Total Food Boxes	**278,900**	**3,356**

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 35 orders prepared for pick up or delivery from the MEMA State Logistics Warehouse from 12/31-1/7.
- The warehouse supported distributions to 18 DPH Community Grant Recipients this week, which included 30,065 KN95s, 92,400 masks, 72,225 cloth face coverings, 9,601 thermometers with batteries, 6,775 goggles, 10,991 face shields, 56,894 bottles of hand sanitizer, 4,291 containers of disinfectant wipes, and 10,158 industrial/heavy duty gloves.
- The three isolation hotels in Pittsfield, Everett, and Taunton continue to be supported with weekly allocations of PPE, drinks, snacks, cleaners, and administrative supplies.
- The Field Hospital in Worcester is receiving a shipment from the warehouse of additional supplies to expand their break room on 1/8.
- MEMA's Food Box Program will be supported by distributions of food boxes from the MEMA State Logistics Warehouse as orders are received. The first distribution of 100 boxes is being distributed to Revere on 1/8.
- DPH coordinated 68 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (1/5) (3 PPE/3 testing supplies and 62 BinaxNOW kits); 52 deliveries were made on Wednesday (1/6) (2 PPE/3 testing supplies and 47 BinaxNOW kits); 22 deliveries were made on Thursday (1/7) (1 PPE/2 testing supplies, 15 BinaxNOW kits and 15 HFNC); 26 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (1/8) (0 PPE and 17 BinaxNOW kits).

Disaster Recovery

On March 27, 2020, 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: 1/1/2021

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)
$651.9M +$2.40M	$461.8M +$1.02M	$53.1M +$189.93K	$7.3M $0
853 Projects +4	582 Projects +8	68 Projects +5	37 Projects 0

Approved Applicants: 635

- Online Applicant Technical Assistant Requests: 497
- Request for FEMA RPA Applicants: 670
- MEMA has approved the Emergency Materials and Equipment PW $315,815,794.86 (Federal Cost Share $236,861,846.15). The project is pending FEMA obligation, which is expected by January 31st.
- FEMA obligated the MEMA Alternate Care Site PW $50,429,50.83 (Federal Cost Share- $37,821,788.13). Project is undergoing final validation for payment.
- FEMA obligated the MEMA Feeding Operations PW $9,325,068.48 (Federal Cost Share- $6,993,801.36). Project has been fully validated and is pending payment.
- FEMA obligated ten municipal PW's this week totaling $781,849.50 (Federal Cost Share- $586,387.14).
- Distributed non-congregate sheltering survey to municipal applicants to collect metrics for FEMA reporting.

Inter-Agency Recovery Working Group:

- Met with HED to review FEMA support materials for HED Economic Recovery Plan

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 1/07)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	**31,683**
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	**417**
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	**7,523**



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Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 1/5/21)

- 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. 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.
- 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.
- Veterans rang in 2021 with safe celebrations at the Home. On New Year's Eve, the recreation staff went room to room with eggnog, sparkling cider, and snacks. On New Year's Day homemade cinnamon rolls started the day, and the main meal included Chicken Cordon Bleu, Shrimp Cocktail, and Ice Cream. The Veterans were treated to a special virtual concert provided by Home Base, and hundreds of holiday cards continue to be distributed
    - Additionally, the Soldiers' Home had staff on hand on New Year's Eve and New Year's 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.
- 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. Over the past weeks, the Home welcomed new permanent and interim leadership including permanent Deputy Superintendent Glen Hevy and Interim Superintendent Michael Lazo.
- Over the past week, the Soldiers' Home has welcomed new staff members to the Home including a Director of Social Work, one Registered Nurse, and 3 Certified Nursing Assistants.
- 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 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.
- On January 4th, Governor Baker appointed Major General Gary Keefe, Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, as the new Chairman of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke Board of Trustees, replacing Kevin Jourdain, who remains a trustee member.
- 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 5 is as follows:
  - Status:
    - 4 veteran residents are positive and not clinically recovered
    - 15 veteran residents are negative
    - 34 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.
    - 74 veteran residents have been determined clinically recovered
    - 0 veteran residents have refused testing
- Resident locations:
  - 97 veteran residents are onsite
  - 30 veteran residents are offsite
    - 21 veteran residents are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
    - 9 veteran residents are receiving acute care offsite

- Since March 1, there have been 77 veteran deaths of veteran residents who tested positive
- Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing
    - 2 staff are positive
    - All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 1/5/21)

- 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. 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.
- 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 5 is as follows:

o Residents
    - 7 veteran residents are positive
    - 130 veteran residents are negative
    - 40 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

o Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing:
    - 21 employees are positive
    - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

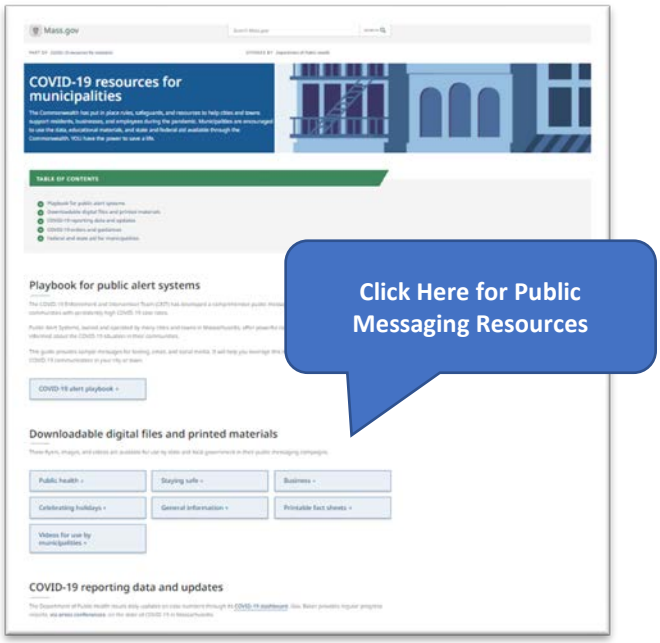
Communications Resources

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:

- Statewide guidelines, advisories, and orders
- Staying safe in the community
- Using local public alert systems for COVID-19 information
- **NEW:** Vaccine Graphics
- **NEW:** 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 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 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