

# Thursday, April 8, 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, 4/15/21.*



*On Wednesday, Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito, joined by Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo and East Boston Neighborhood Health Center President & CEO Manny Lopes, toured the vaccination site at the Oceanside Events Center in Revere.*

#### In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health & Vaccine Data Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
  - Individuals 55+ and Individuals with One Certain Medical Condition Now Eligible for Vaccine
  - Administration Adopts CDC Guidance for New Medical Conditions to Expand Eligibility for More Individuals
  - Administration Announces Expansion of Pre-Registration System
  - Over \$400 Million in New Federal Funding Now Available Through Eviction Diversion Initiative
  - FEMA to Begin Accepting Applications for COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Starting 4/12
  - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
  - Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes Weekly Update

#### Helpful Links:

- [COVID-19 Vaccine in Massachusetts](#)
- [Public Messaging Resources for Municipalities & Businesses](#)
- [Mass.gov/findfoodhelp](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Reopening Massachusetts](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)



#### Situation in Numbers

**Massachusetts** current as of 4/8

613,763 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

17,022 Deaths among confirmed cases

19,543,855 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

**United States** Last Updated 4/8

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:

30,737,477 Total Cases

556,106 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:

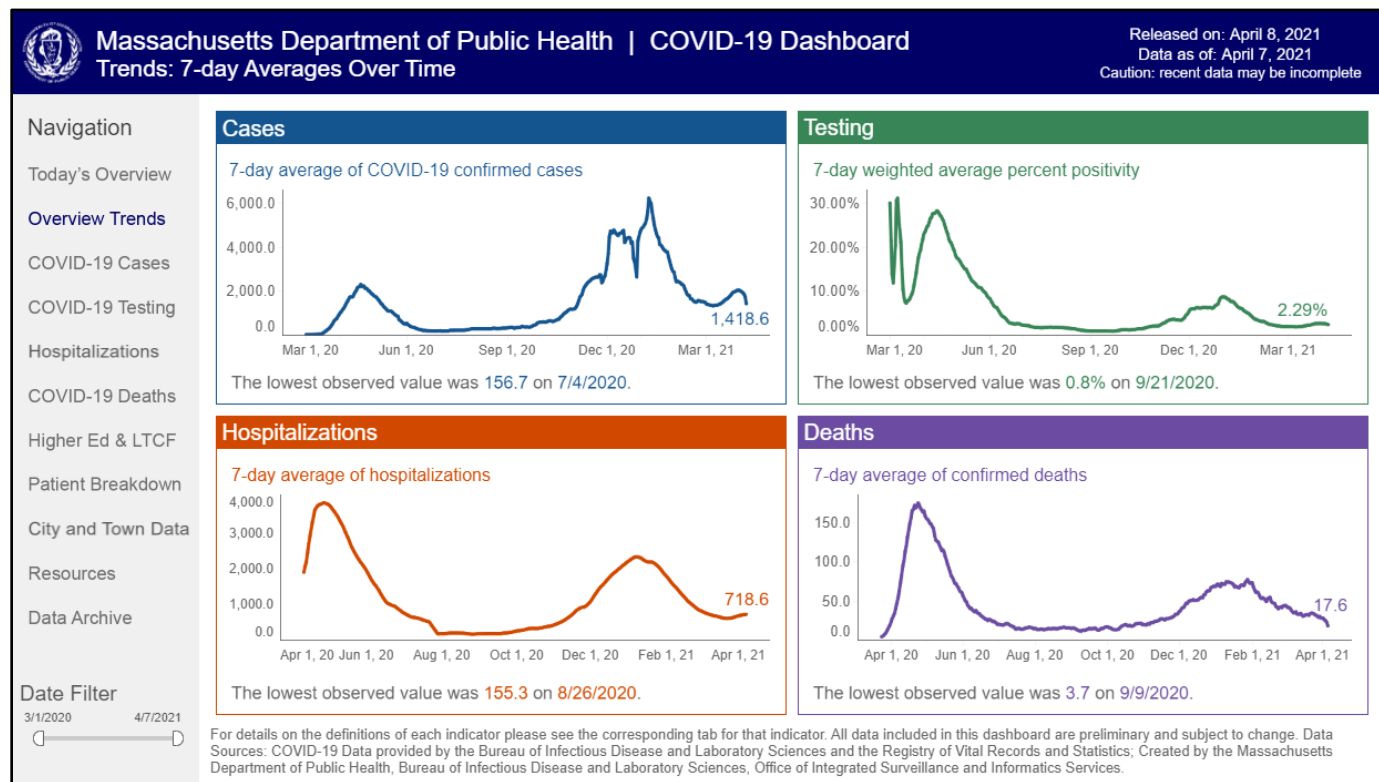
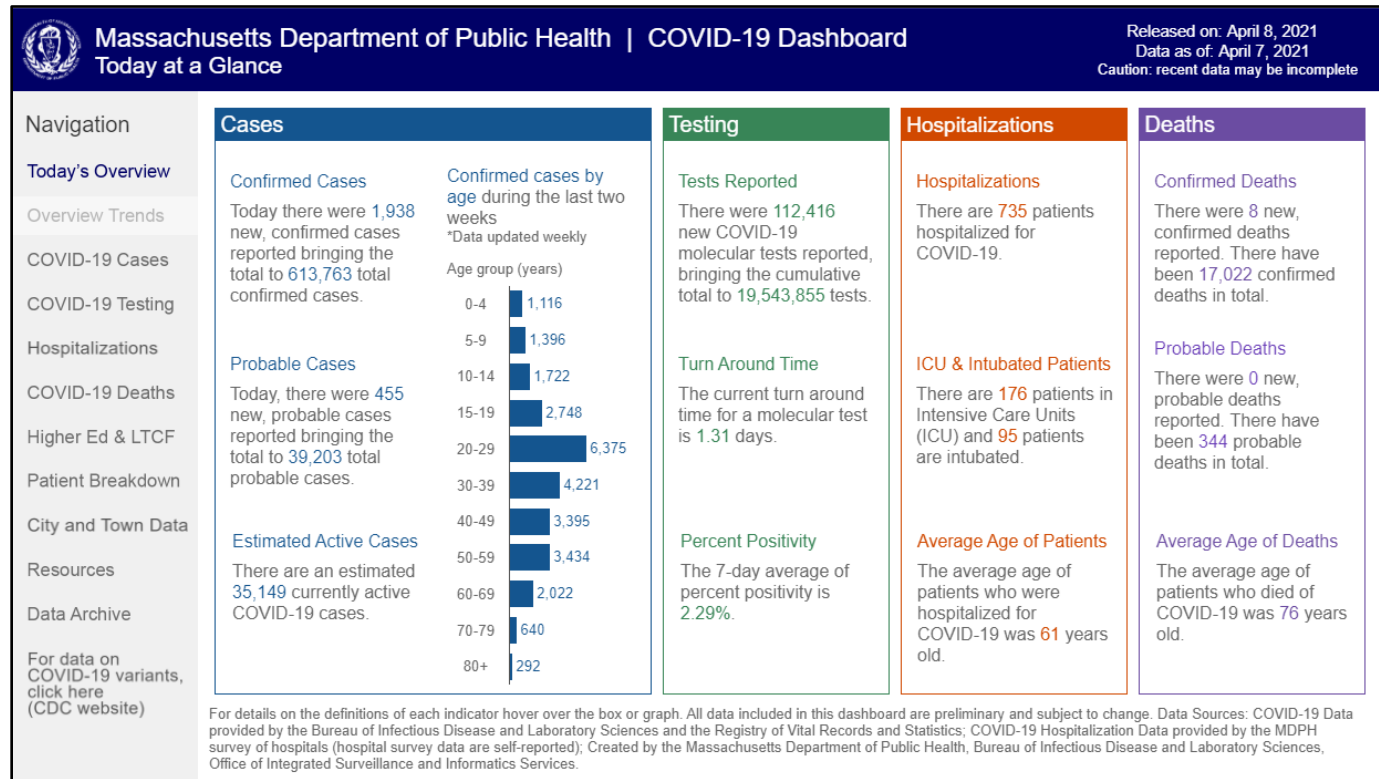
- ✓ Stay Home
- ✓ Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and loved ones.

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.

# COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

## Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update



# COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER

## WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

### Weekly Public Health Report:

The Command Center released the [Weekly Public Health Report](#) on Thursday, 4/8. The report primarily includes information related to cases and inspection data for Long Term Care Facilities. Data previously included in the Weekly Report, including town-level data, contact tracing information (including active COVID cluster information by Exposure Setting Type), are now presented in the [Daily Interactive Dashboard](#).

**Vaccine Update:** For a more detailed weekly breakdown, [visit the MA COVID-19 Vaccination Data webpage](#).

	4/2	4/3	4/4	4/5	4/6	4/7	4/8
<b>DOSES SHIPPED</b>							
Doses Shipped to MA Providers (MIIS)*	3,129,475	3,266,675	3,266,675	3,266,675	3,415,575	3,514,715	3,612,025
Doses Shipped to Pharmacies and Directly by the Federal Government - Including FPPP Providers (Tiberius)	1,221,935	1,245,335	1,315,995	1,353,195	1,360,305	1,392,105	1,440,915
<b>Grand Total Shipped to MA</b>	<b>4,351,410</b>	<b>4,512,010</b>	<b>4,582,670</b>	<b>4,619,870</b>	<b>4,775,880</b>	<b>4,906,820</b>	<b>5,052,940</b>
<b>DOSES ADMINISTERED (MIIS)*</b>							
1st Moderna or Pfizer Doses Administered # of people with at least one dose	2,325,040	2,382,102	2,425,659	2,449,751	2,492,756	2,540,254	2,586,903
2nd Moderna or Pfizer Doses Administered # of people fully vaccinated	1,315,619	1,353,319	1,378,780	1,391,254	1,427,168	1,457,743	1,488,224
Janssen (J&J) Doses Administered (MIIS) # of people fully vaccinated	93,783	96,711	99,740	100,550	102,912	113,330	129,025
<b>Grand Total Doses Administered (MIIS)</b>	<b>3,734,442</b>	<b>3,832,132</b>	<b>3,904,179</b>	<b>3,941,555</b>	<b>4,022,836</b>	<b>4,111,327</b>	<b>4,204,152</b>
<b>Grand Total Fully Vaccinated People with Existing COVID-19 Vaccines**</b>	<b>1,409,402</b>	<b>1,450,030</b>	<b>1,478,520</b>	<b>1,491,804</b>	<b>1,530,080</b>	<b>1,571,073</b>	<b>1,617,249</b>
<b>% of Total Doses Shipped That Have Been Reported as Administered</b>	<b>85.8%</b>	<b>84.9%</b>	<b>85.2%</b>	<b>85.3%</b>	<b>84.2%</b>	<b>83.8%</b>	<b>83.2%</b>
*Data from the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS) are as of midnight the night before.							
**Fully vaccinated people have 2 doses of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or 1 dose of Janssen (J&J) vaccine							

### MA Dose Allocation Update:

This week, the Commonwealth received 444,930 first and second doses as part of the state allocation. These figures do not include doses provided directly from the federal government to the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) or Community Vaccination Center (CVC). These numbers include a one-time shipment of 108,800 J&J vaccines.

This week, first doses and second dose state allocations (total doses), were distributed among providers as follows:

- Health systems and health care providers (excluding community health centers): 163,960
- Regional Collaboratives and Local Boards of Health: 118,230
- Mass vaccination locations: 115,890
- Community Health Centers state allocation only: 31,350
- Retail pharmacies (non-CVS) state allocation only: 4,500
- Mobile Clinics supporting long-term care facilities, congregate care, affordable/low-income senior housing and homebound individuals: 10,000

Weekly allocations are subject to change based on federal availability, demand from providers, and obligations to meet second doses. Providers have 10 days to use their doses and must meet specific performance thresholds.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

### Federal Doses:

In addition to the state allocation, the federal government has increased its distribution of vaccines to CVS Health sites as part of the Federal Retail Pharmacy Partnership as well as to certain Massachusetts federally qualified community health centers. These quantities fluctuate on a weekly basis and are not counted as part of the state's weekly allocation but represent an increasing allocation to selected locations.

This week 254,490 first and second doses were allocated to the retail pharmacy program.

23 FQHCs received 88,400 doses directly from the Federal Government.

The Community Vaccination Clinic at the Hynes Convention Center was allocated 42,120 doses.

## *Week in Review: State Actions*

### **Individuals 55+ and Individuals with One Certain Medical Condition Now Eligible for Vaccine**

As of Monday, April 5th, residents 55+ and residents with one certain medical condition are now eligible to receive vaccine at any of the Commonwealth's over 300 vaccination locations, including 269 pharmacy locations. With this group, more than 1 million additional residents will be eligible for vaccine in the Commonwealth.

The full timeline is available at [mass.gov/COVIDVaccinePhases](https://mass.gov/COVIDVaccinePhases).

The Administration was informed last week of a one-time increased shipment of over 100,000 J&J vaccines that arrived in the state earlier this week. Depending on supply from the federal government, it could take weeks for people to be notified that an appointment is available at a mass vaccination site.



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*On Tuesday, Governor Baker received the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Hynes Convention Center mass vaccination site.*

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Individuals can learn more about the Commonwealth's vaccination sites and pre-registration by visiting [vaxfinder.mass.gov](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov).

### **Administration Adopts CDC Guidance for New Medical Conditions to Expand Eligibility for More Individuals**

In accordance with [CDC guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/vaccine/eligibility/), the Commonwealth has adopted recent additions to the list of conditions that cause individuals to be at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Individuals with one of the following conditions are eligible for vaccination as of Monday, April 5th:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic lung diseases, including COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma (moderate-to-severe), interstitial lung disease, cystic fibrosis, and pulmonary hypertension
- Dementia or other neurological conditions
- Diabetes (type 1 or type 2)



## COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- Down syndrome
- Heart conditions (such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies or hypertension)
- HIV infection
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system)
- Liver disease
- Overweight and obesity
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- Smoking, current or former
- Solid organ or blood stem cell transplant
- Stroke or cerebrovascular disease, which affects blood flow to the brain
- Substance use disorders

The Administration is building a feature into the pre-registration system to allow individuals who have already registered to update their information to reflect the new medical conditions recognized by the CDC and Massachusetts. This feature will be made available soon.

### **Administration Announces Expansion of Pre-Registration System**

The Administration has announced the expansion of pre-registration to include some regional collaboratives and improved features to allow for vaccination location selection during appointment booking.

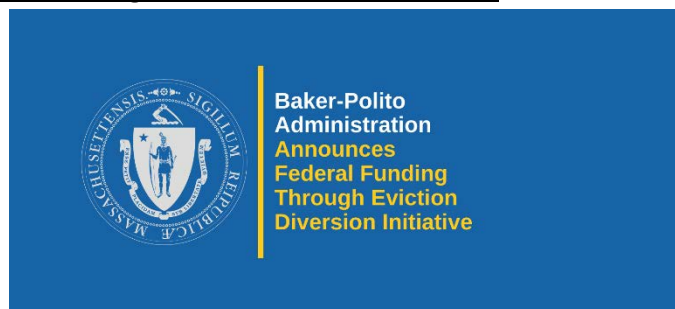
Later this week, the Commonwealth's preregistration system will expand to include the first regional collaboratives to the system. The Amherst/Northampton and Marshfield regional collaboratives will be the first to come online, and more regional collaboratives are working with the Command Center and tech teams to ensure they meet the operational and technological requirements to be added to the preregistration system.

Next week, the user experience for the preregistration system will change for people who are contacted with the opportunity to book appointments. People will have the opportunity to select their vaccination location before proceeding to select from available appointments.

To date, around 1.5 million people have preregistered using the system, with over 800,000 having been contacted with the opportunity to book appointments. The Administration will continue to make improvements to the system in the weeks ahead, to make the process even easier as more people become eligible.

### **Over \$400 Million in New Federal Funding Now Available Through Eviction Diversion Initiative**

Today, the Administration announced that more than \$400 million in new federal funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act is now available through the Administration's Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI). First launched in October 2020, EDI consists of a comprehensive set of resources that serves individuals, families, and landlords in crisis with financial aid, free and low-cost legal aid and community mediation to keep people in their homes. With a focus on preserving housing stability, the Administration has distributed approximately \$80 million in state rental assistance to more than 18,000 households since the beginning of the State of Emergency (data available via [public dashboard](#)).



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As a result of extensive coordination detailed below, these efforts have contributed to the mitigation of the anticipated crisis in evictions. Information tracked by the Massachusetts Trial Court shows a total of 626 executions issued in residential eviction cases from October 18, 2020 through March 28, 2021 for cases filed after the state moratorium. This represents a reduction of nearly 85% compared to the number of executions issued in residential eviction cases during the same span of time one year prior (3,807).

The infusion of more than \$400 million in federal resources, which is expected to be supplemented by hundreds of millions in additional dollars through the American Rescue Plan Act, allows the Commonwealth to provide longer-term relief to low-income renters and landlords in crisis, while implementing system efficiencies and processes for the future. This additional funding, and the flexibility created by federal regulations, enables the Commonwealth to expand aid to more households, provide deeper and longer-term assistance to households, and help households with utility payments. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has been investing heavily in and working closely with regional administering agencies (RAAs) and the Rental Assistance Processing (RAP) Center to incorporate the new Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funding into existing delivery service models for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) programs.

Funding highlights include:

- Income eligibility – households making up to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) will be eligible for funding (RAFT has an eligibility threshold of 50% of AMI).
- Longer-term assistance – households may be eligible for up to 12 months of rental arrears (plus an extra 3 months of stipends for future rent if funding allows and need is demonstrated), as well as overdue utilities arrears up to \$1,500. All rent and utility arrears must have been accrued after 3/13/20. Currently, RAFT and ERMA can provide up to \$10,000 per household for rental arrearages or stipends.
- Prioritization of funds for those most at risk, including those making less than 50% AMI and those unemployed for 90 days or more.

In addition, DHCD, in partnership with MassHousing and the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP), will launch a new program to allow qualified owners of income-restricted units, as well as Local Housing Authorities, to apply for help directly on behalf of all of their income-eligible residents with past-due rent. The Subsidized Housing Emergency Rental Assistance (SHERA) program will expedite relief for possibly tens of thousands of eligible tenants in need, while also allowing administering agencies to concentrate on applications from non-subsidized tenants in need of assistance.

Federal resources will also be made available to families who are eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) Shelter, by coupling ERAP rental assistance benefits with the existing HomeBASE benefit and housing services. This will help those who owe arrears and are at risk of becoming unhoused, and those who are exiting EA shelter and transitioning into permanent housing. The Administration is also pursuing two pilot initiatives: the first will allow municipalities to provide targeted outreach and hands-on ERAP application support to communities with demonstrated need and hard-to-reach populations, and the second provides targeted outreach strategies to small landlords about the availability of ERAP and other state financial assistance programs.

Over the last nine months, DHCD and partners have worked to reduce paperwork, streamline the application process, implement technology upgrades, and provide better language access. To increase capacity, DHCD and regional agencies hired more than 200 new staff and created the new Rental Assistance Processing (RAP) Center to lend added support with increased applications across the state. DHCD is also working to expand access and awareness with a public information campaign and targeted outreach to vulnerable communities.

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To address this immense increase in demand due to COVID-19, DHCD worked with administering agencies to transform the RAFT program from a narrow, homelessness prevention program into a comprehensive disaster relief program to stabilize renters and landlords. The RAFT program was more targeted in its aid, requiring a court summons or other evidence that a household was facing an unstable situation, and was limited to \$4,000 to address a short-term crisis. In past years, with an annual budget of roughly \$20 million, RAFT served between five and six thousand households. During this crisis, the state has already distributed about \$80 million to more than 18,000 households, more than tripling its annual output.

In February 2021 alone, the state served a record 5,463 households, spending \$21.1 million through the RAFT program to keep them in their homes. By comparison, in February 2020, the month before the start of the public health emergency, the state issued \$1.5 million in RAFT funds. February of 2021 represents approximately a 1,300% increase in assistance over February of 2020. During the first three weeks of March, the state distributed \$23.6 million in RAFT payments to 7,445 households, putting the Commonwealth on track for another record month. Payments from those three weeks alone represent more than the entire annual RAFT budget in any fiscal year before the current fiscal year.

In addition, DHCD continues to see fewer families enter and stay in the family shelter system compared to the previous year. Family shelter caseload in February 2021 was down approximately 20% compared to February 2020. Similar trends can be seen in the HomeBASE program, with new participants since October down between 30% and 60% each month compared to the preceding year. Moreover, while there was an initial increase in post-moratorium eviction filings in November and December, new weekly eviction filings for non-payment of rent have declined and have remained consistently below pre-pandemic levels in Calendar Year 2021. Additionally, this week, the Centers for Disease Control extended its eviction moratorium through June 30, 2021.

The EDI effort combines financial assistance with resources for renters and landlords to avoid an eviction. The COVID Eviction Legal Help Project (CELHP), a partnership with the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, and the Volunteers Lawyers Project, provides free legal assistance to low-income households facing an eviction, and free or low-cost assistance for low-income homeowners who live in a home with rental units. Agencies have hired nearly 130 direct service staff to increase capacity, and more than 200 lawyers have been recruited to volunteer their time and expertise. To date, more than 1,000 cases have been opened at legal aid organizations under this partnership. Additionally, with the Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration, professional, confidential mediation services are available across the Commonwealth for tenants and landlords to solve lease or other housing issues outside of the court process.

### **FEMA to Begin Accepting Applications for COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Starting 4/12**

Under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, FEMA will provide financial assistance for COVID-19-related funeral expenses incurred after January 20, 2020. Starting on Monday, April 12, FEMA will begin accepting applications for Funeral Assistance through a dedicated call center. Additional information on eligibility, required documentation, and [how to apply can be found by clicking here](#).

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## Important Updates

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 4/8)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	35,006
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	424
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	9,013



### Department of Public Health Updates:

- DPH issued the [Weekly COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Bulletin](#), for the week of 4/8.
- DPH Epidemiology Line handled 436 COVID-19 calls and 90 non-COVID-19 calls for a total of 526 calls from 3/29 through 4/4.
- As of 4/6, the [Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps](#) has 303 volunteers supporting 43 local boards of health.
- MA211 received 5,148 calls from Monday 3/29 through Sunday 4/4 for a new total of 278,060. These numbers do not reflect calls to the new appointment assistance call centers.
- MDPH coordinated 25 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (4/6) (1 PPE, 2 testing supplies, and 22 BinaxNOW kits); 22 deliveries were made on Thursday (4/8) (2 PPE, and 20 BinaxNOW kits) and 3 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (4/9) (1 testing supplies and 2 BinaxNOW kits).
- All HMCC Regions are at Tier 2 status, in accordance with the [DPH COVID-19 Resurgence Planning and Response Guidance for Acute Care Hospitals](#). DPH and the COVID-19 Command Center will continue to work closely with all regions to monitor hospital capacity statewide.
- There are currently 5 Rapid Response Teams, comprised of nursing staff, deployed to nursing homes across the Commonwealth. Teams are also administering second doses of Pfizer vaccine to nursing and rest home residents and vaccinating using Janssen vaccine at nursing homes and rest homes that have a high number of residents that are unvaccinated.

### Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:

#### **Mass Care**

- 2 state contracted isolation/recovery hotels in the communities of Everett and Pittsfield continue to receive client placements: 46 individuals are currently housed in the program.
  - Top 5 referring cities:
    - Boston (420)
    - Worcester (198)
    - Springfield (185)
    - Quincy (126)
    - Cambridge (120)
  - To date, a total of 2,303 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery, an increase of 31 since last week.

#### Community Food Box Program Update 4/2-4/8:

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



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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. 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
3,556	290	4

### Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 89 orders prepared for pickup or delivery from the MEMA State Logistics Warehouse from 4/2-4/8.
- The Natick Mass Vaccination Site was supplied with 60,000 KN95. PPE deliveries were also made to Curative Health, the Springfield vaccination site, and the Danvers vaccination site this week.
- 16 MPDH Community Health Center (CHC) program groups were supplied with 129,000 KN95 this week
- MDPH coordinated 25 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (4/6) (1 PPE, 2 testing supplies, and 22 BinaxNOW kits); 22 deliveries were made on Thursday (4/8) (2 PPE, and 20 BinaxNOW kits) and 3 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (4/9) (1 testing supplies and 2 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:

<p style="text-align: right;">Data as of: 4/2/2021</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>MEMA COVID-19 EXECUTIVE DASHBOARD</b> <b>AGGREGATE PROGRAM VIEW</b></p> <p><i>Note: Financial data for pre-submission projects reflect 100% federal cost share while submitted projects continue to reflect 75% federal cost share. The remaining 25% federal cost share for submitted projects will be reported as FEMA adjusts cost share for these projects on a rolling basis. In addition, figures do not include MEMA management cost allowance.</i></p>			
Overall (Best Available Estimate)	Submitted (Eligibility & Cost Review)	Approved* (by FEMA)	Paid (by MEMA)
\$1.4B +\$41.36K	\$1.2B +\$37.77M	\$616.6M +\$604.79K	\$293.1M \$0
991 Projects +13	692 Projects -4	193 Projects +4	105 Projects 0
Approved Applicants: 654			

- FEMA Requests for Public Assistance: 664 (+1)
- Technical Assistant Requests: 522 (+4)

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- Distributed [guidance](#) regarding FEMA's updated COVID-19 Safe Opening and Medical Care interim policies to all active applicants.
- New project obligations (2): \$97,048.80
- Two State Agency projects were submitted to FEMA for review this week.
- FEMA obligated three new State Agency projects this week.
- MEMA has received 76 supplemental obligations for the 25% cost share match on projects that were previously obligated at 75%.

### **Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 4/6/21)**

- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke raised its iconic United States Flag to full staff as a symbol of hope for all on Wednesday, March 31. 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, and continues to rebuild staff and leadership as we move forward.
- The Home continues to onboard staff, including this week a recreational therapist, and infection control nurse, 2 CNAs, a ward clerk, and a lead staffing coordinator.
- After a public interview on Tuesday, March 30, the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke Board of Trustees voted to appoint a Superintendent on Thursday, April 1, and the executive branch is working to onboard the selection.
- 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 and is adopting new surveillance testing guidance.
  - 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. 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.
  - All veteran residents' health is being monitored and testing 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 Baker-Polito Administration is moving forward on the expedited capital project to plan for the future of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, and the next step is passage of the [\\$400 million bond bill](#) which would provide capital authorization for the major project to reconstruct the long-term care facility at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home. Administration & Finance Secretary Michael Heffernan, Secretary of Veterans' Services Cheryl Lussier Poppe, and EOHHS Assistant Secretary for Administration and Finance Alda Rego testified before the Joint Committee Bonding and Capital Authorization on Monday in support of the bond bill, after the bill was reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Public Administration and Regulatory Oversight.
  - This bond bill is the next step of the expedited capital project, following the recommendations laid out in the [needs assessment report](#) that was released on Veterans Day, following the [Rapid Planning Phase](#). Payette Associates is the design firm leading the design and planning phase, building on the evaluation they previously completed, and developing a full project scope, refining the plan, confirming the budget, timelines, and ensuring conformity with the regulatory process. To meet the VA State Home Construction Grant's April 15, 2021 deadline, the bond bill must be enacted by mid-March, with a terms bill filed and enacted soon afterwards. The design development phase must be completed by August 1, 2021 to be eligible for this cycle of the grant program.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER

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- The Commonwealth has been making capital investments to address the short and long-term needs of the Home, including a short-term Refresh Project, a \$6 million refresh of units to significantly improve infection control for the residents and staff, and this longer-term Rapid Planning Capital Project ([www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject](http://www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject)) for a future Soldiers' Home in Holyoke.
  - Phase III of the Refresh Project continues on the 4th Floor. The Refresh Project is an important infection control initiative to improve the home in the immediate term for residents and staff.
- The Soldiers' Home welcomed special Sunday visitation on April 4 so that families could celebrate Easter together. Loved ones can visit during expanded in-person visitation hours into the evening on Wednesdays, with visits open Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and Wednesdays 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
  - The Home re-opened in-person visitation for veteran residents and their loved ones, starting February 10, 2021, and since then has hosted 708 visitors.
  - The Home is implementing updated guidance from DPH to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, staff, and those visiting. All visitors are screened and required to wear PPE and social distance, and negative test results are strongly encouraged before visiting. There is designated visitation space at each Home, and high touch surfaces are sanitized after each visit.
  - At least 24 slots will be offered each day, and visits are scheduled for at least 45 minutes. Visits can be scheduled by calling the Family Line at 413-552-4764. 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
  - The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke will also continue to offer and support virtual visitation. The Family Line is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff. Families can also request updates via email at [CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov](mailto: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 in Holyoke hosted 3 onsite vaccination clinics, the last on February 9. The first and second vaccination clinics were held on December 29 and January 19. Following the completion of the vaccination clinics:
  - 117 veteran residents and 225 staff have received both doses.
  - 1 veteran resident and 11 staff have received their first dose.
  - The Home is strongly encouraging all staff to receive the vaccine. On top of the efforts to provide educational information about the COVID-19 vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccine FAQ sheets, and vaccine informational forums with clinical staff, individuals who had not been vaccinated received individual outreach to provide education and encourage vaccination. All educational materials are available in both English and Spanish.
- The Soldiers' Home continues to work with Home Base, a veteran support organization that is a partnership of the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital, to help improve the quality of life, increase psychosocial interventions to address isolation during the pandemic. Home Base has linked us to interactive virtual concerts provided by professional and amateur volunteers, 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. Home Base has extended their free veteran counseling offerings to our Soldier's Home families and staff.
- 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 April 6 is as follows:
  - Status:
    - 0 veteran residents are positive and not clinically recovered

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- 44 veteran residents are negative
- 0 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.
- 71 veteran residents have been determined clinically recovered
- 0 veteran residents have refused testing
- Resident locations:
  - 111 veteran residents are onsite
  - 4 veteran residents are offsite
    - 2 are receiving acute care offsite
    - 2 domiciliary veterans are on an extended leave of absence
- Since March 1, 2020, there have been 77 deaths of veteran residents who tested positive
- Following the most recent staff surveillance testing
  - 0 are positive
  - All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

### **Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 4/6/21)**

- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea has re-opened in-person visitation for veteran residents and their loved ones, starting February 10, 2021, and has since hosted 236 in-person visits with veterans.
  - Visitation is offered 7 days a week 9 AM to 7:30 PM. The Home is implementing updated guidance from DPH to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, staff, and those visiting.
  - Eight visitation slots will be offered each day, and visits will be scheduled for at least 45 minutes long.
  - The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea also continues to offer and support virtual visitation.
  - Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting their assigned social worker, or emailing the Home at [CSH@mass.gov](mailto:CSH@mass.gov). Medical information can only be shared with an authorized health care proxy.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea hosted 3 onsite vaccination clinics, the last on February 9. The first and second vaccination clinics were held on December 29 and 30, and January 19 and 20. Following the completion of the onsite vaccination clinics:
  - 159 residents and 208 staff have received both doses
  - 6 veteran residents and 67 staff have received their first dose.
- 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.
- 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 continues to follow infection control procedures and maintaining best practices for the safety of veteran residents and staff and is adopting new surveillance testing guidance following updated Guidance from the Department of Public Health.
  - 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. 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 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

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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 April 6 is as follows:
  - Residents
    - 0 veteran residents are positive
    - 124 veteran residents are negative
    - 48 veteran residents have recovered, meaning they previously tested positive and are now clinically recovered
    - 0 veteran residents have pending tests
    - Since March 1, 2020, there have been 31 deaths of veteran residents who tested positive
  - Following the most recent staff surveillance testing:
    - 0 employees are positive
    - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

## Communications Resources

### Campaign videos added

Two new :15 second videos have been added to [Trust the Facts, Get the Vax Campaign Materials | Mass.gov](#). Feel free to use them in your outreach:

- What You Need to Know
- Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones



### New 'Trusted Sources' PSAs

Our latest videos come from [Grant Williams of the Boston Celtics](#) and [Kim Janey, Mayor of Boston](#). Please share these posts via your networks using our #TrusttheFacts hashtag.



### Eligibility graphics

- Use these new [graphics](#) for your newsletters and social media showing COVID-19 vaccine eligibility dates for everyone who lives, works, or studies in Massachusetts.

### FAQ for certain workers eligible in Phase 2

- Visit [COVID-19 vaccinations for certain workers | Mass.gov](#) for an FAQ and other COVID-19 vaccine eligibility requirements and information for workers in certain categories.

### Guidance for people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19

- Until more people are vaccinated, prevention measures will be necessary, even for individuals fully vaccinated. Review MA's [Guidance for people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#).



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## CDC 'plain language' materials in multiple languages

- [Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Communication Resources for COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

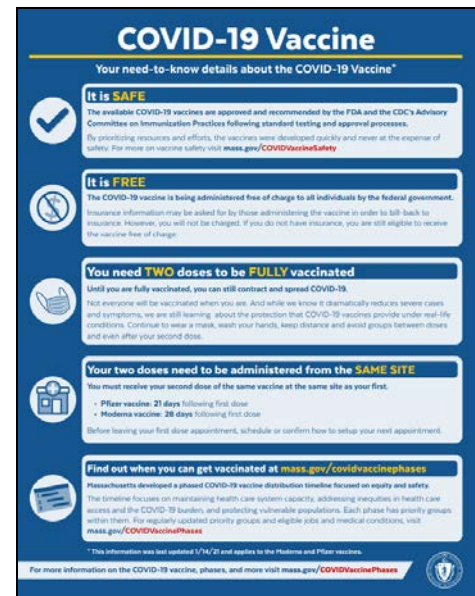
## Other Public Messaging Resources for Communities:

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

- [Trust the Facts, Get the Vax Campaign Materials | Mass.gov](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Posters | Mass.gov](#)
- [Preparing for your COVID-19 Vaccination Appointment flier | Mass.gov](#)
- [Guide to hosting a forum on the COVID-19 Vaccine | Mass.gov](#)

Visitors to COVID-19 resources for municipalities webpage will find these new resources, and additional flyers, posters, and digital resources in multiple languages on topics such as:

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



## 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](mailto: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

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- 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 tool](#) 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*

- [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

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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](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org)