

Thursday, December 10, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

The Command Center Situation Report is published weekly on Thursdays.



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Helpful Links:

- Apply for jobs at COVID-19 Alternate Care Sites
 - UMassMemorialResponds.com
 - LowellGeneralResponds.com
- [Get Back Mass](https://GetBackMass.com)
- Mass.gov/holidays
- Mass.gov/findfoodhelp
- [Stop the Spread](https://StoptheSpread.com)
- HandHoldMA.org
- [Reopening Massachusetts](https://ReopeningMassachusetts.com)
- Mass.Gov/covid19
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](https://MassachusettsEmergencyManagementAgency.com)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](https://UnemploymentandCOVID19.com)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](https://Dept.OfTransitionalAssistanceOnlinePortal.com)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](https://COVID-19CostEligibilityandTrackingGuidance.com)



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts **current as of 12/10**

264,454 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

10,963 Deaths among confirmed cases

9,278,419 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States **Last Updated 12/10**

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:

15,040,175 Total Cases
285,351 Deaths

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

Social Distancing Basics:

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

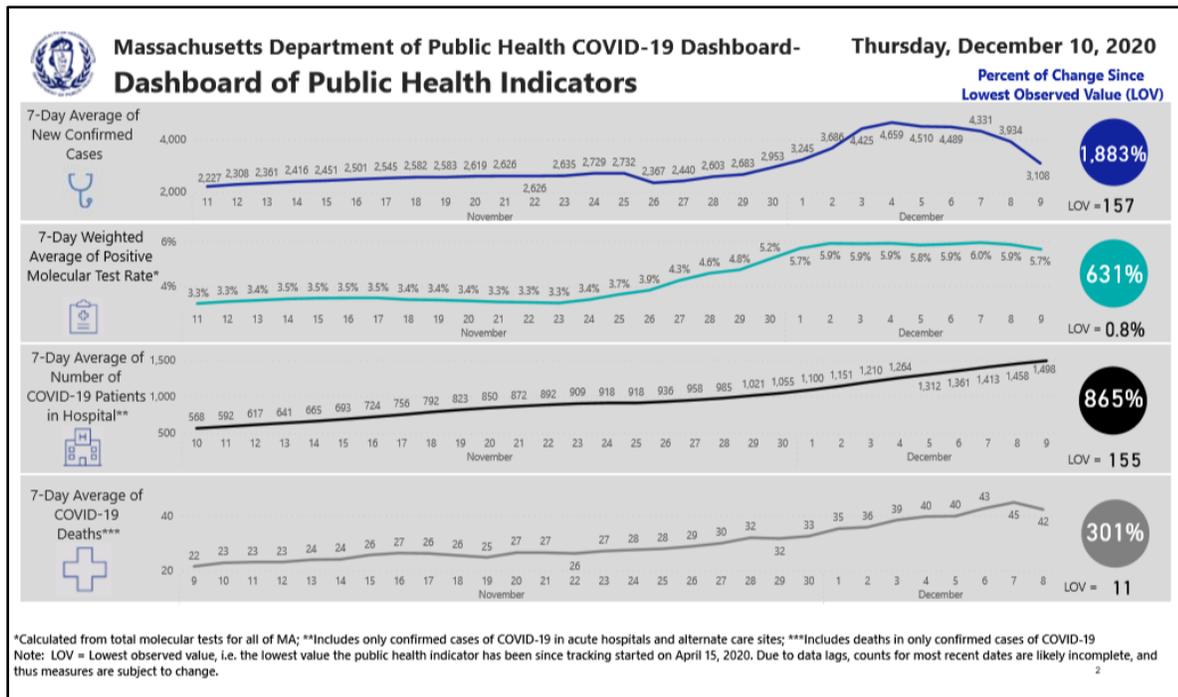
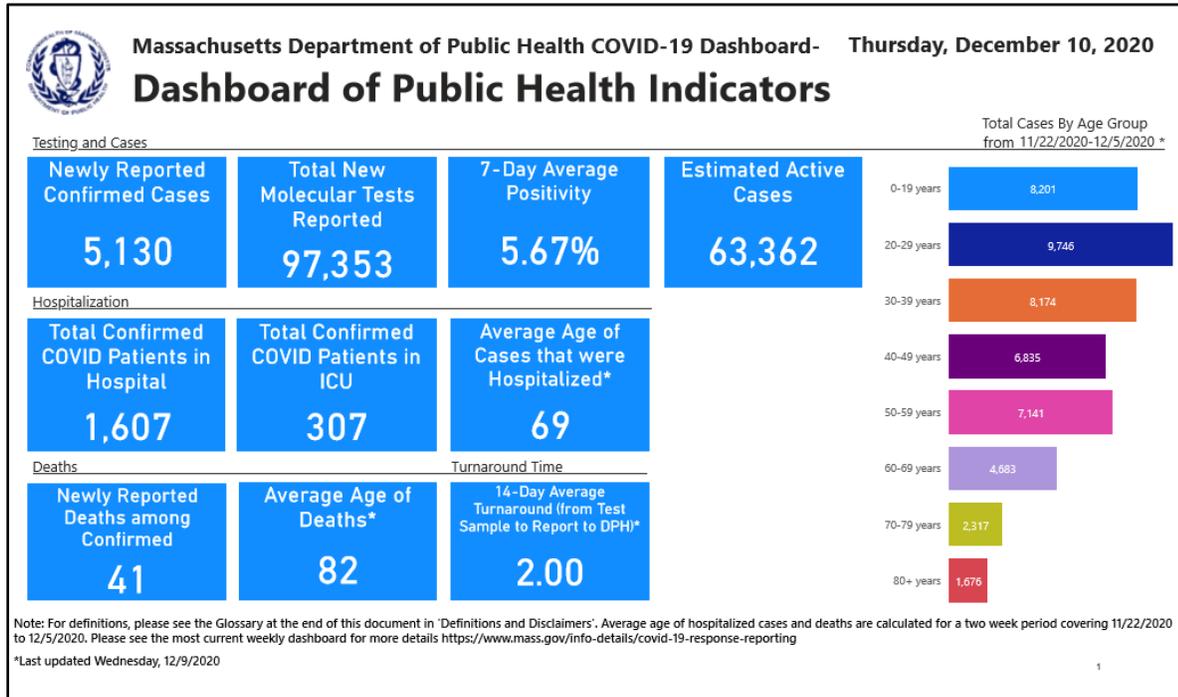
If you go out for essential needs:

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

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Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update

Testing Update: Today, over **97,000** new molecular (viral) tests were reported in Massachusetts with **5,130** newly reported confirmed positive cases. The total number of molecular tests administered to date is over **9.2 million**. **Hospitalizations & Capacity Update:** As of today, **1,607** people are hospitalized, with **307** reported to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Key indicators from today's Daily Dashboard are below.



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Weekly Public Health Report:

The Command Center released the [Weekly Public Health Report, with town by town information, including the weekly listing of city and town risk levels](#). The report posted today also includes 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.

Week in Review: State Actions

Initial Steps for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution:

On Wednesday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced allocation and distribution plans for the first round of COVID-19 vaccine shipments to Massachusetts set to begin around December 15. The state's first shipment of 59,475 doses of the Pfizer vaccine [was ordered from the federal government this past Friday](#) and will be delivered directly to 21 hospitals across 8 counties, as well as to the Department of Public Health Immunization lab. Doses will then be redistributed for access to 74 hospitals across all 14 counties for front line medical workers. The next 40,000 doses of Pfizer vaccine will be allocated to the Federal Pharmacy Program to begin vaccinating staff and residents of skilled nursing facilities, rest homes and assisted living residences.

Vaccine is being prioritized for these groups to maximize life preservation and to support the health care system. Based on information at this time, Massachusetts is expecting 300,000 first doses of the vaccine to be delivered by the end of December. The first vaccines, manufactured by Moderna and Pfizer, will require two doses administered 3-4 weeks apart.



Members of the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, Dr. Paul Biddinger of Mass General Brigham, and Rev. Liz Walker, of the Roxbury Presbyterian Church, joined Governor Baker, Lt. Gov. Polito and EOHHS Sec. Sudders to outline initial steps for COVID-19 vaccine distribution in Massachusetts.

Click here to view the administration's vaccine website: www.mass.gov/COVIDvaccine.

While all delivery dates and quantities are subject to change due to ongoing federal approval and allocation, the Administration plans to receive and distribute over 2 million doses to priority population groups by the end of March.

In collaboration with the COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, the Administration designated groups of medical workers, first responders and residents most at risk for serious illness to receive the vaccine before the general population. The [Vaccine Advisory Group](#) is made up of leading medical, infectious disease and public health experts as well as representatives from communities of color and representatives of high-risk populations. Communities of color and at-risk populations are prioritized throughout the process to maximize life preservation and to prevent serious complications from COVID related illnesses.

Anticipated Vaccination Phases and Timeline:

Phase One (December 2020-February 2021):

In order of priority

- Clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers doing direct and COVID-facing care
- Long term care facilities, rest homes and assisted living facilities
- Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services

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- Congregate care settings (including shelters and corrections)
- Home-based healthcare workers
- Healthcare workers doing non-COVID facing care

Phase Two (February 2021-April 2021):

In order of priority

- Individuals with 2+ comorbidities (high risk for COVID-19 complications)
- Early education, K-12, transit, grocery, utility, food and agriculture, sanitation, public works, and public health workers
- Adults 65+
- Individuals with one comorbidity

Phase Three (April 2021-):

- Vaccine available to general public

The first shipments of the vaccine are expected to contain doses manufactured by Pfizer and Moderna. While both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are pending FDA emergency use authorization, Massachusetts will not distribute the COVID-19 vaccine until it receives this authorization.

Vaccines go through extensive testing, more than any pharmaceuticals, including extensive testing in clinical trials. The FDA, which approves the vaccine, and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which will make its recommendation for use, must ensure any vaccine is both safe and effective for the public before approval and distribution. The infectious disease experts in the state's academic medical centers have pledged to review the EUA data and provide an independent opinion about their safety and efficacy.

Statewide Rollback to Phase Three, Step One with Additional Restrictions:

On Tuesday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that effective Sunday, December 13th, all communities in Massachusetts will return to Step 1 of Phase 3, of the Commonwealth's reopening plan. This will reduce indoor capacities across a broad range of sectors of the economy and tighten several other workplace restrictions. The Administration announced the roll-back to respond to an increase in new COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations since the Thanksgiving holiday that is straining the health care system in Massachusetts.



The return to Step 1 will also require the closure of certain businesses designated as Step 2 industries. These include indoor performance venues and certain high-contact indoor recreational businesses. In addition, capacity limits will be reduced to 40% statewide for most industries, and the limit on outdoor gatherings will be reduced statewide from 100 persons to 50 persons. Additional safety measures will be applied to restaurant dining as well. These new measures are designed to prevent infection and viral spread, especially in indoor settings. They will create stronger mask compliance, more social distancing, and limits to the time spent with people outside of your immediate household.

The Administration also announced additional guidance for certain sectors including restaurants, office spaces and gyms, to address activities where mask wearing is not possible at all times.

Phase III, Step I:

Effective December 13, all communities will roll back to Phase 3, Step 1 of Massachusetts' re-opening plan, including the following restrictions:

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- Outdoor gatherings at event venues will be limited to no more than 50 people
- Hosts of outdoor gatherings of greater than 25 people will be required to provide advance notice of the gathering their local board of health
- Indoor theaters and performance venues and higher contact indoor recreation businesses will be required to close to the public
- Outdoor theaters and performance venues will be limited to 25% capacity, and no more than 50 people

In all communities, capacity will be reduced from 50% to 40% for the following sectors:

- Arcades/Indoor and Outdoor Recreational Businesses
- Driving and Flight Schools
- Gyms/Health Clubs
- Libraries
- Museums
- Retail
- Offices
- Places of Worship
- Lodging (common areas)
- Golf facilities
- Movie Theaters (Maximum 50 people per theater)

This new capacity limit will not apply to sectors that do not currently have a percentage-based capacity limit, including restaurants, laboratories, and close contact personal services.

Restaurants and Venues

The Administration also announced new guidelines for restaurants and other venues with seated dining, including:

- Patrons must wear masks at all times except when eating and drinking
- Restaurants must seat no more than six patrons per table
- Restaurants must impose a 90-minute time limit on tables
- Musical performances at restaurants will no longer be permitted
- Food court seating must be closed in malls

Customers are encouraged to dine only with members of the same household.

Offices and Gyms

The Administration announced new guidelines for workplaces and gyms, including:

- In offices, employees must wear masks at their place of work when not in their own workspace and alone
- Employers are encouraged to close or limit the use of break rooms
- Patrons must wear masks at all times in gyms

New Testing Capacity Infrastructure Announced:

Building on Massachusetts' nation-leading COVID-19 testing program, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced the Commonwealth will increase testing capacity and locations to provide more access for residents in every county. This plan includes five new locations, and the state plans to collect 110,000 COVID-19 tests per week—representing a 50% testing increase for state-financed and organized testing sites alone. Across Massachusetts, there are more than 350 testing locations available to the public. Massachusetts remains among the top five states for testing per capita in the nation and has made significant progress to increase testing and access.



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New Project Beacon Sites: In addition to five new Stop the Spread (STS) locations, three current locations will expand to regional testing sites run by Project Beacon: New Bedford, Framingham, and Lynn. Project Beacon currently operates a testing site in Revere and specializes in high-volume testing scheduled through an online platform. Each Project Beacon site will test at least 1,000 individuals per day. The sites are expected to be operational by the end of December, with the site in Framingham launching today.

Western MA & Cape Cod Testing: The Administration also announced expanded testing in Hampshire, Franklin, Berkshire, and Barnstable Counties. This includes a partnership with UMass Amherst for free testing in Hampshire County at Amherst, a partnership with Berkshire Health Systems to expand free testing across multiple sites in Berkshire County, and an intent to expand free testing with a mobile provider in Franklin County. These sites are coming online during the coming weeks. The Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment is opening two testing sites, including one in Falmouth with \$550,000 in state funds.

To date, the state has allocated more than \$150 million for COVID-19 free testing, including surveillance testing programs in congregate settings and investments in laboratory capacity to process samples.

When all these new sites are operational, the Baker-Polito Administration will have nearly 50 testing sites in the state-run Stop the Spread program, which will be able to conduct 110,000 free tests per week. This program has grown exponentially since it first launched in early July. In September, STS sites tested approximately 28,000 people each week, that number grew to 42,500 in October, and more than 91,400 individuals were tested at STS sites between November 19 and November 25. Shifting to higher-volume, less expensive sites that serve an entire region will allow the Commonwealth to test more individuals on a weekly basis and reduce per-test costs, making the testing program more sustainable.

AbbotBinaxNOW Tests: Additionally, to support increased testing demand for vulnerable populations, the Administration will distribute up to 150,000 AbbotBinaxNOW tests to community health centers and community hospitals to use during December. Ordering information for Community Hospitals and Community Health Centers can be found [here](#).

COVID-19 cases are increasing across the Commonwealth, and the Administration's expanded testing will focus on converting certain sites to high-volume sites, so they are able to serve more residents. Over the next month, existing testing sites will engage in winter planning preparations including converting to an appointment-based system to reduce wait times and traffic congestion.

Stop the Spread Operations by City/County: Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Framingham, Great Barrington, Greenfield, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lynn, Marlborough, Methuen, Nantucket, New Bedford, North Adams, Pittsfield, Randolph, Revere, Salem, Saugus, Springfield, Winthrop, Worcester,

Additional New Sites Announced Today: Barnstable County (Community testing in Barnstable County is being supported by \$550K in earmarks), Amherst (Free community testing & increased lab capacity is being supported with \$5M of ELC funding in Amherst (UMass), Martha's Vineyard (Free community testing in Dukes County is being supported locally). In addition to STS sites, Massachusetts residents who are a close contact or who have COVID-19 symptoms can obtain a test, covered by their insurance, at more than [350 testing sites](#) across the Commonwealth, with no co-pay. Residents can also order [at-home test kits](#) like Pixel, which are covered by insurance and available for uninsured individuals as well. These tests are easy-to-use, arrive via overnight shipping, and currently have an average turnaround time of 1-2 days according to LabCorp.

Communications Resources

Click Here For Public
Messaging 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

DPH Communication Materials in Multiple Languages

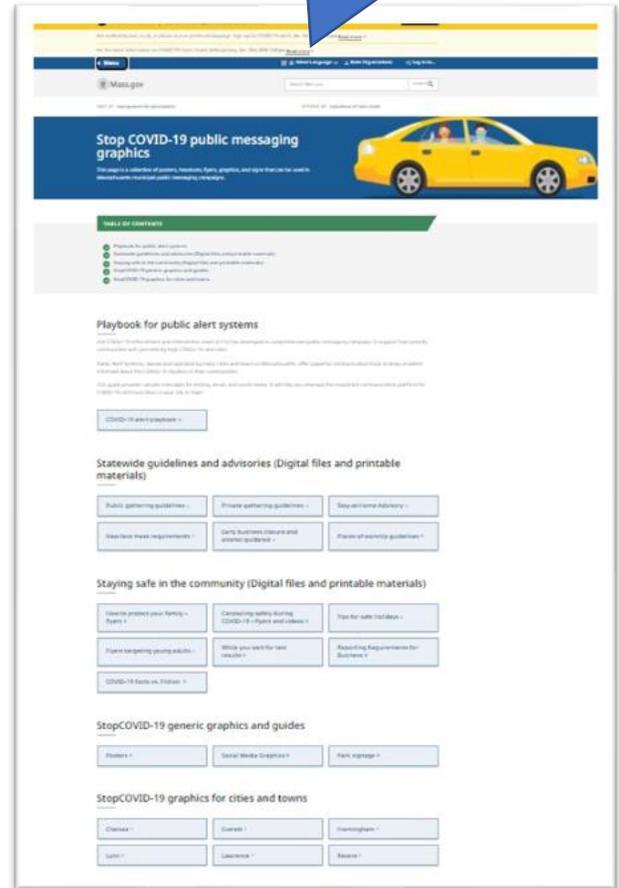
- [Facts Sheets](#)
- [Videos](#)

In addition, a website with tips on staying safe this holiday season has been developed: [Mass.gov/holidays](https://www.mass.gov/holidays)

Important Updates

Department of Public Health Updates:

- A [press release](#) was issued by the Governor's Office announcing initial steps for COVID-19 vaccine distribution. On Thursday, 12/10, DPH BIDLS and Communications staff delivered [a presentation](#) to the Public Health Council regarding DPH planning and distribution regarding the vaccine.
- A new website was unveiled as the hub of all COVID-19 vaccine information and distribution planning. Visit www.mass.gov/COVIDvaccine.
- The daily dashboard and weekly public health report are published on Thursdays at 5pm. Look for both [here](#).
- MA211 received 5,260 calls from Monday 11/30 through Sunday 12/6 for a new total of 166,513.
- BinaxNOW test kits are being made available for use at Community Health Centers (CHC) and Community Hospitals to respond to the increased demand for rapid testing leading into and directly following the holiday season. Please refer to the [guidance](#) for more details.
- DPH received Week 5 allocations on 12/9 as follows: Bamlanivimab 870 doses and Regeneron 230 doses. The Therapeutics Working Group is recommending an equitable allocation strategy.
- There were 33 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (12/8) (2 PPE/12 testing supplies and 19 BinaxNOW kits for LTC); 58 deliveries were made on Wednesday (12/9) (1 PPE/5 testing supplies and 52 BinaxNOW kits for LTC, Schools and Community Hospitals/CHC); 67 deliveries were made on Thursday (12/10) (1 PPE/6 testing supplies and 60 BinaxNOW kits for LTC, Schools and Community Hospitals/CHC) and 74 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (12/11) (2 PPE/6 testing supplies and 66 BinaxNOW kits for LTC, Schools and Community Hospitals/CHC).



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- MA has aligned its quarantine recommendations with those issued last week by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The updated [guidance](#) is available online at: www.mass.gov/quarantine. The [COVID-19 Exposure and Return to Work Guidance](#) has also been updated.
- DPH issued an [Order and Guidance](#) related to elective procedures.
- DPH published a new [webpage](#) and [updated user guide](#) to provide long-term care facilities with resources when reporting Chapter 93 data in the REDCap application. The Department’s Chapter 93 Program, a section of the Division of Quality Improvement, also established a new [email address](#) to field additional questions as they arise. Program staff may be contacted at: Chapter93.ElderFacilities@mass.gov.
- For the date range of 11/27-12/3, 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 are ongoing and all HMCC regions are now designated as Tier 3. This escalation was made in accordance with the DPH COVID-19 [Resurgence Planning and Response Guidance](#) for Acute Care Hospitals.

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: 105 currently housed.
 - Top 5 referring cities:
 - Springfield (101)
 - Boston (97)
 - Brockton (88)
 - Worcester (74)
 - Cambridge (72)
 - To date, a total of 1,035 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery.

Emergency Food Box Program Update (as of 12/5):

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	31259	0
Greater Boston Food Bank	204960	1344
Merrimack Valley Food Bank	3312	0
Worcester County Food Bank	1440	0
MEMA Warehouse (Reserve)	36869	3,456
Total Food Boxes	277,840	4,800

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 28 orders prepared for pick up or delivery from the MEMA warehouse between 12/4 and 12/10.
- 6,000 KN-95 were distributed to the Framingham CEIT initiative, with another 140,000 scheduled to additional sites next week
- The MEMA warehouse is prepared to support the setup of the second field hospital in Lowell with Hand Sanitizer Stations and durable medical equipment as needed and requested
- The MEMA warehouse continues to support PPE and other supply requests to the three operational isolation hotels in Everett, Taunton, and Pittsfield

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- As homeless alternate care sites are established, the warehouse will support distribution of some durable equipment and other supplies as needed.

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

MEMA COVID-19 EXECUTIVE DASHBOARD			
AGGREGATE PROGRAM VIEW			
<i>Note: Financial data represents 75% federal cost share; figures do not include MEMA management cost allowance</i>			
Overall (Best Available Estimate)	Submitted (Eligibility & Cost Review)	Approved* (by FEMA)	Paid (by MEMA)
\$606.4M -\$6.00M	\$427.0M -\$2.72M	\$45.5M +\$37.83M	\$6.9M \$0
834 Projects +6	560 Projects +14	49 Projects +3	26 Projects 0
Approved Applicants: 621			

- Online Applicant Technical Assistant Requests: 495 (+8)
- On Tuesday, December 8, 2020 FEMA obligated MEMA's Alternate Care Site PW \$50,429,050.83 (\$37,821,788.12- Federal Cost Share).
- MEMA advanced Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centers \$13,346,629.22 (\$10,009,971.92-Federal Cost Share) to FEMA.
- Collaborating with A&F on final reconciliation for CvRF.
- Recordings of the four virtual all hands Applicant Briefing [Webinars](#) that MEMA conducted last week are now available on the [website](#) along with the presentation PowerPoint slides. The Q&A documents from each webinar session will be added soon.
- MEMA successfully hosted an all hands Applicant Briefing Webinar for Institutions of Higher Education on 12/10/20. The webinar recording, presentation PowerPoint slides, and Q&A document from this webinar session will be added to the [website](#) soon.
- MA VOAD is assisting with clothing donations to a resident in the Isolation Hotel.
- Continuing to provide technical assistance to project applicants.

Long Term Recovery Program

- MEMA received an extensive Resource list with COVID-related funding opportunities from A&F. MEMA organized the data into three categories (housing, economic, and health and social services) to be used as a quick reference for other state agencies. Also included is an identification of the beneficiary(ies) for each program, such as, Business, State, Local Government, Tribal, Private Non-Profit, Education/University, and Health Care. The resource spreadsheet is a living document and was sent out

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to our state partners in the Recovery Working Group to be updated, added to, and sent out to those in their networks who may be able to benefit.

- MEMA coordinated a call between the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (HED) and the M.I.T. Lincoln Labs (MIT LL) on Dec 8th to better understanding how M.I.T. LL may be able to assist the state with long-term recovery data collection, program gap analyses, and other deliverables. MIT LL was able to elaborate on a project timeline, their partnering process with FEMA, and how projects are created and executed. HED will coordinate internally before presenting MEMA with a possible scope of work to present to FEMA

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 12/10)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	28,546
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	403
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	6,965



**NURSING HOME
FAMILY RESOURCE LINE
617-660-5399**

CALL US MONDAY THRU FRIDAY FROM 9AM-5PM



TODAY: Administration Announces New Senior Leaders at Department of Veterans’ Service & Soldiers’ Homes

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services today announced new hires into key leadership roles at the Department of Veterans’ Services, the Soldiers’ Home in Chelsea, and the Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke.

These new hires follow the [announcement](#) of Cheryl Lussier Poppe’s appointment as Secretary of Veterans’ Services (DVS) in October and will be critical to moving forward major initiatives to support the Commonwealth’s veterans, including the continued COVID-19 response and oversight of the Soldiers’ Homes, strengthening the leadership and staff of the Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke, and moving forward the [Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke expedited capital project](#).

[Read the full announcement of new senior leader appointments.](#)

Holyoke Soldiers’ Home Weekly Update (current as of 12/8/20)

- As COVID-19 will be with us until there is a safe and effective vaccine available and community transmission exists throughout the state, 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.
- 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, we will begin 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.

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- Following positive COVID-19 cases, visitation and movement throughout the facility have been suspended 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.
- 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 an Infection Control RN, Clinical Educator, a Recreational Therapist, and four Certified Nursing Assistants.
- Veteran and Family Advisory Council meetings have resumed, and both met in mid-November. The Veteran and Family Advisory Councils are run by veterans and families with assistance from the Soldiers' Home, and 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

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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 December 8 is as follows:
 - Status:
 - 1 veteran resident is positive and not clinically recovered
 - 18 veteran residents are negative
 - 38 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.
 - 72 veteran residents have been determined clinically recovered
 - 0 veteran residents have refused testing
 - Resident locations:
 - 103 veteran residents are onsite
 - 26 veteran residents are offsite
 - 22 veteran residents are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
 - 4 veteran residents 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
 - 11 tested positive
 - All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 12/8/20)

- Beginning on 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, and virtual visits were offered.
 - 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.

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- o 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.
- o 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.
- On December 6, Soldiers' Home received notification that a Veteran residing in the domiciliary – an independent living style residence – tested positive for COVID-19 through their employer's surveillance testing program. The Veteran remains asymptomatic and is isolating, and contact tracing identified close contacts who were subsequently tested, along with all domiciliary veterans.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea currently 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.
- Long Term Care veterans have moved into their new private spaces following the completion of a short-term ward conversion 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.
- The status as of December 8 is as follows:
 - Residents
 - 1 veteran resident is positive
 - This veteran resides in the independent-living style domiciliary
 - 138 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
 - Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing:
 - 6 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:

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- 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

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

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