

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

State Actions in Today's Report:

- Daily Case Update (link in sidebar)
- Governor Provides Update on Unemployment Systems
- Updates from The Command Center: New DPH Data Available
- Update on Mobile Testing Numbers
- Update on MA National Guard COVID-19 Response
- Update on Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes



Learn more about the importance of covering your face when out in public to help slow the spread of COVID-19 at: mass.gov/coveryourface

Helpful Links:

- [Updated Weekly City & Town Case Data](#)
- [Get Involved: Community Contact Tracing Collaborative](#)
- [Jobs Available to Assist Long Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Mass.Gov/covid19](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [FrontlineMA.org](#)
- [Emergency Childcare Site](#)
- [MBTA.com/covid19](#)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)
- [Complete List of Emergency Orders & Guidance](#)

Background on the Command Center

The COVID Command Center, under the leadership of Secretary Marylou Sudders and reporting to Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, is the Commonwealth's single point of strategic decision making and coordination for the Administration's comprehensive COVID-19 response.



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts current as of 4/29

60,265 Total Cases ([click here for more information](#))

3,405 Deaths

265,618 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.

United States current as of 4/29

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:

1,005,147 Total Cases

57,505 Deaths

55 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Marianas, 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.

State Actions Today

Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders to provide an update on the Commonwealth response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Governor provided his daily update on testing, hospitalizations, and PPE distribution, and provided an update on the traditional unemployment system and the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program that launched last week.

Testing:

- Yesterday (April 28) 9,613 tests were reported in Massachusetts.
- The number of new, confirmed COVID-19 cases came in at 1,840.
- 19% of those tests were positive.

Hospitalizations & Capacity:

- As of April 28th there were 3,875 patients hospitalized statewide for COVID-19. That's a small decrease over Monday.
- Overall, our hospitals have had roughly this many COVID positive patients in their facilities for the last two weeks. Hospitalizations have remained steady – which is better than the sharp spike but still not falling at a consistent rate.
- For people who test positive for COVID-19, only a small number get sick enough to need to go to a hospital.
- Massachusetts hospitals have significantly increased their bed capacity and now have about 18,200 beds available across the state—including the temporary field hospitals.
- 54% of those beds remain available for patients.

Personal Protective Equipment:

- As of yesterday, the Commonwealth has delivered over 6.8 million pieces of PPE.
- This includes masks, gloves, gowns and ventilators distributed to health care workers, first responders and others. We continue to aggressively pursue all supply chain avenues.

Unemployment System Update:

The administration continues to work hard to get people the unemployment benefits they need to help our families get through these difficult times. In just a few short weeks, we have created and grown an enormous infrastructure to help people who are suddenly out of work through no fault of their own.

That's been done both through the traditional unemployment system and the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program that was created by the CARES Act.

The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program (PUA). This program was created to help workers who don't fit into a category that would make them eligible for traditional unemployment benefits.

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That includes people like independent contractors, the self-employed, and workers who participate in the gig economy. The federal government enacted the PUA program with the passage of the CARES Act, but left it to the states to implement.

Massachusetts was one of the first states to successfully launch the program and start paying claimants. So far, the system has seen well over 100,000 applications. And as of today, nearly half a billion dollars in benefits to people who have applied. These benefits include an extra \$600 per week, part of another federal CARES Act benefit that we implemented. The PUA program also has a robust customer service component, including a call center and an online “chat bot” that helps people through common issues on the application process.

In just over a week, that PUA call center has connected with nearly **80,000** constituents over the phone, and the online help tool has helped resolve over **200,000** individual issues with people’s applications. The administration will continue to pay out benefits for workers who don’t qualify for traditional unemployment through the PUA program. You can learn more about this program at www.mass.gov/pua.

Traditional unemployment system:

Last week’s numbers indicated that over 650,000 people have applied for traditional unemployment since this crisis began. Fortunately, the Department of Unemployment Assistance is paying benefits to an unprecedented number of people, as well. As of last week, the Commonwealth is paying benefits to over 400,000 people.

Managing this volume of claims and applicants has required DUA to exponentially expand their operations—and they have risen to the occasion. Before this crisis, DUA had a 50-person call center. Today, DUA has 1,200 call center staffers working remotely to help people through the application process.

That number includes nearly 60 City of Boston employees helping with the call center, as part of a partnership with the City of Boston. We’re grateful to Mayor Walsh and the City for this support, including the employees who are working on Spanish-language customer service operations.

The customer service component of the traditional unemployment system also includes our daily virtual town halls, which help people through common issues on the application. To date, these have been attended by over 200,000 constituents, with town halls available in both English and Spanish.

DUA will continue to work overtime to help people with both of these unemployment programs.

New COVID-19 Public Health Data Released:

In her updates from the Command Center, Secretary Sudders announced that DPH would for the first time make available the underlying data files the Department uses each day to produce one of the most comprehensive daily report of any state in the country. The Secretary noted that the release of the files was part of a continued effort to expand the amount and type of data released to the public. The data files will be updated and posted daily with the dashboard report for the public, researchers and media to download. ([Find the Data Files Here](#))

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Update on Mobile Testing Numbers for Long Term Care, Assisted Living Residences and EOHHS Sites

The Mobile Testing Program can test both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents and staff at nursing homes, rest homes, Assisted Living Residences, and EOHHS group homes and care sites. The program was launched by the Command Center on 3/31 and operates under the auspices of the Massachusetts National Guard, in partnership with the Department of Public Health, Fallon Ambulance, and Broad Institute of Cambridge. See a summary below of testing activity.

Onsite Testing

Date	Number of Tests Completed	Facilities Visited
4/29	1278	10
Total (as of 4/29)	22,119	453

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 4/29)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	11,701
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	313
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	1,982

Mobile Testing at EOHHS Group Homes & Care Sites (as of 4/29 by Fallon Ambulance Service)

DDS, DMH, DCF and DPH Facilities	
Clients	5632
Staff	7058
Total Tests	12,690
Number of Locations	952

617-
660-
5399

NURSING HOME

FAMILY RESOURCE LINE

617-660-5399

CALL ANY TIME 9AM-5PM, 7 DAYS A WEEK



Update on MA National Guard COVID-19 Response

Key missions of the MA National Guard include; support to medical/health care facilities, deploying mobile test teams statewide, supporting the pickup and distribution of PPE, and security/law enforcement support.

Current Soldiers/Airmen Active Supporting COVID-19 Response	
MA Army National Guard	1754
MA Air National Guard	178
TOTAL	1932



Other Important Updates

Holyoke Soldiers' Home

- Holyoke Soldiers' Home infection control staff are enforcing PPE use and sharing best practices for the safety and protection of residents and staff. This includes eight new PPE coaches who are on the units to provide additional friendly correction and coaching to ensure staff are compliant with proper use across all shifts, a function in addition to the training staff have already received.
- As veteran residents are being cared for, their status and symptoms are being closely monitored and they are being retested as appropriate. As results are returned, residents are being cohorted appropriately.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home is ensuring adequate staffing ratios for veteran resident care, and is continuing to post for and hire permanent staff. This week, several CNAs have been onboarded - a mix of permanent, per-diem, and contracted -- to support veteran care.
- Governor Charlie Baker has advised flags be lowered to half-staff until the end of the public health emergency at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, as well as the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam and Winchendon due to the fact Military Honors are unavailable during this public health crisis.
- Regular family communication continues from Holyoke Soldiers' Home staff through video chat, and the Family Hotline is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff.
 - Families can call the Family Hotline at 413-552-4764 Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., and Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.; Families can also request updates via email at CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov.
 - Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file. If a family member requests an update and is **not** the health care proxy, the name of the health care proxy will be shared and it will be suggested that the health care proxy should call and request the update.
- **The total numbers at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home as of Wednesday:**
 - 82 veteran resident deaths (70 positive, 11 negatives, 1 unknown)
 - Today's update includes 2 deaths: both positive, DNR, DNH
 - Testing results of all residents
 - 80 veteran residents have tested positive
 - 55 veteran residents have tested negative
 - 9 veteran residents have pending tests
 - Of all residents:
 - 105 residents are onsite
 - 39 residents are offsite
 - 31 residents are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
 - 8 residents are receiving acute care offsite
 - 81 employees have tested positive

Chelsea Soldiers' Home

- On Tuesday the Chelsea Soldiers' Home received its first group of veterans back who were proactively transferred to VA facilities after testing positive for COVID-19 and are being medically cleared to return to the Soldiers' Home. Veterans will be cohorted and will continue to be monitored.

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- One returning veteran received a warm sendoff from the Bedford VA.
- Veteran residents' health is being monitored and retesting is being conducted for veterans on- and off-site as appropriate. As results are received, veteran residents are being appropriately cohorted and further monitored. The majority of those who test positive are being proactively transferred to other facilities for further monitoring and the option of higher acuity care.
- The Chelsea Soldiers' Home has been continuously reviewing and revising its infection control policy to ensure best practices throughout the facility. Staff have been provided PPE core competency training, the entire facility is rounded on daily for infection control quality assurance checks, all units have been provided with educational materials, and there are daily cleanings throughout the facility in addition to frequent terminal cleaning.
- The Chelsea Soldiers' Home clinical command continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including regular coordinating calls with the VA Health Care System, continuously reviewing and implementing infection control policy, monitoring and enforcing staff use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and closely monitoring staff levels, supplementing as necessary with support from contracted staff.
- Governor Charlie Baker has advised flags be lowered to half-staff until the end of the public health emergency at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, as well as the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam and Winchendon due to the fact Military Honors are unavailable during this public health crisis.
- Veteran residents are communicating with their families and loved ones via video with support from the Chelsea Soldiers' Home Social Work team. Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting the Home at CSH@mass.gov and through phone and video conversations. Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- **The total numbers at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home as of Wednesday:**
 - 30 veteran resident deaths (23 tested positive, 7 tested negative)
 - Today's update includes 1 veteran resident death who had tested positive and was being treated at the hospital
 - 24 veteran residents who have tested positive
 - 198 veteran residents who have tested negative
 - 53 staff tested positive

Department of Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard

An enhanced, comprehensive and detailed COVID-19 data report, which includes trend data in a variety of areas (e.g. information on cases rates, testing, geography of confirmed cases etc.), death related data and specific data on COVID-19 hospital census information, nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, rest homes (with known clusters), and PPE distribution is updated daily by 4PM. **City and town case data are published weekly each Wednesday.** ([Click here to access the report](#)). Key data reflected in today's report is provided below:

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Newly Reported Cases Today 1,963	Confirmed Cases 60,265	Newly Reported Deaths Today 252	Deaths of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases 3,405
Percent of All Cases Currently Hospitalized 6%	Count of Cases Currently in ICU 1,011	New Tests Reported Today 11,118	Total Tests Performed 265,618

Massachusetts residents subject to COVID-19 quarantine by current status as of April 28, 2020*	
Total of individuals subject to quarantine	27,939
Total of individuals who have completed monitoring (no longer in quarantine)	17,659
Total of individuals currently undergoing monitoring/under quarantine	10,280
*Data are accurate as of 4/28/2020 at 5 p.m.	

Resources

COVID-19 Testing

The Department of Public Health (DPH) has posted to their COVID-19 website information on testing and mobile testing site locations ([available here](#)). This information is updated twice weekly.

Homeless COVID-19 Isolation Sites

The Commonwealth's COVID-19 Command Center and MEMA have stood up regional isolation and recovery sites located in hotels across the state ([click here for more information](#)). Currently there are sites in Lexington, Pittsfield, Taunton, Northampton, and Everett. These locations are for individuals who:

- Are homeless (people who normally sleep at a shelter, on the street, for whom home is unsafe due to violence, or who do not have a permanent address) AND
- Who are COVID-19 positive OR have a medical provider's note recommending isolation and can safely isolate without medical supervision.

These sites are for individuals who have mild or moderate symptoms and do not need hospital level of care or nursing facility level of care. Medical treatment is not provided on site. As noted above, individuals must have a positive COVID-19 test or must have been seen by a medical provider and directed to isolate for them to be

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accepted. These locations cannot support individuals who need assistance with Activities of Daily Living or who need the level of care provided at a Skilled Nursing Facility.

For shelter providers located outside Boston, please call 617-367-5150 between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. The intake coordinator will determine eligibility, register an individual for the program, and have the guest placed and transported to the nearest Isolation and Recovery location that has availability.

For shelter providers located in Boston please call 617-534-5050 to access sites in Boston.

Buoy Health's free Online Symptom Checker

Individuals can use Buoy Health's free online symptom checker to connect with telemedicine options. This tool is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency that requires immediate attention, please call 911 or the number for your local emergency service. Buoy is available at www.buoy.com/mass and is available in both English and Spanish.

Disaster Recovery Information

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 [website](#) with information and guidance regarding the disaster declaration, eligibility criteria, and the application process.

COVID-19 Public Resources Map

MEMA, together with MA VOAD and other partners, has developed a [COVID-19 Public Resources Map](#) showing the location of resources available to the public, such as food banks, houses of worship, and Project Bread site locations. Please note that this map is not inclusive of all resources and is only as accurate as the information that has been provided to MEMA.

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 on a daily basis as enhancements are continuously being added.

Stay Informed

- Get information from trusted sources. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid19> for the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results. Call 2-1-1 with questions. Text the keyword **COVIDMA** to **888-777** to receive notifications to your phone. To receive these notifications in Spanish, text **COVIDMAESP** to **888-777**
- 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.

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- 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.

Please share our Communications Resources

Infographics

- [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
- Social distancing: for [youth](#) for [general audience](#)
- [Coping with stress or fear](#)
- [What to do if you are sick](#)
- 10 tips for at-home [quarantine or self-monitoring](#)

Short videos:

[10 Tips for at home quarantine or self-monitoring](#)

[Stop the Spread of Germs like Seasonal Flu and COVID-19 \(:30\)](#)

[Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing \(:30\)](#)

[How Young People Can Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing \(:30\)](#)

[Coping with Stress and Fear from COVID-19 \(:30\)](#)

[Stay Home - Save Lives \(:06\)](#)

Spanish Radio Spots (available on request):

- Prevent the Spread of Germs
- Social Distancing
- Stay Home. Stay Safe. Save Lives.

How to Help Out

- [Donate](#) to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.
- Volunteer opportunities for health professionals: [Please click here.](#)
- Get involved with the new Community Tracing Collaborative: [Please click here.](#)
- Donate or sell personal protective equipment: [Please click here.](#)
- Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here.](#)
- Apply for Jobs at COVID-19 Temporary Care Sites ([Details Here](#)).

Give Blood:

The COVID-19 virus has caused the cancellation of blood drives across the Commonwealth. There is an urgent need **now**. The Governor has deemed “Blood and plasma donors and the employees of the organizations that operate and manage related activities” as an essential service. Your support is needed to communicate to your residents that the need is urgent, and donating is a necessity to supply the hospitals with the blood our neighbors require. Donating blood is safe and people should not hesitate to give. In addition, there is a need for community blood drive sites in the eastern part of the state. Identifying donation sites is vital to meet the demand as we go forward. Your local knowledge, suggestions of sites, and potential partners are crucial to meeting the needs of our neighbors who need blood and blood products. To schedule a new blood drive contact Bill Forsyth at (617) 699-3808 or at email William.Forsyth@redcross.org.

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Those who are healthy, feeling well and eligible to give blood or platelets, are urged to make an appointment to donate as soon as possible by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Requests for Red Cross Emergency Response

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross (ARC) of Massachusetts is committed to fulfilling our Mission of providing emergency relief to our neighbors following a home fire or other disaster. We have implemented temporary changes to our response protocols. ARC we will be responding to your requests for service with a virtual response and ask your assistance in sharing this information with your Incident Commanders and Dispatch Center personnel.

Notification: Continue to request a response by contacting our long-standing emergency line **800-564-1234**.

When calling: Please have contact information for the head of household for each displaced family unit.

A point of contact from the Fire Department or Emergency Management on-scene that we can coordinate with if needed. Quick assessment as to extent of damage.

What we will do:

- Contact each head of household by phone or video chat. Open a virtual case for each affected family.
- Arrange for lodging if needed.
- Deliver a Client Assistance Card (financial assistance) to hotel, family member's home, etc.
- Provide Recovery guidance and assistance in the days following the incident.

If a virtual response is not possible, we will send a minimal number of Red Cross volunteers to the scene to orchestrate the virtual intake process. We value our partnership with your department and encourage you to contact us with any questions.