

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

State Actions in Today's Report:

- Daily Case Update (link in sidebar)
- Increased Community Health Center COVID-19 Testing Capacity
- Access to High-Speed Internet
- Relief to Massachusetts Student Loan Borrowers
- Food Security Task Force Launched
- Update on Mobile Testing Numbers
- Update on Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes
- DPH COVID-19 Dashboard (updated daily)



Manny Lopes, President & CEO of East Boston Neighborhood Health Center speaks at the announcement today about expanded testing capacity at Community Health Centers.

Helpful Links:

- [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 4/22**

42,944 Total Cases ([click here for more information](#))

2,182 Deaths

180,462 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.

United States **current as of 4/22**

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:

802,583 Total Cases

44,575 Deaths

55 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Marianas, and US V.I.)

Social Distancing Basics:

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

If you go out:

- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug

State Actions Today

Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders and Manny Lopes, CEO of East Boston Neighborhood Health Center, to provide an update on the Commonwealth's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. ([See video of today's briefing](#))

Increased Community Health Center COVID-19 Testing Capacity ([News Release](#))

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced an initiative to expand COVID-19 testing at Community Health Centers throughout the Commonwealth. The Administration also announced new WiFi hotspots to provide high-speed internet to unserved municipalities.

In partnership with Quest Diagnostics and the Mass League of Community Health Centers, the Baker-Polito Administration announced further efforts to increase COVID-19 testing through community health centers.

In rolling out increased testing, community health centers in areas of high need that have the ability to increase their testing capacities will be prioritized. Since Friday, Quest has sent over 2,255 kits to community health centers in Boston and Brockton. Quest Diagnostics will ship additional COVID-19 test kits today and tomorrow to 12 community health centers, with a commitment to add additional health centers. By Friday of this week, Quest Diagnostics has committed to ship an additional 5,000 COVID-19 test kits to the 12 community health centers.

Today's announcement provides increased testing capacity for community health facilities located in Boston, Brockton, Lowell, Quincy, Fall River, Provincetown, and Worcester.

Access to High-Speed Internet

The Baker-Polito Administration announced expanded access to high-speed internet for unserved cities and towns throughout Massachusetts that do not yet have a completed last-mile broadband network. The Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) at MassTech, KCST and local internet service providers will offer communities new WiFi hotspots, building off the Commonwealth's MassBroadband 123 fiber-optic network.

These WiFi hotspots will provide unserved communities with a temporary 250 megabit per second wireless hotspot, allowing increased broadband access for residents, families, and students impacted by COVID-19. This program will be offered free of monthly charge to eligible communities until September 1, 2020.

Citizens who use these hotspots must continue to follow social distancing protocols, and the towns and ISPs will post clear signs with the DPH guidance. MassBroadband is providing support to local ISPs as needed, and is tracking these hotspots as they come online and posting them online [here](#).

Multi-State Initiative to Provide Relief to Massachusetts Student Loan Borrowers ([News Release](#))

The Massachusetts Division of Banks (DOB) has joined a multi-state initiative to secure payment relief options for Massachusetts student loan borrowers and issued a [Consumer Advisory](#) with important information and resources for private student loan borrowers. Through this initiative, DOB has secured relief options with 15 private student loan servicers to expand on the protections the federal government granted to federal student loan borrowers. These new options stand to benefit over 182,000 Massachusetts borrowers with privately held student loans. This response builds on the federal CARES Act, which provided much needed relief for students with federal loans, including the suspension of monthly payments, interest and involuntary collection

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activity until September 30, 2020, as well as the [recently announced](#) Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's deferment of payments in its No-Interest Loan Program until August 1, 2020.

Under this initiative, borrowers with commercially-owned Federal Family Education Program Loans or privately held student loans who are struggling to make their payments due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be eligible for expanded relief. Borrowers in need of assistance must immediately contact their student loan servicer to identify the options that are appropriate to their circumstances. Relief options include:

- Providing a minimum of 90 days of forbearance
- Waiving late payment fees
- Ensuring that no borrower is subject to negative credit reporting
- Ceasing debt collection lawsuits for 90 days
- Working with borrowers to enroll them in other borrower assistance programs, such as income based repayment

Additional information and resources, including a full list of participating private student loan servicers, are included in the [Division's Consumer Advisory](#).

Food Security Task Force Launched

Secretary Sudders announced today that the Baker-Polito Administration, through the COVID-19 Command Center has launched a **Food Security Task Force** today with membership from state agencies, the Legislature and other partners such as Greater Boston Food Bank, Project Bread, MA Restaurant Foundation, the Shah Foundation, and representatives from communities of faith. The task force will work to coordinate resources and communication across sectors, stakeholder group, and government at all levels to ensure food insecurity and issue related to the food supply chain are addressed. The Goals of the panel are to:

- Identify immediate needs to be addressed across the state
- Maximize nutrition program access, enrollment and participation
- Create and implement plans that address all regions of the state and their unique challenges in the food supply chain, short and long term
- Explore creative partnerships to maximize resource available in the Commonwealth

The Task Force will present their recommendations to the Governor by the end of this month.

Seeking Needed Health Care

Governor Baker reminded residents today that while hospitals are preparing for COVID-19, they are prepared to handle other urgent health care needs. If someone feels they have symptoms of COVID-19, they should contact their health care provider. If you are in need of medical attention, please call your doctor and schedule an appointment if necessary. And in the event of an emergency, call 911.

If symptoms are not serious, residents should stay home to avoid exposing others. And you can use Buoy Health's free online symptom checker to connect with telemedicine options. MA residents have checked their symptom more than 83,000 times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Buoy is available at www.buoy.com/mass and is available in both English and Spanish.

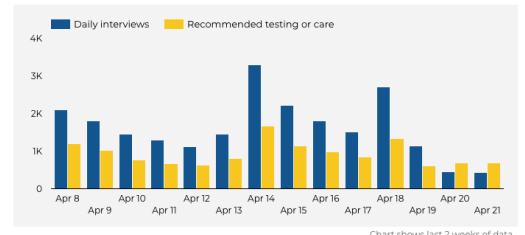
Symptom checker data

Last updated: April 21, 2020

The Commonwealth has partnered with BuoyHealth to create an [online symptom checking tool](#) that asks about your symptoms and tells you how serious it thinks they are.

So far, it has suggested testing or care for about 50% of its daily users.

Total symptom checks to date
83,327



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

Onsite Testing

Date	Number of Tests Completed	Facilities Visited
4/21	754	7
Total (as of 4/21)	10,124	324

**Mobile Testing at EOHHS Group Homes & Care Sites
(as of 4/22)**

DDS, DMH, DCF and DPH Facilities	
Clients	2979
Staff	3030
Total Tests	6,009
Number of Locations	348

Cases in Long term Care Facilities (as of 4/22)

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	7,721
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	273
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	1,205

Other Important Updates

Holyoke Soldiers' Home

- Today, two nursing executives are onsite to provide additional clinical support to the Holyoke Soldiers' Home, and this week, consulting support is being provided by Baystate Medical Practice Management to assist in administrative procedures.
- The Clinical Command continues to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak while bringing on additional management staff for nursing, facilities, operations and administration to complement the existing staff. Quarantine zones for COVID-19 positive residents are being strictly enforced, as is staff use of PPE and increased disinfection protocols.
 - Additional social work staff is being brought onboard to support staff during this challenging time on weekends and per diem throughout the week.
- 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.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home continues regular communication with veteran residents' health care proxies, and is scheduling regular updates for families, which is made possible through the additional clinical case management nursing staff that was brought on board.

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- On Monday, the Military Friends Foundation delivered a donation of 20 iPads for veterans to use to communicate with their families and for personal entertainment during quarantine.
- 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:**
 - 66 veteran resident deaths (55 positive, 9 negatives, 1 pending, 1 unknown)
 - Today's update includes 3 deaths, 2 positive who had DNRs, 1 positive who was DNH.
 - 93 veteran residents have tested positive
 - 60 veteran residents have tested negative
 - 7 veteran residents have pending tests
 - 81 employees have tested positive

Chelsea Soldiers' Home

- As retesting is being conducted and some veteran residents are testing positive, they are being appropriately cohorted, and many are being transferred to other facilities for higher acuity care.
 - The Chelsea Soldiers' Home is collaborating with the VA Health Care System to proactively transfer veterans who may need care, and to accept Veterans back who have been medically cleared to return from VA facilities.
- 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, and daily monitoring of personal protective equipment (PPE) supply and procuring additional PPE from regular supply chain and from emergency DPH sources.
- Staffing levels are being closely monitored by the Chelsea clinical command, and identified gaps driven by positive employees in self-quarantine per CDC guidelines are being filled by contractors from staffing agencies as needed. So far 47 slots have been filled through staffing agency contracted roles.
- 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.
- Today, the Chelsea Soldiers' Home accepted a donation of 25 iPads for use by veterans. This will support veteran residents communicating with their families and loved ones via video with support from the Chelsea Soldiers' Home Social Work team.
 - On Monday, the Military Friends Foundation delivered a donation of 5 iPads for veterans to use to communicate with their families and for personal entertainment during quarantine.
 - 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.
 - If a family member who is not the health care proxy requests an update, the name of the proxy will be shared and it will be suggested that the health care proxy should call and request the

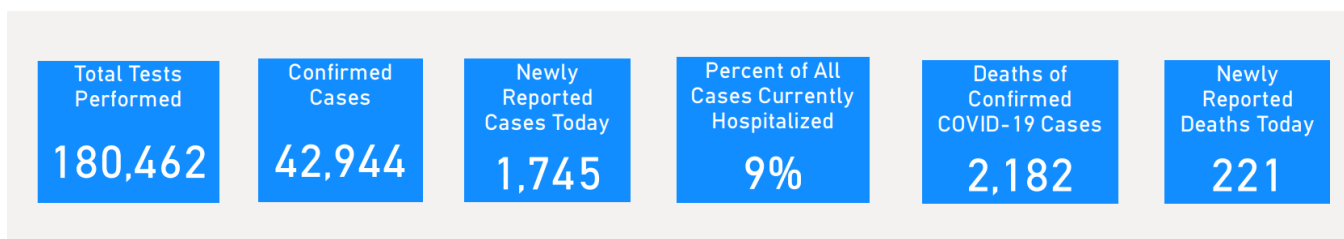
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update.

- **The total numbers at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home as of Wednesday:**
 - 16 veteran resident deaths (12 tested positive, 4 tested negative)
 - 31 veteran residents who have tested positive
 - 205 veteran residents who have tested negative
 - 52 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:



Resources

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.
- 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 [\(Details Here\).](#)

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Give Blood:

As you are aware, 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.

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. In order to maintain our commitment to assisting to those affected while balancing our volunteer workforce safety, we have implemented the below 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.