

Highlights from the Department of Public Health Report

March 26, 2020

Major Disaster Declaration Request:

Governor Baker today submitted a request to the federal government for a Major Disaster Declaration for Massachusetts. If approved, this declaration would provide the Commonwealth additional federal assistance beyond what was included in the Emergency Declaration declared by President Trump on March 13, 2020.

The disaster declaration request includes a request for FEMA's Public Assistance Program, which would make financial assistance available to cities and towns, state agencies, and certain non-profits statewide. The disaster declaration request also requests FEMA's Individual Assistance Program including Disaster Unemployment Assistance and Crisis Counseling Assistance to help support residents in need during this unprecedented incident.

Former Boston Medical Center Building To Be Used To Care For Homeless Residents

- To ensure the care and safety of the Boston area's homeless population during the COVID-19 epidemic, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced that a former Boston Medical Center hospital building will be temporarily reopened and used to meet COVID-19 related medical needs of area homeless residents.
- The building, known as Newton Pavilion, is currently owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The new facility will be operated by a consortium of providers, including Boston Medical Center, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless, shelters including the Pine Street Inn, and the City of Boston's COVID-19 response team. (News Release)

New Public Health Orders

The Department of Public Health has issued three emergency orders to support the health care system's response to COVID-19:

- **Pharmacy Practice:** To ensure pharmacists are able to fully support the health care system's response to COVID-19, this emergency order makes several changes regarding pharmacy practice, including expedited approval for pharmacists licensed in other states to practice in Massachusetts, and allowing the remote processing of prescriptions by pharmacy technicians.
- **Determination of Need:** This emergency order exempts health care facilities from the requirement that they submit a Notice of Determination of Need for certain activities that will support their response to COVID-19.
- **Nurse Staffing:** To ensure hospitals have the flexibility they need to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, this emergency order exempts hospitals from certain nurse-staffing requirements, while requiring that they must ensure that staffing levels remain adequate to meet patients' needs, and staff is trained and competent to meet the needs of their patients.