

Thursday, December 17, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

Next Week's Command Center Situation Report will be published on Wednesday, December 23rd.



Deliveries of Hope: A vaccine to prevent COVID-19 arrived at health care sites throughout the Commonwealth this week, bolstering the state's response to the pandemic. Above, DPH staff receive a shipment of vaccine at the State Lab for distribution to hospitals.

In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
 - Administration Provides Vaccine Update
 - Officials Urge Holiday Caution and Issue Updated Guidance
 - MA 1st State to Get Approval to Continue Pandemic EBT
 - ALDI Joins Massachusetts' SNAP Online Purchasing Program
 - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
 - Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes Weekly Update – New Veterans' Services, Soldiers' Homes Leaders Announced

Helpful Links:

- Apply for jobs at COVID-19 Alternate Care Sites
 - [UMassMemorialResponds.com](https://umassmemorialresponds.com)
 - [LowellGeneralResponds.com](https://lowellgeneralresponds.com)
- [Get Back Mass](https://getbackmass.com)
- [Mass.gov/holidays](https://mass.gov/holidays)
- [Mass.gov/findfoodhelp](https://mass.gov/findfoodhelp)
- [Stop the Spread](https://stopthespread.com)
- [HandHoldMA.org](https://handholdma.org)
- [Reopening Massachusetts](https://reopeningmassachusetts.com)
- [Mass.Gov/covid19](https://mass.gov/covid19)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](https://mass.gov/emergency-management)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](https://mass.gov/unemployment)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](https://dept.mass.gov/transitional-assistance)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](https://mass.gov/covid19-cost-eligibility)



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts **current as of 12/17**

297,301 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

11,305 Deaths among confirmed cases

9,901,732 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States **Last Updated 12/17**

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:

16,756,581 Total Cases

306,427 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.

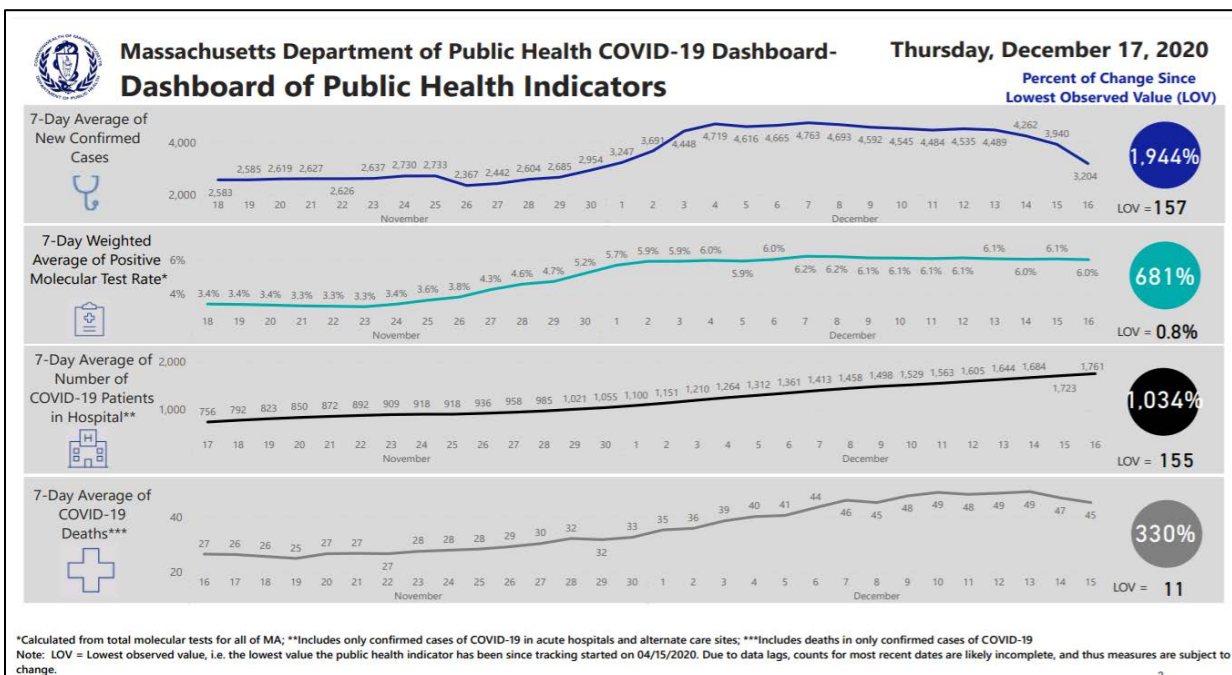
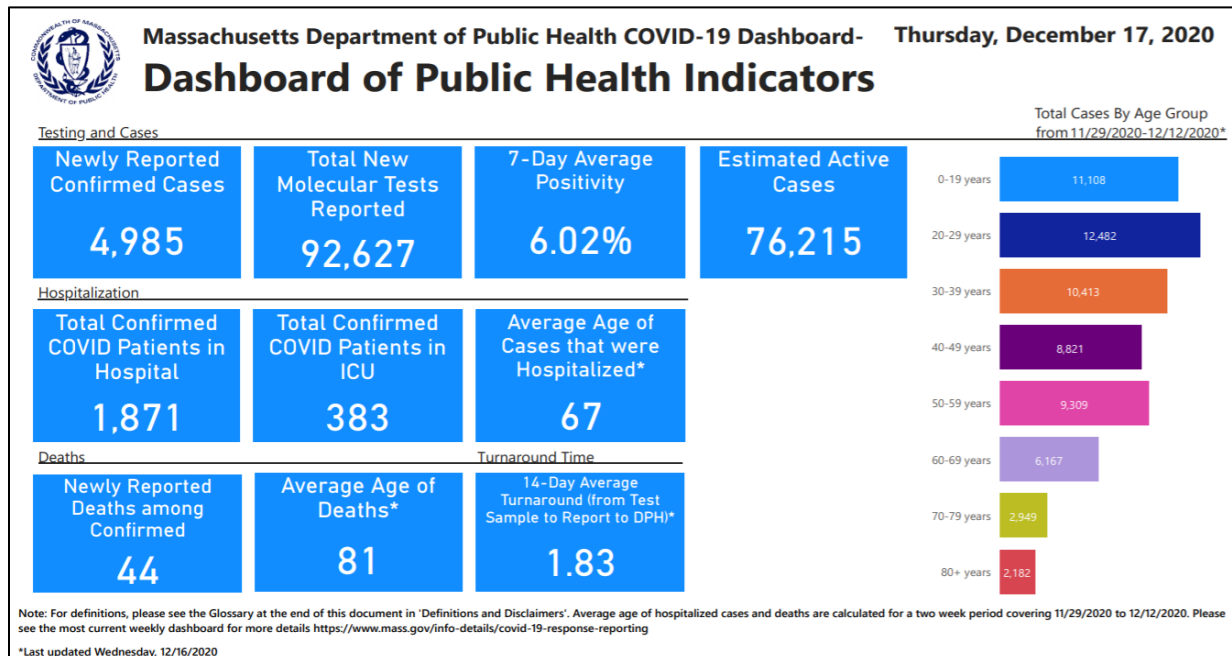
If you go out for essential needs:

- ✓ 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 **92,000** new molecular (viral) tests were reported in Massachusetts with **4,985** newly reported confirmed positive cases. The total number of molecular tests administered to date is over **9.9 million**. **Hospitalizations & Capacity Update:** As of today, **1,871** people are hospitalized, with **383** reported to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Key indicators from today's Daily Dashboard are below.



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

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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

Administration Announces Vaccine Update

The Baker-Polito Administration announced updates on the Commonwealth's distribution efforts of the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine as well as new guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH) to help residents celebrate the holiday safely. (Read news release [here](#)).

On Monday, the first doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine arrived in the Commonwealth. Four hospitals received 5,850 first doses on Monday.

On Tuesday, 53,625 more doses have begun to arrive to 17 more hospitals statewide.



Pending the approval of Moderna's Emergency Use Authorization, the Commonwealth, based on federal guidance, has been told to anticipate 180,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and 120,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine. In all, the Administration expects the Commonwealth to receive 300,000 doses by the end of December.

DPH places vaccine orders on behalf of the providers. From there, the vaccine is shipped to the hospital or facility directly from the manufacturer on behalf of the federal government.

When vaccination begins, hospitals report data into DPH, and DPH and the Command Center will launch a public dashboard to keep track of immunizations administered next week. Individuals with questions about what phase they can be vaccinated in can send an email to COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov for prioritization clarifications.

Additionally, CVS and Walgreens will begin vaccinating in nursing homes the week of December 28th under the CDC's Long-Term Care Pharmacy Partnership program. Their doses will come from the state's Pfizer allocation, between 40,000 – 60,000 will be shipped to CVS and Walgreens for Massachusetts skilled nursing facilities.

When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Baker-Polito Administration and the Department of Public Health developed a vaccine distribution timeline after extensive consultation with the [Massachusetts Vaccine Advisory Group](#), made up of leaders from health care, the faith community, community organizations, local government, and others.

The timeline reflects several priorities: protecting our most vulnerable, maintaining health care system capacity, and addressing inequities in health care access and COVID-19 burden. Vaccine distribution in MA will occur in a phased approach.

[Visit this webpage to learn more about where you fit in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution timeline.](#)

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December Holiday Guidance

As we enter the December holiday season, residents are urged to follow the public health guidance that we know will help keep people safe. This year we ask residents to:

- **Limit** in-person celebrations to household members only
- **Postpone or cancel** travel this holiday season. If you do choose to travel, be aware of and comply with Massachusetts travel order [requirements](#).
- **Follow** the current state [gathering size limits](#) and [sector-specific workplace safety standards](#).



Lower-Risk Celebrations and Activities

- Limit in-person holiday gatherings to **only people you live with**.
- Host a **virtual** holiday dinner with extended family or friends.
- Prepare foods for family and neighbors and deliver them in a no-contact way.
- Virtually attend your traditional holiday activities, such as a visit with Santa.
- Consider virtual caroling or reciting. Provide a link to your virtual caroling to the people you want to sing to.
- View holiday lights from your car with those you live with.

Higher-Risk Celebrations and Activities

- Any time you gather with others outside of your household, you increase the risk of contracting or spreading illness. All residents are discouraged from gathering. Gatherings in Massachusetts are subject to [gathering size limits](#).
- You are risking your health and others health if you host or participate in any in-person festivities if you or anyone in your household:
 - has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and has not completed the isolation period;
 - has [symptoms of COVID-19](#);
 - is waiting for COVID-19 viral test results;
 - may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days; or
 - is at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as older adults or those with certain medical conditions.
- If in-person caroling or reciting, stay more than 25 feet from the people you are reciting or singing for and wear a mask. Remain outdoors while caroling.
- If you visit Santa Claus in person, wear a mask, stay 6 feet from Santa and others while in line, and make a reservation for your visit where available.
- If viewing holiday lights outdoors, take a one-way walk with those you live with and maintain distance from others.

Other Recommendations and Guidance:

- Always wear your mask and watch your distance. (Remove your mask only for eating and drinking.)
- For 10 days before and after holiday gatherings, monitor yourself closely for fever and other symptoms of COVID-19, minimize contact with other people, and leave home only for essential services like going to work, buying groceries, and appointments with doctors; OR,

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- Obtain a negative result from a COVID-19 test, on a sample obtained within 72 hours of the celebration. Even with a negative test you must be vigilant about masking and distancing when you are around individuals you do not live with.
 - Testing only indicates whether a person may have COVID-19 when they were tested. You can still become sick with COVID-19 after your test and before your celebration.
 - Testing information can be found at www.mass.gov/GetTested
- Do not share food, drink, or any utensils, including serving utensils.
- Seat people with plenty of space (at least six feet) from one another while dining.
- Consider seating people at smaller tables in multiple rooms instead of around a large family table.
- Improve ventilation by opening windows and doors.
- If setting up outdoor seating under a tent, ensure guests are still seated with physical distancing in mind. Enclosed 4-wall tents will have less air circulation than open air tents and should be considered indoor spaces (check also fire codes for heating tents).
 - If outdoor temperature or weather forces you to put down the tent sidewalls, consider leaving one or more sides open or rolling up the bottom 12 inches of each sidewall to enhance ventilation while still providing a wind break.

Provide supplies to help everyone to stay healthy. These include extra [masks](#) (do not share or swap with others), [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60% alcohol, and tissues. Stock bathrooms with enough hand soap and single use towels.

Holiday Shopping

In addition to observing store capacity limits, wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, and following directions and place markings at stores, consider the following when holiday shopping:

Higher Risk: High-risk activities include in-person promotions or holiday activities that encourage large crowds. When shopping with a non-household member, make sure to wear a mask, including while driving together.

Medium Risk: If you choose to shop in-person, wear your [mask](#) and maintain 6 feet of distance from others. Try to shop at off-peak times when there are fewer shoppers.

Lower Risk: Shop online. Many retailers have options for online shopping and in-person, contactless curbside or drive-up pick-up. If using in-person pick-up, you and the retail personnel should wear masks.

Important reminders:

- Wear a [mask](#) (when not eating or drinking).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Stay at least six feet away from other people.
- If you may be around others at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as older adults or those medical conditions, take extra precautions to keep them safe.
- Get the flu vaccine.
- For additional information, please refer to the [holiday guidance provided by the CDC](#)



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Massachusetts is First State to Gain Federal Approval to Continue Pandemic EBT through School Year 2020-21

The Baker-Polito Administration received federal approval to issue Pandemic EBT benefits (P-EBT) for the rest of the 2020-2021 school year. P-EBT promotes increased food security for families who participate in the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), covering the cost of missed school meals for more than 500,000 students in remote or hybrid learning environments. (Read article [here](#)).

Eligible households will receive the next round of P-EBT benefits by the end of December. The benefits cover school meals missed during the months of October and November, and households will receive benefits monthly through the end of the 2020-2021 school year. The Department of Transitional Assistance estimates P-EBT will bring \$40 to \$60 million per month in federal dollars into the Commonwealth's economy.



Press Release

Massachusetts is First State in Nation to Gain Federal Approval to **Continue Pandemic EBT through School Year 2020-2021**



Department of
Transitional
Assistance



"COVID-19 has exacerbated food insecurity, especially for children who receive nutrition support in school settings. This remains a significant challenge for many families throughout the Commonwealth," said **Secretary of Health and Human Services and COVID-19 Command Center Director Marylou Sudders**. "Massachusetts continues to maximize every opportunity to tackle food insecurity across the state. The rapid approval of our plan to issue P-EBT through the end of the school year provide relief to hundreds of thousands of families across the state for many months as we continue to navigate this public health crisis."

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act established the option for states to establish program P-EBT. Massachusetts [initially launched](#) its P-EBT program in April 2020 to help students and their families buy healthy food while schools were closed from March through June due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and was one of a limited number of states to receive federal approval for [September P-EBT benefits](#). To date, P-EBT has brought more than \$253 million in federal dollars into the Commonwealth, supporting families across the state and local grocery retailers. The Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021 extended P-EBT through the entire 2020-2021 school year.

P-EBT is jointly administered by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in collaboration with local school districts. Families with eligible students are expected to begin receiving P-EBT benefits to cover October and November school days, by the end of the year.

"P-EBT has proven to be an effective tool during the COVID-19 pandemic to help families with students learning at home directly purchase healthy, culturally appropriate food," said **DTA Commissioner Amy Kershaw**. "P-EBT also brings critical resources into our local communities, supporting food retailers and their employees."

"P-EBT benefits are an important piece of support for students and families during this challenging time," said **Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley**. "I'm grateful to everyone at the state and district levels who are helping to feed children, from the people facilitating P-EBT benefits to the school nutrition workers preparing free meals."

Families with eligible students will receive their P-EBT benefits monthly for the remainder of the school year. Based on federal rules, families will receive varying P-EBT amounts. Families with children in a fully remote learning environment will receive \$117 a month per child, and children in a hybrid learning environment will receive \$58 a month per child. Families can check their P-EBT balance by calling the number on the back of the

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card. P-EBT benefits can be used anywhere Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are accepted, including [online from Walmart and Amazon](#). Learn more about P-EBT at MAp-ebt.org.

P-EBT builds upon the work of the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center's Food Security Task Force to strengthen our local food system and maximize federal food assistance programs to ensure that food insecurity needs are addressed during the COVID-19 public health emergency and into the long-term.

Families who already receive DTA benefits will get their P-EBT benefits on their existing EBT card. Families who do not receive DTA benefits but were mailed a P-EBT card in the past, will get their P-EBT benefits on their existing P-EBT card. Newly eligible students will receive their P-EBT benefits on their EBT card if receiving DTA benefits or will be mailed a P-EBT card if they do not receive DTA benefits. Families who lost their P-EBT card can [request a new one](#).

Many families eligible for P-EBT may also be eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and are being encouraged to [apply](#). Children and teens participating in the free and reduced-price lunch program can also get free meals at hundreds of school meal locations throughout the state, no registration or ID required.

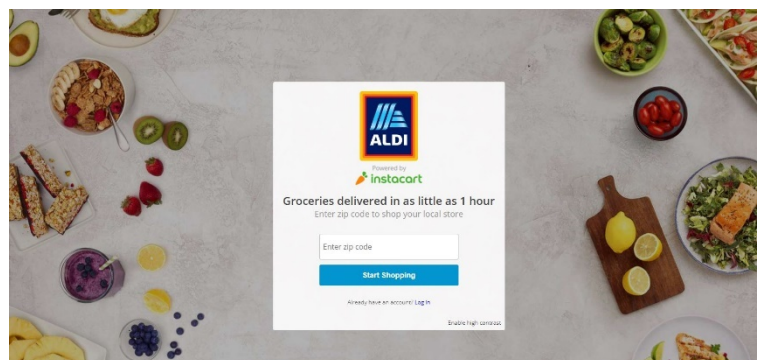
[DTA](#) assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency. DTA serves one in eight residents of the Commonwealth with direct economic assistance and food assistance, as well as workforce training opportunities. DTA administers three core programs: [SNAP](#); Transitional Aid for Families with Dependent Children ([TAFDC](#)); and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children ([EAEDC](#)).

[DESE](#) is committed to preparing all students for success after high school. The Department's work includes licensing educators, distributing state and federal education money, helping districts implement learning standards, overseeing statewide standardized tests, monitoring schools and districts, and convening districts and individuals to share best practices. In addition, we collect data to inform state and local decisions.

ALDI Joins Massachusetts' SNAP Online Purchasing Program

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that Massachusetts residents who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ([SNAP](#)) can now use their EBT SNAP benefits to buy groceries online from participating ALDI stores for pickup and delivery via Instacart. ALDI joins Walmart and Amazon as federally approved SNAP online retailers in the Commonwealth. Massachusetts first launched the SNAP online purchasing program [on May 29th](#).

To date, Massachusetts residents have spent over \$19 million in SNAP online grocery purchases. Similar to using EBT SNAP benefits to purchase food in a store, benefits can be used to buy SNAP-eligible foods online, including fresh produce, frozen foods, dairy and eggs.



"SNAP online purchasing is one of several tools the Administration is employing, alongside the state's national leadership in Pandemic EBT, to combat food insecurity for Massachusetts families and advance the COVID-19 Command Center Food Security Task Force's recommendation to maximize federal nutrition programs," said **COVID-19 Command Center Director and Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders**. "Helping thousands of families across the

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Commonwealth shop for healthy food in a safe way is important as we continue to navigate our way through the public health crisis.”

“As a result of the economic fallout of COVID-19, the Commonwealth has seen a historic increase in residents using SNAP benefits to buy food. SNAP remains our most critical tool to help fight food insecurity by putting money directly into the hands of over 500,000 households,” said **Department of Transitional Assistance Commissioner Amy Kershaw**.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has hurt all communities, but for our most vulnerable populations, it has exacerbated the inequalities that exist when it comes to accessing food,” said **Andrew Nodes, Vice President of Retail at Instacart**. “By unlocking the use of EBT SNAP benefits for grocery and delivery services at ALDI in Massachusetts, we’re helping to ensure that residents who lack transportation, are homebound with disability or illness, or are elderly can access fresh, nutritious food and supplies during the remainder of the pandemic and beyond. We’re proud of our partnership with Baker-Polito Administration and ALDI on this important initiative.”

Residents can shop for groceries online at [Shop.ALDI.us](https://www.aldi.us). ALDI uses Instacart as its online grocery delivery and pickup platform. Search by zip code to find participating ALDI stores with delivery and pickup options. Some retailers have a delivery fee, and all Instacart orders have a service fee. New with this expansion and to help subsidize costs for EBT SNAP beneficiaries, during a 90 day period starting December 16, 2020, Instacart will waive delivery and/or pickup fees on up to the first three EBT SNAP orders from ALDI for each customer with a valid EBT card associated with their Instacart account. SNAP benefits cannot be used to pay for fees, like delivery fees. Economic assistance programs benefits received through DTA, Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC), cannot be used to purchase items online at this time.

In response to COVID-19, the USDA allowed states to submit plans to participate in an online purchasing pilot program. Massachusetts submitted a waiver to participate in the pilot program on April 24 and received federal approval on May 20. The USDA approves all retailers for participation in this program. Interested retailers can visit: www.FNS.USDA.gov/SNAP. For more information and outreach materials on the Massachusetts program, visit www.mass.gov/SNAPonline. To apply for SNAP benefits, visit www.DTAConnect.com. DTA assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency. DTA serves one in eight residents of the Commonwealth with direct economic assistance and food assistance, as well as workforce training opportunities.

Important Updates

Department of Public Health Updates:

- MA211 received 4,884 calls from Monday 12/7 through Sunday 12/13 for a new total of 171,397.
- DPH received Week 6 allocations on 12/16 as follows: Bamlanivimab 1010 doses and Regeneron 240 doses. The Therapeutics Working Group is recommending an equitable allocation strategy.
- DPH issued guidance regarding Considerations for Health Care Personnel After COVID-19 Vaccination.
- The Baker-Polito Administration [announced](#) updates on the Commonwealth’s distribution efforts of the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.
 - o This week, the first doses of Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine arrived in the Commonwealth and vaccinations of healthcare workers began.
 - o Pending the approval of Moderna’s Emergency Use Authorization, the Commonwealth is anticipating receiving Moderna vaccine early next week.
 - o Planning continues relative to the allocation and distribution the vaccine.

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- For the date range of 12/4-12/10, 93 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.
- There are currently 12 Rapid Response Teams deployed to nursing homes across the Commonwealth. At the end of this week there will be 14 teams.
- There are also 8 National Guard Teams deployed and supporting nursing and rest homes.
- DPH is collaborating on the establishment of [alternate medical sites](#) (or “Field Medical Stations”) to mitigate stress on health care systems as cases increase. The [UMASS Memorial Medical Center DCU Center Field Hospital](#) opened on 12/6/20 and planning for the Lowell General Hospital Field Hospital is ongoing. The DCU Center has announced that it will be implementing a 24-hour observation recommendation for all patients being transferred into the facility.
- Action = Consequences Campaign Social Media Links
 - [Instagram](#)
 - Twitter: [All languages thread](#)
 - Facebook
 - [Stop COVID-19: English \(facebook.com\)](#)
 - [Stop COVID-19: Portuguese \(facebook.com\)](#)
 - [Stop COVID-19: Haitian Creole \(facebook.com\)](#)
 - [Stop COVID-19: Spanish \(facebook.com\)](#)

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: 135 individuals are currently housed in the program which is the highest single day total since the beginning of the pandemic
 - Top 5 referring cities:
 - Springfield (113)
 - Brockton (90)
 - Worcester (82)
 - Cambridge (73)
 - Lowell (66)
 - To date, a total of 1,132 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery.

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

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	205440	480
Merrimack Valley Food Bank	3312	0
Worcester County Food Bank	1440	0
MEMA Warehouse (Reserve)	36869	3,456
Total Food Boxes	278,320	3,936

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 13 orders prepared for pick up or delivery from the MEMA warehouse between 12/11 and 12/17.

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- Support to the CEIT initiative continued this week with 130,000 KN-95 and 1,260 Packs of Alcohol-Based Hand Wipes being delivered to 9 sites.
- A balance of MEMA's remaining Field Hospital inventory is being deployed to UMass Lowell, along with 100 Hand Sanitizer Stations, on 12/18/2020.
- Cots and other support materials are being delivered to the Cambridge Homeless Housing Site on 12/18/2020.
- The MEMA State Logistics Warehouse continues to support the three Isolation Hotels in Pittsfield, Taunton, and Everett with biweekly orders of PPE, cleaners/sanitizer, drinks, snacks, and other amenities as requested.
- DPH coordinated 76 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (12/15) (6 PPE/6 testing supplies, 10 ventilators and 64 BinaxNOW kits for LTC, Schools and Community Hospitals/CHC); 49 deliveries were made on Wednesday (12/16) (4 PPE/6 testing supplies and 39 BinaxNOW kits for LTC, Schools and Community Hospitals/CHC); No deliveries were made on Thursday (12/17) due to the storm and 60 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (12/18) (2 PPE/12 testing supplies and 46 BinaxNOW kits for LTC, Schools and Community Hospitals/CHC).

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:

Data as of: 12/11/2020

MEMA COVID-19 EXECUTIVE DASHBOARD AGGREGATE PROGRAM VIEW

Note: Financial data represents 75% federal cost share; figures do not include MEMA management cost allowance

Overall (Best Available Estimate)	Submitted (Eligibility & Cost Review)	Approved* (by FEMA)	Paid (by MEMA)
\$607.1M +\$670.76K	\$440.5M +\$13.53M	\$45.5M \$0	\$7.3M +\$374.30K
843 Projects +9	565 Projects +5	49 Projects 0	37 Projects +11

Approved Applicants: 623

- Online Applicant Technical Assistant Requests: 495
- Request for FEMA Request for Public Assistance (RPA) Applicants: 667
- MEMA advanced Massachusetts Department of Early Childhood Education and Care PW \$18,815,800.00 (\$14,111,850.00 of Federal Cost Share) to FEMA for review.
- MEMA advanced Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority PW \$17,080,334.05 (\$12,810,250.54 of Federal Cost Share) to FEMA for review.
- Presentation materials from recent Public Assistance webinars are posted to MEMA's [website](#).

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- Providing guidance to applicants on response costs for snowstorms versus response costs for COVID-19.
- Continued technical assistance to applicants in preparation for the CvRF 12/30 deadline.

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 12/17)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	29,264
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	408
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	7,084



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

CALL US MONDAY THRU FRIDAY FROM 9AM-5PM



Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 12/15/20)

- On December 21, Glen Hevy will become the new permanent Deputy Superintendent for the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. Hevy, a retired U.S. Army Infantry Officer, joins Holyoke from the Bedford VA Medical Center, where he was the Senior Operations Official for Patient Care Services at the 400-bed VA hospital.
- 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, the Home has implemented 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.
- 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.
 - o 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

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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.
 - o 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.
 - o 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.
 - o 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 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.](#)
 - o 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.
 - o 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 15 is as follows:
 - o Status:
 - 1 positive and not clinically recovered
 - 17 veterans are negative
 - 37 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.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- 73 residents have been determined clinically recovered
- 1 resident have refused testing
- o Resident locations:
 - 104 veterans are onsite
 - 25 veterans are offsite
 - 22 veterans are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
 - 3 veterans are receiving acute care offsite
- o Since March 1, there have been 76 veteran deaths of veterans who tested positive
- o 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 12/15/20)

- Eric Johnson, MBA, is now the new permanent Superintendent of the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea. Johnson, a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator, takes over following Superintendent Sheehan. Johnson is a health care executive and U.S. Army veteran who comes to Chelsea from Norwood Healthcare and Rehab, where he has been Executive Director since 2018. Prior to Norwood, Johnson was the Executive Director at two other skilled nursing facilities in Massachusetts.
- 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. 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.
 - o 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.
 - 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.
- 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.

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- 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 15 is as follows:
 - o Residents
 - 1 veteran resident is positive
 - 138 veteran residents are negative
 - 40 residents have recovered, meaning they previously tested positive and are now clinically recovered
 - 0 residents have pending tests
 - Since March 1, there have been 31 deaths of veterans who tested positive
 - o Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing:
 - 8 employees are positive
 - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

Communications 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:

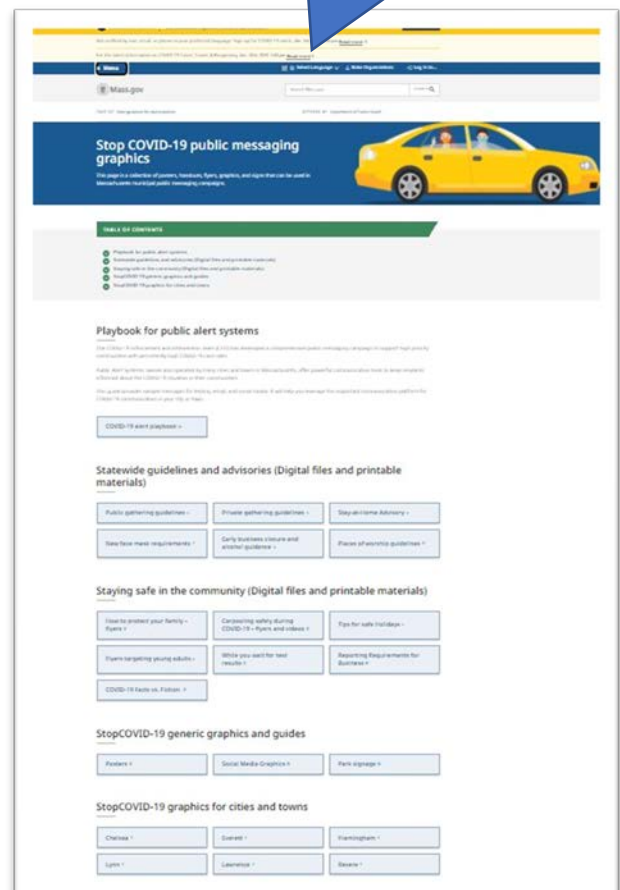
- Statewide guidelines, advisories, and orders
- Staying safe in the community
- Using local public alert systems for COVID-19 information

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)

Click Here For Public
Messaging Resources



COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

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:

- 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

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- 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

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