

Thursday, March 18, 2021

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

The Command Center Situation Report is published weekly. The next report will be published on Thursday, 3/25/21.



Governor Baker and Lt. Gov. Polito recently toured the mass vaccination site at the Reggie Lewis Center in Roxbury. This site is helping residents of Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and other communities access the COVID19 vaccine. This week the administration announced \$27.4 million in federal funding for the Commonwealth's Vaccine Equity Initiative. (See below)

In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health & Vaccine Data Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
 - Baker Administration Announces Transition to Phase IV of Reopening Plan
 - Vaccine Timeline for All Residents, Weekly Dose Updates & \$27.4 Million in Federal Funding for Vaccine Equity Initiative
 - First MA Case of the P.1 COVID-19 Variant Announced
 - Guidance for Long Term Care Facilities Updated
 - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
 - Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes Weekly Update

Helpful Links:

- [COVID-19 Vaccination Locations](#)
- [When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine in Massachusetts](#)
- [Public Messaging Resources for Municipalities & Businesses](#)
- [Mass.gov/findfoodhelp](#)
- [HandHoldMA.org](#)
- [Reopening Massachusetts](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts **current as of 3/18**

574,135 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

16,426 Deaths among confirmed cases

17,714,455 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States **Last Updated 3/18**

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:

29,431,658 Total Cases

535,217 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:

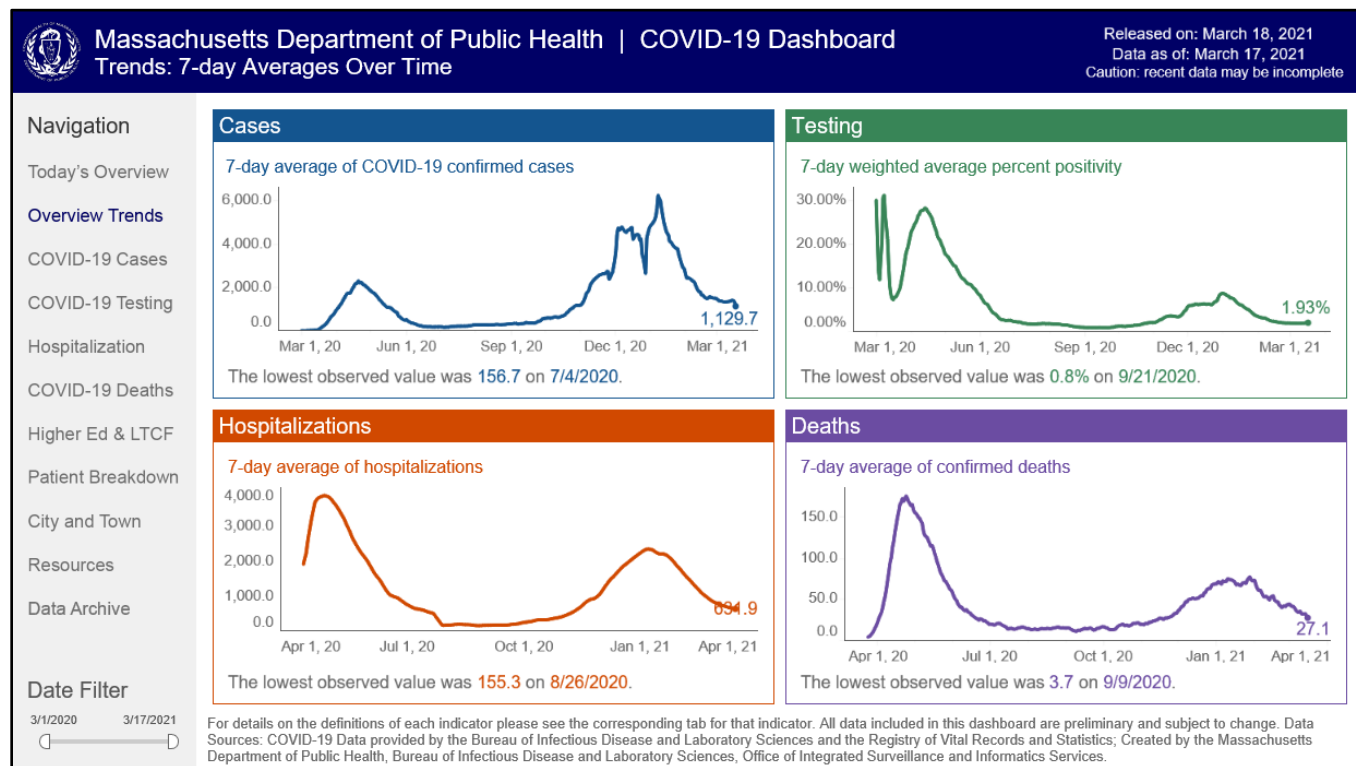
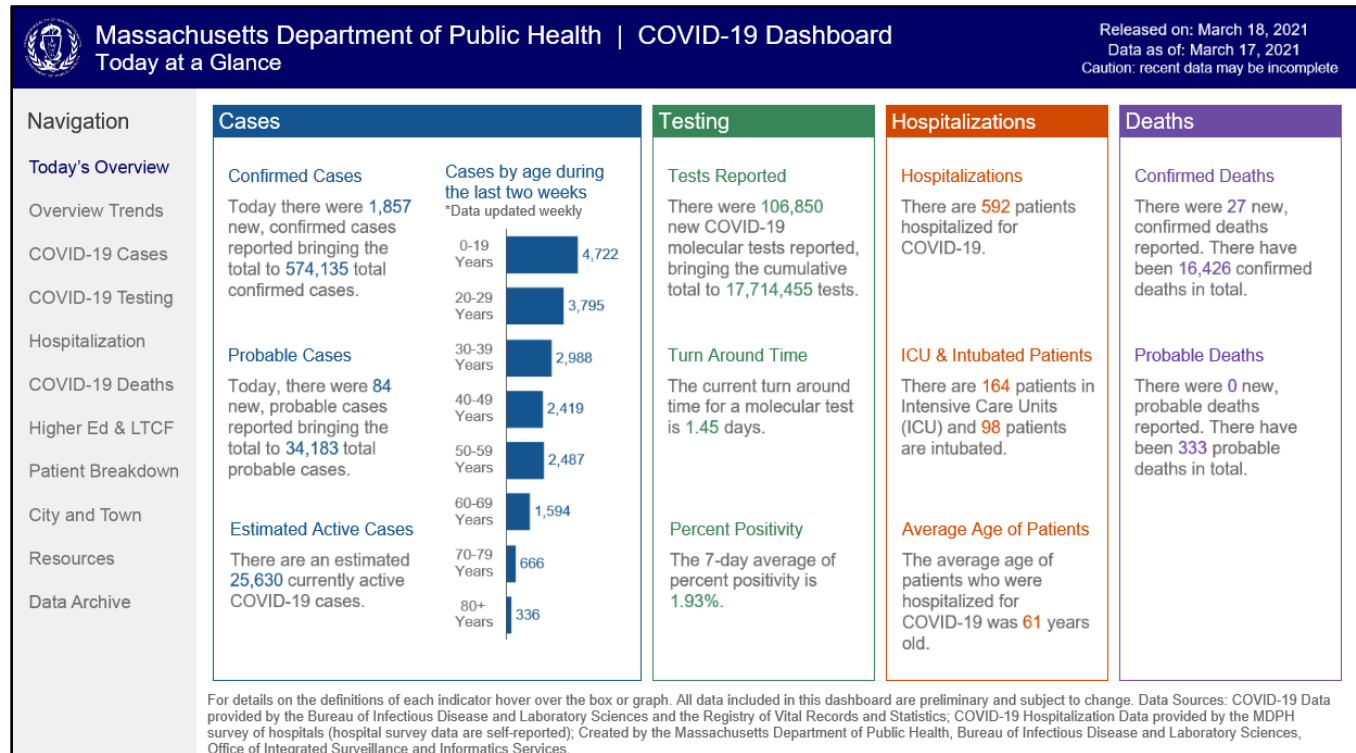
- ✓ Stay Home
- ✓ Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and loved ones.

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.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update



COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

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](#) on Thursday, 3/18. The report also includes granular information on cases by county, biweekly testing rates, contact tracing information (including active COVID cluster information by Exposure Setting Type), hospitalization data, race and ethnicity data, information about cases in long term care facilities, and PPE distribution data.

Vaccine Update: For a more detailed weekly breakdown, [visit the MA COVID-19 Vaccination Data webpage](#).

	3/12	3/13***	3/14	3/15	3/16	3/17	3/18
DOSES SHIPPED							
Doses Shipped to MA Providers (MIIS)*	2,091,835	2,091,835	2,091,835	2,091,835	2,236,125	2,314,865	2,396,725
Doses Shipped to Pharmacies and Directly by the Federal Government - Including FPPP Providers (Tiberius)	713,015	737,585	743,435	744,835	755,545	780,945	824,595
Grand Total Shipped to MA	2,804,850	2,829,420	2,835,270	2,836,670	2,991,670	3,095,810	3,221,320
DOSES ADMINISTERED (MIIS)*							
1st Moderna or Pfizer Doses Administered	1,563,347	1,587,325	1,614,294	1,620,368	1,664,173	1,699,825	1,737,411
# of people with at least one dose							
2nd Moderna or Pfizer Doses Administered	803,231	825,157	848,237	853,934	883,407	906,783	929,577
# of people fully vaccinated							
Janssen (J&J) Doses Administered (MIIS)	50,202	54,910	60,316	60,993	62,899	65,320	67,472
# of people fully vaccinated							
Grand Total Doses Administered (MIIS)	2,416,780	2,467,392	2,522,847	2,535,295	2,610,479	2,671,928	2,734,460
Grand Total Fully Vaccinated People with Existing COVID-19 Vaccines**	853,433	880,067	908,553	914,927	946,306	972,103	997,049
% of Total Doses Shipped That Have Been Reported as Administered	86.2%	87.2%	89.0%	89.4%	87.3%	86.3%	84.9%

*Data from the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS) are as of midnight the night before.

**Fully vaccinated people have 2 doses of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or 1 dose of Janssen (J&J) vaccine

***On 3/13 only, data from the MIIS is as of 5pm the night before due to scheduled MIIS maintenance

Week in Review: State Actions

Baker Administration Announces Transition to Phase IV of Reopening Plan

On Thursday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that Massachusetts will advance to Step 1 of Phase IV of the Commonwealth's reopening plan on Monday, March 22. The Administration continues to take steps to reopen the Commonwealth's economy with public health metrics continuing to trend in a positive direction. This includes drops in average daily COVID cases and hospitalizations. Massachusetts also continues to be a national leader in vaccination rates. The Administration also replaced the Massachusetts Travel Order originally issued in July 2020 with a Travel Advisory, effective March 22.



COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Phase IV, Step 1, and Gathering Changes:

On March 1, Massachusetts loosened capacity restrictions for several industries and advanced to Step 2 of Phase III of the reopening plan. Since then, hospitalizations dropped by 20% and deaths dropped by 24%. The seven-day average of new cases in long-term care facilities dropped by 53%. The positive test rate remains below 2% and has been for several weeks now. The seven-day average of new cases is also down over this time by 7%.

Effective Monday, March 22, all communities in Massachusetts will move into Step 1 of Phase IV of the state's reopening plan. This will open a range of previously closed business sectors under tight capacity restrictions that are expected to be adjusted over time if favorable trends in the public health data continue. Effective on the planned advancement to Step 1 of Phase IV, the following large capacity sports and entertainment venues will be permitted to operate at a strict 12% capacity limit after submitting a plan to the Department of Public Health (DPH):

- Indoor and outdoor stadiums
- Arenas
- Ballparks

Also effective on March 22, gathering limits for event venues and in public settings will increase to 100 people indoors and 150 people outdoors. Outdoor gatherings at private residences and in private backyards will remain at a maximum of 25 people, with indoor house gatherings remaining at 10 people.

Additionally, dance floors will be permitted at weddings and other events only, and overnight summer camps will be allowed to operate this coming summer. Exhibition and convention halls may also begin to operate, following gatherings limits and event protocols. Other Phase IV sectors must continue to remain closed.

Travel Order:

Effective Monday, March 22, the Massachusetts Travel Order will be replaced with a Travel Advisory.

The new travel advisory will urge all persons entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, are advised to quarantine for 10 days upon their arrival if they have been out of the state for 24 hours or more.

The advisory does not apply to anyone in the following categories:

- Anyone who is returning to Massachusetts after an absence of fewer than 24 hours.
- Travelers who have a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72 hours prior to their arrival in Massachusetts.
- Workers who enter Massachusetts to perform critical infrastructure functions (as specified by the Federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency) while they are commuting to or from or while at work.
- Travelers who are fully vaccinated (i.e. who have received two doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines OR who have received a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, 14 days or more ago and who do not have symptoms).

Travelers are additionally encouraged to consult and follow the CDC's guidelines and requirements for travel.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

COVID-19 Business Relief Grants:

On Thursday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced approximately \$31 million in awards for 710 additional businesses in the tenth round of COVID relief grants administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC). As in prior rounds, each grant recipient meets sector or demographic priorities set for the grant programs administered by MGCC.

With the addition of this round of grants, the Administration has awarded over \$633 million in direct financial support to 14,056 businesses across the Commonwealth. Grants for this round were awarded to 327 minority-owned, and 293 women-owned, businesses; 240 recipients are located in Gateway Cities, and 245 businesses awarded grants have not received any prior aid.

Additionally, MGCC will soon be announcing the availability of funding to support small business technical assistance and community development financial institutions.

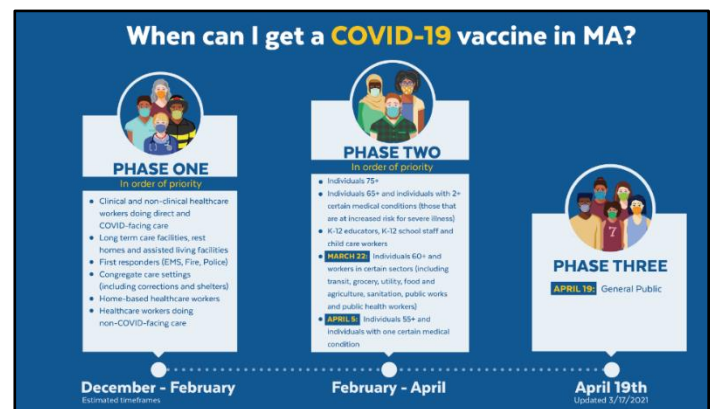
Vaccine Timeline Announcement for All Residents, Provides Weekly Dose Updates & \$27.4 Million in Federal Funding for Vaccine Equity Initiative

On Wednesday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the timeline for all remaining residents to be eligible for a vaccine.

The Administration also announced the weekly distribution of vaccine doses statewide for providers and a new \$24.7 million investment in the Administration's Vaccine Equity Initiative.

Vaccine Eligibility Timeline

Governor Baker today announced the dates that all remaining residents and certain worker groups will be eligible for a vaccine. The Commonwealth's detailed timeline adheres to the original timeline for the three phases announced in December. All residents can preregister to book an appointment at a mass vaccination site at mass.gov/COVIDVaccine. Appointments will be offered based on eligibility and available appointments nearby. It is expected that more sites will come online as part of the preregistration process in April.



Timeline for remaining groups:

- March 22nd: Residents 60+ and certain workers
- April 5th: Residents 55+ and residents with one certain medical condition
- April 19th: General public ages 16 years of age and older

The full timeline is available at mass.gov/COVIDVaccinePhases. The Administration has received assurances from the federal government that an increased vaccine supply will be available to states soon. Depending on supply, it could take weeks for people to be notified that an appointment is available at a mass vaccination site.

Dose Update

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

The Administration provided the weekly update for doses allocated from the federal government.

In total, the Commonwealth will receive 316,000 first and second doses as part of the state's allocation this week. This includes a modest increase in supply of first doses, approximately 170,000. This includes an unexpected 8,000 doses of J&J vaccine. These figures do not include doses provided through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program or to Federally Qualified Health Centers.

This week, first doses and second dose state allocations (total doses), were distributed among providers as follows:

- Mass vaccination locations: 101,890
- Health systems and health care providers (excluding CHCs): 99,230
- Community Health Centers: 27,450
- Regional Collaboratives and Local Boards of Health: 59,580
 - Regional Collaboratives: 40,370
 - Local Boards of Health: 19,210
- Retail pharmacies (non-CVS)
 - State allocation: 8,490
- Mobile Clinics supporting long-term care facilities, congregate care, affordable/low-income senior housing, and homebound individuals: 19,180

Weekly allocations are subject to change based on federal availability, demand from providers, and obligations to meet second doses. Providers have 10 days to use their doses and must meet specific performance thresholds.

Federal Doses:

In addition to the state allocation, the federal government distributes vaccines to CVS Health sites as part of the Federal Retail Pharmacy Partnership as well as to certain Massachusetts federally qualified community health centers. These quantities fluctuate on a weekly basis and are not counted as part of the state's weekly allocation.

This week, 106,440 first and second doses have been allocated to the retail pharmacy program and 9,500 doses have been allocated to the federally qualified health centers.

Individuals looking to book appointments across any of these providers should visit mass.gov/COVIDvaccine to learn more.

Vaccine Equity Initiative

The Administration also announced the release of \$27.4 million in federal funds to increase trust, vaccine acceptance and administration rates as part of the Administration's Vaccine Equity Initiative and to meet the needs of priority populations. Recognizing equity as a critical component of the state's vaccine distribution plan, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is working closely with 20 hardest hit communities in Massachusetts as they identify their specific community needs, further building on existing support.

These federal funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) build upon current and past efforts supporting vaccination in these communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and includes

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

partnerships with municipalities, local boards of health, community- and faith-based organizations, community health centers and others to reduce barriers to vaccination. These funds also will provide direct vaccine administration to populations that are not effectively reached through existing vaccine supply channels.

These federal funds include:

- \$10.6 million to provide direct assistance with vaccine access, including appointment registration assistance, transportation to vaccination clinics, mobility assistance, medical interpretation, and other supports. These services will be delivered through contracted community-based organizations (CBOs), community health centers (CHCs), and behavioral health providers.
- \$5.1 million to invest in community health centers through the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers to expand vaccination capacity at community health centers, including Community Health Worker Ambassadors.
- \$4.7 million to support municipalities and local boards of health through direct funding of the 20 equity municipalities for coordination and support for vaccine clinics and acceptance.
- \$4 million to help tailor community outreach and education through direct funding of local community-based and faith-based organizations in the 20 equity municipalities.
- \$3 million for direct vaccine administration in community settings by funding qualified organizations to directly administer vaccination to groups not effectively reached by other mechanisms.

These activities will build on DPH-supported initiatives already in progress, such as outreach and collaboration with community and faith-based organizations, increased connections and investment in Community Health Centers, and grassroots neighborhood outreach by teams of trained staff and residents led by Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG), a minority-owned business, and Health Care For All (HCFA).

Other activities already underway include the DPH COVID-19 Vaccine Ambassador Program, which has assisted with dozens of local meetings to answer questions about vaccine, wide dissemination and amplification of the state's "Trust the Facts. Get the Vax." multilingual public awareness campaign, and the DPH Community Liaisons who are meeting weekly with representatives from the communities to identify and lift barriers to vaccine access and support community-based solutions.

The Administration's Vaccine Equity Initiative focuses on 20 cities and towns with the greatest COVID-19 case burden, taking into account social determinants of health and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). These communities are Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Framingham, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Randolph, Revere, Springfield, and Worcester.

State Public Health Officials Announce First Case of the P.1 COVID-19 Variant of Concern in Massachusetts, Urge Continued Protective Measures

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

The Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced that the first case of the P.1 COVID-19 variant of concern, which originated in Brazil, has been detected in Massachusetts. The individual is a woman in her 30s who resides in Barnstable County.

DPH was notified of her test results from genetic sequencing conducted through the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's national surveillance system. Currently, there is no information available on the woman's illness or whether she has recently traveled. She tested positive for COVID-19 in late February.

As of today, there have been 213 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, originally found in the United Kingdom, and 6 cases of the B.1.351, which originated in South Africa, reported in Massachusetts. The B.1.1.7 variant is known to spread more easily and has caused a rapid surge of cases in the UK, several other countries, and parts of the United States. The best defense against variants of concern is to prevent the spread of COVID.

This includes wearing a mask, social distancing, avoiding groups, staying home when you are sick, getting tested if you have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID, and getting vaccinated when it is your turn.

Learn more about variants of concern at [New Variants of the Virus that Causes COVID-19 | CDC](#) and track their presence in both Massachusetts and the US at [US COVID-19 Cases Caused by Variants | CDC](#).

Department of Public Health Updates Guidance for Long Term Care Facilities

To incorporate recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Department of Public Health recently updated its guidance to long term care facilities covering several topic areas, including:

- **Visitation, communal dining, and group activities**: This update incorporates recent updates to CMS guidance that allows visits in residents rooms when the resident and visitor are both fully vaccinated; allows non-distanced communal dining and activities (such as playing cards, watching movies) when residents are fully vaccinated; and removes the requirement that visitors must schedule their visits with the facility. Safety measures such as mask wearing, hand hygiene, and cleaning remain in place.
- **Caring for Long Term Care Facility Residents during COVID-19**: This update removes the requirement for fully vaccinated individuals to quarantine upon admission to the LTC facility consistent with recent CDC guidance.
- **Surveillance Testing Guidance**: This update continues weekly surveillance testing in staff, however, staff who are fully vaccinated may move to every other week testing.



COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 3/18)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	34,822
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	424
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	8,809



Important Updates

Department of Public Health Updates:

- DPH has been working with 'trusted sources' to promote COVID vaccination and the latest comes from the Red Sox and Big Papi! They are helping us amplify the "Trust the Facts, Get the Vax" message: <https://twitter.com/RedSox/status/1372560014011998211>. Also in Spanish: <https://twitter.com/RedSoxBeisbol/status/1372560242416947221>
- DPH issued the [Weekly COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Bulletin](#), for the week of 3/12.
- DPH Epidemiology Line handled 359 COVID-19 calls and 71 non-COVID-19 calls for a total of 430 calls from 3/8 through 3/14.
- As of 3/17, the [Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps](#) has 301 volunteers supporting 43 local boards of health.
- MA211 received 7,123 calls from Monday 3/8 through Sunday 3/14 for a new total of 262,440. These numbers do not reflect calls to the new appointment assistance call centers.
- There were 8 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (3/16) (8 BinaxNOW kits); 13 deliveries were made on Thursday (3/18) (1 testing supplies, 11 BinaxNOW kits and 1 therapeutic) and 10 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (3/19) (1 testing supplies and 9 BinaxNOW kits).
- DPH issued [Order regarding Administration of Medication in Long-Term Care Facilities by Massachusetts National Guard Staff](#)
- DPH issued [Updated Staff and Resident Roster Reporting](#). Staff and resident roster reporting frequency is transitioning from every other week instead to monthly reporting.
- Due to decreasing COVID -19 cases and hospitalizations, improving hospital capacity, and a diminishing need for daily load balancing, HMCC Regions 3 and 5 moved to Tier 2, effective 3/12. This modification was made in accordance with the [DPH COVID-19 Resurgence Planning and Response Guidance for Acute Care Hospitals](#). DPH and the COVID-19 Command Center will continue to work closely with all regions to monitor hospital capacity statewide.
- For the date range of 3/5 – 3/11, 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 10 Rapid Response Teams, comprised of nursing staff, deployed to nursing homes across the Commonwealth. Teams are also administering second doses of Pfizer vaccine to nursing and rest home residents and vaccinating at nursing homes that have a high number of residents that are unvaccinated.
- All the National Guard Teams deployed to support nursing and rest homes have transitioned to supporting vaccination efforts.
- Due to decreasing COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, and improving hospital capacity, on 3/15/21 services at the [UMASS Memorial Medical Center DCU Center Field Hospital](#) were discontinued. The state

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

will continue to closely monitor indicators and if additional capacity is necessary to support the health care system.

Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:

Mass Care

- 2 state contracted isolation/recovery hotels in the communities of Everett and Pittsfield continue to receive client placements: 63 individuals are currently housed in the program.
 - Top 5 referring cities:
 - Boston (384)
 - Worcester (189)
 - Springfield (170)
 - Quincy (122)
 - Cambridge (118)
 - To date, a total of 2,182 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery, an increase of 41 since last week

Community Food Box Program Update 3/11-3/18:

MEMA is partnering with the Salvation Army, and a vendor, to bring in shelf-stable food boxes each week to support communities in their effort to deliver food to individuals and families in quarantine and isolation who require assistance accessing food. Each week MEMA's warehouse receives a delivery of shelf-stable food boxes. Distribution of food boxes is coordinated between MEMA and communities in need via a request through WebEOC. The table below reflects the current food box inventory, and number of food boxes distributed to communities during the weekly reporting period (data is updated every Friday).

Total Number of Food Boxes in MEMA's Inventory	Total Number of Food Boxes Distributed to One or More Local Communities During the Reporting Period	Total Number of Communities that Received Food Boxes During the Reporting Period
2,733	1,044	8

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 85 orders prepared for pickup or delivery from the MEMA Statewide Logistics Warehouse from 3/11-3/18

Disaster Recovery On March 27, 2020, 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:

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Data as of: 3/12/2021

MEMA COVID-19 EXECUTIVE DASHBOARD			
AGGREGATE PROGRAM VIEW			
<i>Note: Financial data for pre-submission projects reflect 100% federal cost share while submitted projects continue to reflect 75% federal cost share. The remaining 25% federal cost share for submitted projects will be reported as FEMA adjusts cost share for these projects on a rolling basis. In addition, figures do not include MEMA management cost allowance.</i>			
Overall (Best Available Estimate)	Submitted (Eligibility & Cost Review)	Approved* (by FEMA)	Paid (by MEMA)
\$1.4B -\$1.69M	\$1.1B +\$1.08M	\$517.0M +\$528.39K	\$292.2M +\$1.14M
962 Projects +9	672 Projects +6	169 Projects +7	84 Projects +9
Approved Applicants: 654			

- FEMA Requests for Public Assistance (RPA): 664 (+1)
- Technical Assistance Requests: 518 (+2)
- Developing MEMA closeout infrastructure to process all FEMA-4496 project worksheets
- Coordinating with Department of Public Health to ensure all applicants operating COVID-19 vaccination sites can meet FEMA's Guidelines for [Equitable COVID-19 Response and Recovery](#) reporting metrics.
- New project obligations (5): \$5,768,762.30

Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 3/16/21)

- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke is in the midst of a search for a qualified permanent Superintendent, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services is working with an executive search firm to find qualified candidates. The final candidates are being interviewed this month and will need Board of Trustee approval.
- Today, Secretary of Veterans' Services Cheryl Lussier Poppe and EOHHS Assistant Secretary for Administration and Finance Alda Rego testified before the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight in support of the Baker-Polito Administration's [\\$400 million bond bill](#) which would provide capital authorization for the major project to reconstruct the long-term care facility at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home.
 - The Commonwealth has been making capital investments to address the short and long-term needs of the Home, including a short-term Refresh Project, a \$6 million refresh of units to significantly improve infection control for the residents and staff, and this longer-term Rapid Planning Capital Project (www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject) for a future Soldiers' Home in Holyoke.
 - This bond bill is the next step of the expedited capital project, following the recommendations laid out in the [needs assessment report](#) that was released on Veterans Day, following the [Rapid Planning Phase](#). Payette Associates is the design firm leading the design and planning phase, building on the evaluation they previously completed, and developing a full project scope, refining the plan, confirming the budget, timelines, and ensuring conformity with the regulatory process. To meet the VA State Home Construction Grant's April 15, 2021 deadline, the bond bill must be enacted by mid-March, with a terms bill filed and enacted soon afterwards. The design development phase must be completed by August 1, 2021 to be eligible for this cycle of the grant program.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- Last week, the VA conducted the annual health survey of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. Due to COVID-19 protocols, the survey was done virtually, including direct care observations, and examining the physical structure of the building virtually. The VA conducts surveys annually for state veterans' homes.
- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke expanded in-person visitation hours into the evening on Wednesdays, now offering slots Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and Wednesdays 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 - The Home re-opened in-person visitation for veteran residents and their loved ones, starting February 10, 2021, and since then has hosted 392 visitors.
 - The Home is implementing updated guidance from DPH to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, staff, and those visiting. All visitors are screened and required to wear PPE and social distance, and negative test results are strongly encouraged before visiting. There is designated visitation space at each Home, and high touch surfaces are sanitized after each visit.
 - At least 24 slots will be offered each day, and visits are scheduled for at least 45 minutes. Visits can be scheduled by calling the Family Line at 413-552-4764. 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
 - The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke will also continue to offer and support virtual visitation. The Family Line is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff. Families can also request updates via email at CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov.
 - Note: The Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke hosted 3 onsite vaccination clinics, the last on February 9. The first and second vaccination clinics were held on December 29 and January 19. Following the completion of the vaccination clinics:
 - 117 veteran residents and 220 staff have received both doses.
 - 1 veteran resident and 10 staff have received their first dose.
 - The Home is strongly encouraging all staff to receive the vaccine. On top of the efforts to provide educational information about the COVID-19 vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccine FAQ sheets, and vaccine informational forums with clinical staff, individuals who had not been vaccinated received individual outreach to provide education and encourage vaccination. All educational materials are available in both English and Spanish.
- Phase III of the Refresh Project continues on the 4th Floor. The Refresh Project is an important infection control initiative to improve the home in the immediate term for residents and staff.
- The Soldiers' Home continues to work with Home Base, a veteran support organization that is a partnership of the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital, to help improve the quality of life, increase psychosocial interventions to address isolation during the pandemic. Home Base has linked us to interactive virtual concerts provided by professional and amateur volunteers, featuring musical performances and conversation between the Veterans and musicians. The concerts occur every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. The team at Home Base is working with Social Work, Recreation and Nursing to provide other opportunities for virtual activities. Home Base has extended their free veteran counseling offerings to our Soldier's Home families and staff.
- 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 is continuing 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.
- 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 widespread vaccination 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.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER

WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke has been intently focused on following infection control procedures and maintaining best practices for the safety of veteran residents and staff. All veteran residents' health is being monitored and retesting is being conducted for veterans both on- and off-site as clinically appropriate. The Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following [the latest CDC guidance](#), which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus.
- The 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, and continues to rebuild staff and leadership.
- 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 March 16 is as follows:
 - Status
 - 0 veteran residents are positive and not clinically recovered
 - 2 veteran residents are negative
 - 42 veteran residents have a pending test. Please note that all veteran residents and staff are now being tested twice weekly, which will increase the number of pending tests.
 - 74 veteran residents have been determined clinically recovered
 - 0 veteran residents have refused testing
 - Resident locations:
 - 115 veteran residents are onsite
 - 3 veteran residents are receiving acute care offsite
 - Since March 1, there have been 77 deaths of veteran residents who tested positive
 - Following the most recent staff surveillance testing
 - 0 are positive
 - All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 3/16/21)

- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea has re-opened in-person visitation for veteran residents and their loved ones, starting February 10, 2021, and has since hosted 144 in-person visits with veterans.
- Visitation hours have been expanded on the weekends, and now visitation is offered 7 days a week 9 AM to 7:30 PM. The Home is implementing updated guidance from DPH to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, staff, and those visiting. All visitors are screened and required to wear PPE and social distance, and negative test results are strongly encouraged before visiting. There is designated visitation space at each Home, and high touch surfaces are sanitized after each visit.
 - Eight visitation slots will be offered each day, and visits will be scheduled for at least 45 minutes long.
 - The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea will also continue to offer and support virtual visitation.
 - Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting their assigned social worker, or emailing the Home at CSH@mass.gov. Medical information can only be shared with an authorized health care proxy.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea hosted 3 onsite vaccination clinics, the last on February 9. The first and second vaccination clinics were held on December 29 and 30, and January 19 and 20. Following the completion of the onsite vaccination clinics:
 - 159 residents and 208 staff have received both doses
 - 6 veteran residents and 67 staff have received their first dose.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- This week the Beverly Veterans Council generously donated 45 pairs of new sneakers to the Veterans of the Chelsea Soldiers' Home.
- 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.
- 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.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea currently weekly staff surveillance testing. In accordance with [CMS rules](#), 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.
- The status as of March 16 is as follows:
 - Residents
 - 0 veteran residents are positive
 - 126 veteran residents are negative
 - 48 veteran residents have recovered, meaning they previously tested positive and are now clinically recovered
 - 0 veteran residents have pending tests
 - Since March 1, there have been 31 deaths of veteran residents who tested positive
 - Following the most recent staff surveillance testing:
 - 0 employees are positive
 - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

Communications Resources

Updated Eligibility graphics

- Use these new [graphics](#) for your newsletters and social media showing COVID-19 vaccine eligibility dates for everyone who lives, works, or studies in Massachusetts.

Updated Vaccine Equity Initiative website

- Visit [COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Initiative | Mass.gov](#) for the latest on the initiative in 20 of our hardest hit communities to increase equity in COVID-19 vaccine awareness and access.

New FAQ for certain workers eligible in Phase 2

- Visit [COVID-19 vaccinations for certain workers | Mass.gov](#) for an FAQ and other COVID-19 vaccine eligibility requirements and information for workers in certain categories.

New Guidance for people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- Until more people are vaccinated, prevention measures will be necessary, even for individuals fully vaccinated. Review MA's [Guidance for people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#).

New CDC 'plain language' materials in multiple languages

- [Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Communication Resources for COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

Other Public Messaging Resources for Communities:

The COVID-19 Command Center and DPH have produced many communication resources aimed at helping communities inform and educate residents on recent executive orders and guidance related to COVID-19.

- [Trust the Facts, Get the Vax Campaign Materials | Mass.gov](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Posters | Mass.gov](#)
- [Preparing for your COVID-19 Vaccination Appointment flier | Mass.gov](#)
- [Guide to hosting a forum on the COVID-19 Vaccine | Mass.gov](#)

Visitors to COVID-19 resources for municipalities webpage will find these new resources, and additional flyers, posters, and digital resources in multiple languages on topics such as:

- [When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?](#)
- [Vaccine Graphics](#)
- [Statewide guidelines, advisories, and orders](#)
- [Staying safe in the community](#)
- [Using local public alert systems for COVID-19 information](#)
- [Materials for Business](#), including:
 - Return to work guidance
 - Employee Screening Questionnaire
 - Business guidance – New, Temporary Capacity Limits
 - Updated safe store tips for retailers

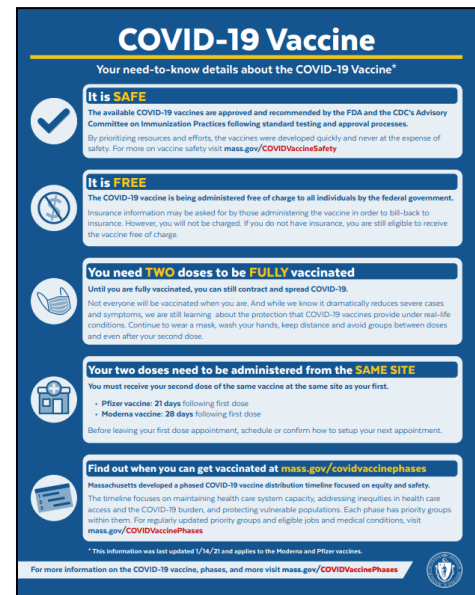
Resources

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@riversideecc.org

Red Cross Virtual Family Assistance Center



COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

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 tool](#) that shows the locations of COVID-19 testing sites around the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts COVID-19 Response Dashboard

MEMA has developed and maintains a public-facing COVID-19 ArcGIS Online dashboard, available [here](#). This dashboard is continuously updated and captures information about current COVID 19 case counts, cases by age, cases by county, hospital status, hospital bed status, death tolls, and deaths by age. Users should refresh the dashboard daily as enhancements are continuously being added.

Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here](#).

Stay Informed

- Get information from trusted sources. Get notified by text, email, or phone call in your preferred language. Visit <https://member.everbridge.net/index/406686158291020/#/signup> to sign-up for **AlertsMA** for the latest news on the Commonwealth's response to COVID-19
- Take care of your emotional health:
- Call 2-1-1 and choose the "CALL2TALK" option.
- Samaritans is continuing operations 24/7, as always. During this unprecedented time, it can feel overwhelming to receive constant messages about COVID-19. Call or text their 24/7 helpline any time at 877-870-4673.
- The Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990, is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

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

- [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