

# Thursday, February 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, 2/25/21.



Governor Baker speaks with staff during a recent tour of East Boston Neighborhood Health Center's COVID-19 vaccine clinic. This week the Administration invested \$1 million in the MA League of Community Health Centers to support community health center efforts to increase vaccine safety awareness in underserved communities. Story below.

### In This Week's Report:

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### 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 2/18**

534,827 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

15,373 Deaths among confirmed cases

15,240,866 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

## United States **Last Updated 2/18**

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:

27,127,858 Total Cases

470,110 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**

Key indicators from today's interactive dashboard are below.

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health | COVID-19 Dashboard**  
Today at a Glance

Released on: February 18, 2021  
Data as of: February 17, 2021  
Caution: recent data may be incomplete

Navigation

**Today's Overview**

Overview Trends

COVID-19 Cases

COVID-19 Testing

Hospitalization

COVID-19 Deaths

Higher Ed & LTCF

Patient Breakdown

City and Town

Resources

Data Archive

**Cases**

**Confirmed Cases**

Today there were **1,803** new, confirmed cases reported bringing the total to **534,827** total confirmed cases.

**Probable Cases**

Today, there were **237** new, probable cases reported bringing the total to **29,149** total probable cases.

**Estimated Active Cases**

There are an estimated **38,666** currently active COVID-19 cases.

**Cases by age during the last two weeks**  
\*Data updated weekly

0-19 Years	6,468
20-29 Years	5,433
30-39 Years	4,374
40-49 Years	3,675
50-59 Years	4,030
60-69 Years	2,809
70-79 Years	1,517
80+ Years	954

**Testing**

**Tests Reported**

There were **100,002** new COVID-19 molecular tests reported, bringing the cumulative total to **15,240,866** tests.

**Turn Around Time**

The current turn around time for a molecular test is **1.76** days.

**Percent Positivity**

The 7-day average of percent positivity is **2.13%**.

**Hospitalizations**

**Hospitalizations**

There are **1,029** patients hospitalized for COVID-19.

**ICU & Intubated Patients**

There are **271** patients in Intensive Care Units (ICU) and **173** patients are intubated.

**Average Age of Patients**

The average age of patients who were hospitalized for COVID-19 was **70** years old.

**Deaths**

**Confirmed Deaths**

There were **61** new, confirmed deaths reported. There have been **15,373** confirmed deaths in total.

**Probable Deaths**

There were **2** new, probable deaths reported. There have been **313** probable deaths in total.

For details on the definitions of each indicator hover over the box or graph. All data included in this dashboard are preliminary and subject to change. Data Sources: COVID-19 Data provided by the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences and the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics; COVID-19 Hospitalization Data provided by the MDPH survey of hospitals (hospital survey data are self-reported); Created by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences, Office of Integrated Surveillance and Informatics Services.

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health | COVID-19 Dashboard**  
Trends: 7-day Averages Over Time

Released on: February 18, 2021  
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**Today's Overview**

**Overview Trends**

COVID-19 Cases

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Date Filter

3/1/2020      2/17/2021

**Cases**

**7-day average of COVID-19 confirmed cases**

The lowest observed value was **156.7** on **7/4/2020**.

**Testing**

**7-day weighted average percent positivity**

The lowest observed value was **0.8%** on **9/21/2020**.

**Hospitalizations**

**7-day average of hospitalizations**

The lowest observed value was **155.3** on **8/26/2020**.

**Deaths**

**7-day average of confirmed deaths**

The lowest observed value was **3.7** on **9/9/2020**.

For details on the definitions of each indicator please see the corresponding tab for that indicator. All data included in this dashboard are preliminary and subject to change. Data Sources: COVID-19 Data provided by the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences and the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics; Created by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences, Office of Integrated Surveillance and Informatics Services.

# 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, 2/18. 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.

## ***Week in Review: State Actions***



### **Statement from the COVID-19 Command Center**

"The state's website to find and book vaccine appointments experienced delays and technical difficulties and the administration sincerely apologizes for the frustration and inconvenience our residents experienced over the course of the day. Despite these difficulties, 60,000 mass vaccination appointments for the week were booked. At this time, there are no availabilities for Fenway, Foxboro, Danvers, Natick, Dartmouth, and Springfield.

After the web vendor, Prep Mod addressed the issues, the state's website is currently operating. The administration is now pressure testing the site to ensure the vendor's adjustments are adequate. While the mass vaccination sites are booked for the week, a small number of appointments for other locations will be posted over the next several days. This includes pharmacies and regional collaboratives. Currently, approximately one million residents are now eligible and because supply is still severely limited by the federal government, it is expected to take at least a month for residents to book appointments. The Command Center will continue to work on website improvements to streamline and improve this process."

- Command Center Spokesperson

### **Vaccine Appointment Booking for Individuals Age 65+ or with 2+ Certain Medical Conditions Begins Today**

Yesterday, the Baker-Polito Administration has announced individuals ages 65 and over and those with 2+ certain medical conditions, including asthma, can visit [www.mass.gov/covidvaccine](http://www.mass.gov/covidvaccine) to start booking an appointment for vaccine beginning today, February 18<sup>th</sup>. With this announcement, almost 1 million individuals are newly eligible for vaccine.

Due to extremely high demand for appointments and limited vaccine supply, it could take more than a month for all eligible individuals to secure an available appointment, unless federal supply significantly increases. Recently, Massachusetts has been receiving approximately 110,000 first doses per week from the federal government. Next week, Massachusetts is scheduled to get 139,000 doses. Residents are encouraged to keep checking the website as appointments are added on a rolling basis.

### **Individuals 65 and over:**

Individuals 65 and over, including residents and staff of low income and affordable public and private senior housing are eligible to receive vaccine effective starting today, February 18<sup>th</sup>. Residents and staff of low income and affordable public and private senior housing can learn more about vaccination options [here](#).

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### **Individuals with 2+ Certain Medical Conditions:**

Individuals 16 and older with two or more of certain medical conditions (defined below) are also eligible for vaccine, effective today. In concert with CDC guidelines, the Commonwealth has adopted the list of conditions that cause individuals to be at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Massachusetts has also identified moderate to severe asthma as an eligible medical condition.

#### **Phase 2 eligible conditions:**

- Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Down Syndrome
- Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
- Obesity and severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Learn more from [CDC: COVID-19: People with Certain Medical Conditions](#)

### **Local Boards of Health Update:**

Yesterday, Local Boards of Health were informed of the Commonwealth's streamlined vaccination distribution plan that prioritizes equity and high-capacity throughput vaccination, particularly as vaccine supply from the federal government remains extremely constrained.

This streamlined distribution plan will increase vaccine access at high throughput vaccination locations such as mass vaccination sites or regional sites and at pharmacy sites. In addition to increasing efficiency in administering the vaccine, the Commonwealth will ensure that the program is equitable and meets the needs of communities that have been the most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Utilizing the social vulnerability index as a starting point, the Department of Public Health has identified 20 municipalities that have had the greatest COVID burden and have the greatest percentage of non-white residents. These municipalities are Boston; Brockton; Chelsea; Everett; Fall River; Fitchburg; Framingham; Haverhill; Holyoke; Lawrence; Leominster; Lowell; Lynn; Malden; Methuen; New Bedford; Randolph; Revere; Springfield; and Worcester.

These municipalities will continue to distribute vaccine at the local level, are prioritized for the retail pharmacy program, and are served by community health centers and other health care providers administering vaccine. Local Boards of Health will continue to play a crucial role in our collective plan to curb COVID-19. The Administration is asking Local Boards of Health to support these critical objectives:

- Planning to vaccinate homebound individuals in their community and older adults in private and public low income and affordable housing.
- Encourage residents to get vaccinated at mass vaccination sites, retail pharmacies and other locations that are open to all residents.

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- Increase vaccine awareness of safety and efficacy so that when we do have more incoming vaccine from the Federal Government, and as more groups become eligible, communities are ready and willing to accept vaccine.

### **Administration Launches Initiative to Increase Equity in COVID-19 Vaccine Awareness and Access**

On Tuesday, the Administration announced a targeted outreach initiative in 20 cities and towns most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and \$1M to the MA League of Community Health Centers to support vaccination in historically underserved communities.

The Department of Public Health (DPH) will invest resources directly in the 20 cities and towns most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to increase awareness of the vaccine's safety and efficacy and to reduce barriers to vaccination. DPH will assist each city or town by working with local leaders, and community- and faith-based groups to strengthen existing efforts focused on awareness and overcoming barriers so that residents will get vaccinated when it's their turn.



The initiative will focus 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 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.

Massachusetts now ranks in the Top 10 for vaccinations per capita according to the CDC and last week administered more doses per week than it received from the federal government.

#### **How Cities/Towns were Identified:**

This list of 20 is a subset of the cities and towns that met the Massachusetts COVID Advisory Group recommendation to prioritize communities using the [CDC's Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\)](#) and COVID-19 case rates since the start of the pandemic. Those communities were then ranked by average daily COVID-19 case rates in each city and town (excluding cases in long-term care and correctional facilities and communities with under 30,000 residents). From this ranked list by case rate, the top 17 cities and towns with the highest percentage of people of color were identified. The list of 20 cities and towns includes three additional communities to capture the top 15 communities with the highest daily COVID case rates.

The new DPH initiative will support a tailored community-based approach around the individual needs identified by each municipality. As part of the outreach, a DPH Community Liaison will work to leverage and coordinate state resources and customize a menu of options to be offered to each community, which may include:

- Identifying gaps and mapping available resources to reduce barriers to vaccination
- Coordinating and supporting key stakeholders including Local Boards of Health, local Community and Faith-Based Organizations, Community Health Centers, and Community Health Workers who can support grassroots outreach
- Deploying DPH Vaccine Ambassadors to provide support for town halls and other local forums to share information and materials, including a DPH forum guide and toolkit

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- Disseminating culturally appropriate translations of communications campaign materials, including “Trust the Facts, Get the Vax” campaign materials and vaccine FAQs in multiple languages
- Hiring residents to provide “boots on the ground” for neighborhood and local business outreach, which may include a door-knocking campaign to provide information and answer questions about vaccine efficacy and safety

### **Administration Invests \$1 Million to Support Vaccination in Historically Underserved Communities**

The Administration has invested \$1 million in the MA League of Community Health Centers to support community health center efforts to increase vaccine safety awareness in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, with the goal of addressing vaccine hesitancy and increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates for individuals and communities disproportionately impacted.

The program has three main objectives:

- Increase Community Health Center and community engagement staff vaccine confidence and knowledge
- Implement dissemination of culturally relevant and linguistically diverse patient education materials
- Identify and partner with local community-based organizations to provide information and tips to engage people in vaccination conversations

This grant initiative is a critical piece of the MA League of Community Health Center’s COVID-19 Vaccine Community Engagement Campaign and recognizes that Community Health Centers, community health workers and other community-facing outreach workers are critical and widely trusted individuals to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among the most at-risk communities.

Under the initiative, qualified health centers may apply for \$25,000 grants via the MA League of Community Health Centers to assist Community Health Workers (CHW) to engage patients and community members in vaccination discussions to increase vaccine uptake in the Commonwealth’s hardest-hit communities. The funding helps health centers in several critical ways, including supporting providers and staff in having one-to-one conversations with patients to answer their questions and concerns, bringing these individualized dialogues to the broader community, and using online and other communication channels and resources.

### **DPH COVID-19 Community Impact Survey Results Released**

This week, the Department of Public Health released preliminary findings from its COVID-19 Community Impact Survey.

The survey of more than 35,000 MA residents was conducted to help understand the specific needs of people throughout the Commonwealth who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey findings will help DPH plan for appropriate resources and supports for residents as we continue to navigate this public health crisis. The survey, which was available in multiple languages, gathered feedback from communities throughout the state. The complete survey results are available at [Mass.Gov/COVIDsurvey](https://www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey).



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### **MassHealth Expands & Simplifies Vaccine-Related Transportation Eligibility for its Members**

MassHealth has made changes to its non-emergency transportation policy to expand eligibility and simplify processes for transportation to and from COVID-19 vaccine appointments.



MassHealth is providing free transportation to vaccine appointments to any individual that has any type of MassHealth coverage or the Health Safety Net. This includes people with MassHealth Limited, Children's Medical Security Program (CMSP) and MassHealth Family Assistance (FA). In addition, members can request transportation services directly through MassHealth's Customer Service, rather than needing to request services through a health care provider.

**If an individual has MassHealth or the Health Safety Net, they (or a caregiver) can be encouraged to call their health plan or MassHealth directly to schedule free transportation at 800-841-2900 (TTY: 800-497-4648).**

MassHealth members who are enrolled in a Senior Care Options or One Care plan or in a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) should continue to contact their health plan or PACE provider to request help with transportation.

MassHealth [All Provider Bulletin 310](#) and this [FAQ](#) contain additional details on this policy, and members can visit the [MassHealth webpage](#) for more information on COVID-19 vaccines.

## ***Important Updates***

### **Department of Public Health Updates:**

- DPH continues to amplify our "Trust the Facts, Get the Vax" public information campaign airing on TV, radio, and digital platforms in multiple languages. Information and resources can be found [here](#).
- DPH issued a Bulletin – What Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Providers Need to Know, for the week of 2/11. This Bulletin offers the Latest Numbers, Who to Vaccinate This Week, What to Know This Week, Where to go when you have questions about COVID-19 vaccination, and Resources and Learning Opportunities.
- DPH Epidemiology Line handled 386 COVID-19 calls and 74 non-COVID-19 calls for a total of 460 calls from 2/8 through 2/14.
- DPH [announced](#) the first case of the B.1.351 COVID-19 variant identified in the Commonwealth. Genetic sequencing completed at the Broad Institute on behalf of DPH has confirmed the variant, which was originally identified in South Africa.
- As of 2/17, the Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps has 303 volunteers supporting 52 local boards of health. For more information about the Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps, please visit the [APHVC webpage](#) on Mass.gov.
- MA211 received 10,629 calls from Monday 2/8 through Sunday 2/14 for a new total of 221,945. These numbers do not reflect calls to the new appointment assistance call centers.
- DPH received Cycle 11 allocations on 2/17 as follows: Bamlanivimab 300 doses and Regeneron 0 doses due to a repackaging project being conducted by the supplier. This allocation is for a two-week period. The Therapeutics Working Group is recommending an equitable allocation strategy.
- HMCC Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4 remain in Tier 3. HMCC Region 5 remains in Tier 4 as the hospitals in the region continue to respond to capacity constraints. DPH and the COVID-19 Command Center will continue to work closely with all regions to support strategies to improve hospital capacity statewide and in accordance with the [DPH COVID-19 Resurgence Planning and Response Guidance for Acute Care Hospitals](#).

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- For the date range of 2/5 – 2/11, all 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, comprised of nursing staff, deployed to nursing homes across the Commonwealth. Teams are also helping nursing homes on the day of their Vaccine Clinics to ensure staff and residents are monitored after vaccination.
- There are also 4 National Guard Teams deployed and supporting nursing and rest homes.

**Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:**

**Mass Care**

- 4 state contracted isolation/recovery hotels in the communities of Everett, Pittsfield, Taunton, and Wakefield continue to receive client placements: 97 individuals are currently housed in the program. Beginning this week, Wakefield will stop accepting new guests and will prepare for demobilization due to decreasing demand in the Isolation and Recovery Program.
  - Top 5 referring cities:
    - Boston (338)
    - Worcester (186)
    - Springfield (163)
    - Cambridge (117)
    - Brockton (112)
  - To date, a total of 2,022 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery, an increase of 42 since last week.

**Community Food Box Program Update (2/12 to 2/18):**

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
3,073	1,385	8

**Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)**

- 13 orders placed for pickup or delivery from the MEMA State Logistics Warehouse from 2/12-2/18.
- Isolation hotels in Taunton and Pittsfield were resupplied with food, drinks, and PPE this week.
- DPH coordinated 18 deliveries to health care entities on Monday (2/15) (1 testing supplies, 14 BinaxNOW kits and 1 therapeutic); 2 deliveries were made on Tuesday (2/16) (1 PPE and 1 BinaxNOW kits); 15 deliveries were made on Wednesday (2/17) (1 PPE/3 testing supplies, 10 BinaxNOW kits and 1 therapeutic); 5 deliveries were made on Thursday (2/18) (5 BinaxNOW kits); and 4 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (2/19) (1PPE and 3 BinaxNOW kits).

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## 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:

Data as of: 2/12/2021

### 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)
\$908.1M +\$2.07M	\$678.9M -\$5.45M	\$504.9M \$0	\$290.0M +\$20.47K
915 Projects +3	631 Projects -1	90 Projects 0	64 Projects +1

Approved Applicants: 647

- FEMA Requests for Public Assistance (RPA): 662
- Technical Assistant Requests: 514
- Following up with local municipalities that have not submitted RPAs for DR-4496 to ensure they are aware of the FEMA Public Assistance process
- Working with FEMA partners to finalize estimated cost summary template for COVID-19 vaccination projects
- Compiled all data regarding non-congregate sheltering operations through 2/15/21 for monthly FEMA report
- Total RDU Applicants: 56 (+ 1 – Worcester State University)
- Anticipated Costs Being Submitted through RDU: \$878,566,597 (Increase of \$5.7 million)
- Technical Assistance Meetings Conducted with RDU Applicants (excludes exploratory calls): 549 (+18)
- Project Worksheets submitted to FEMA: 23 (+1 – MRC – Cleaning & PPE)
- Project Worksheets obligated: 8

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 2/18)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	<b>34,513</b>
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	<b>424</b>
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	<b>8,436</b>



**NURSING HOME  
FAMILY RESOURCE LINE**

**617-660-5399**



CALL US MONDAY THRU FRIDAY FROM 9AM-5PM

# COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER

## WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

### Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 2/16/21)

- On February 11, the Baker-Polito Administration [filed a \\$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. This includes a short-term Refresh Project and this longer-term Rapid Planning Capital Project ([www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject](http://www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject)) for a future Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. While the expedited capital project will address long-term facility needs, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans' Services, and Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance have been addressing immediate capital needs, including a \$6 million refresh of units to significantly improve infection control for the residents and staff.
  - 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.
- In the days leading up to February 14, Veterans celebrated Valentine's Day with music, cheesecake and strawberries, and hundreds of Valentine's Day cards from local schools.
- CVS Health returned to the Home on February 9 for the third and final onsite vaccine clinic, to administer second doses of the vaccine to those vaccinated, and first doses to individuals who newly consented. The first and second vaccination clinics were held on December 29 and January 19. Following the completion of the vaccination clinics.
  - At the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, **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.
- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke has re-opened in-person visitation for veteran residents and their loved ones, starting February 10, 2021.
  - The Home is implementing updated guidance from DPH to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, staff, and those visiting.
  - All visitors will be 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 will be sanitized after each visit.
  - At this time, we are asking that loved ones schedule one visit each week, and as more availability becomes available, more may be scheduled.
  - At the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, visitation will take place Tuesday through Saturday, from 9:00am to 3:00pm, and 24 slots will be offered each day. Visits will be 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](mailto:CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov). Note:

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The Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.

- The Soldiers' Home is working 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 virtual concerts provided by professional and amateur volunteers. The concerts are interactive—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 until the Home receives 14 consecutive days of negative results.
  - 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.
- 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 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.
- 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 February 16 is as follows:
  - Status:
    - 0 veteran residents are positive and not clinically recovered
    - 4 veteran residents are negative
    - 41 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.
    - 76 veteran residents have been determined clinically recovered
    - 0 veteran residents have refused testing
  - Resident locations:
    - 118 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

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- 0 are positive
- All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

### Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 2/16/21)

- The Soldiers' Home received several virtual Valentine's Day cards from Massachusetts General Hospital employees and volunteers, through the Home Base Program. These virtual cards were posted on display throughout the weekend on digital signage board located all over the campus and were appreciated by Veterans and staff.
- In honor of National Salute to Veteran Patients Week, the American Legion Auxiliary are treating all Chelsea Long Term Care Veterans to some strawberry shortcake, which will be distributed by recreation staff for Veterans to enjoy.
- CVS Health returned to the Home on February 9 for the third and final onsite vaccine clinic to administer second doses of the vaccine to those vaccinated, and first doses to individuals who newly consented. 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
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea has re-opened in-person visitation for veteran residents and their loved ones, starting February 10, 2021.
  - The Home is implementing updated guidance from DPH to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, staff, and those visiting.
  - All visitors will be 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 will be sanitized after each visit.
  - At this time, we are asking that loved ones schedule one visit each week, and as more availability becomes available, more may be scheduled.
  - At the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, visitation will take place Monday through Friday 9:00am-7:30pm, and 8 slots will be offered each day; and Saturday & Sunday from 1pm-4pm, and 3 slots will be offered each day. Visits will be scheduled for at least 45 minutes long. Visits can be scheduled by Diane Rennie at (617) 887-7160 or [diane.rennie@mass.gov](mailto:diane.rennie@mass.gov)
  - 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](mailto:CSH@mass.gov). Medical information can only be shared with an authorized health care proxy.
- 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

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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 February 16 is as follows:
  - Residents
    - 2 veteran residents are positive, all in independent living
    - 127 veteran residents are negative
    - 46 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:
  - 4 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 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.

### New Resources:

- [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

### Additional DPH Stop the Spread Materials in Multiple Languages

- [Facts Sheets](#)
- [Videos](#)

**COVID-19 Vaccine**  
Your need-to-know details about the COVID-19 Vaccine\*

- It is SAFE**  
The available COVID-19 vaccines are approved and recommended by the FDA and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices following standard testing and approval processes. By prioritizing resources and efforts, the vaccines were developed quickly and never at the expense of safety. For more on vaccine safety visit [mass.gov/COVIDVaccineSafety](https://mass.gov/COVIDVaccineSafety)
- It is FREE**  
The COVID-19 vaccine is being administered free of charge to all individuals by the federal government. Insurance information may be asked for by those administering the vaccine in order to bill back to insurance. However, you will not be charged, if you do not have insurance, you are still eligible to receive the vaccine free of charge.
- You need TWO doses to be FULLY vaccinated**  
Until you are fully vaccinated, you can still contract and spread COVID-19. Not everyone will be vaccinated when you are. And while we know it dramatically reduces severe cases and symptoms, we are still learning about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions. Continue to wear a mask, wash your hands, keep distance and avoid groups between doses and even after your second dose.
- Your two doses need to be administered from the SAME SITE**  
You must receive your second dose of the same vaccine at the same site as your first.
  - Pfizer vaccine: 21 days following first dose
  - Moderna vaccine: 28 days following first doseBefore leaving your first dose appointment, schedule or confirm how to setup your next appointment.
- Find out when you can get vaccinated at [mass.gov/COVIDvaccinephases](https://mass.gov/COVIDvaccinephases)**  
Massachusetts developed a phased COVID-19 vaccine distribution timeline focused on equity and safety. The timeline focuses on maintaining health care system capacity, addressing inequities in health care access and the COVID-19 burden, and protecting vulnerable populations. Each phase has priority groups within them. For regularly updated priority groups and eligible jobs and medical conditions, visit [mass.gov/COVIDvaccinephases](https://mass.gov/COVIDvaccinephases).

\* This information was last updated 1/14/21 and applies to the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.  
For more information on the COVID-19 vaccine, phases, and more visit [mass.gov/COVIDvaccinePhases](https://mass.gov/COVIDvaccinePhases)

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### *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](mailto: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 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

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- 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*

- [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](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org)