

# Thursday, February 25, 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, 3/4/21.



Governor Baker visited a new mass vaccination site in Natick on Wednesday. During this visit, it was announced that \$4.7 million is being used to promote equity in our hardest-hit communities, with a focus on reducing barriers for populations like homebound seniors. Story below.

### In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health & Vaccine Data Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
  - \$4.7 Million for Vaccine Equity in Hardest Hit Communities; Regional Vaccination Collaboratives
  - Plans for Continued Reopening
  - 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 2/25**

545,624 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

15,657 Deaths among confirmed cases

15,894,675 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States **Last Updated 2/25**

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:

28,065,327 Total Cases

501,181 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.

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**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 25, 2021  
Data as of: February 24, 2021  
Caution: recent data may be incomplete

	Cases	Testing	Hospitalizations	Deaths																
<p><b>Navigation</b></p> <p>Today's Overview</p> <p>Overview Trends</p> <p>COVID-19 Cases</p> <p>COVID-19 Testing</p> <p>Hospitalization</p> <p>COVID-19 Deaths</p> <p>Higher Ed &amp; LTCF</p> <p>Patient Breakdown</p> <p>City and Town</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Data Archive</p>	<p><b>Confirmed Cases</b></p> <p>Today there were <b>1,928</b> new, confirmed cases reported bringing the total to <b>545,624</b> total confirmed cases.</p> <p><b>Probable Cases</b></p> <p>Today, there were <b>180</b> new, probable cases reported bringing the total to <b>30,369</b> total probable cases.</p> <p><b>Estimated Active Cases</b></p> <p>There are an estimated <b>32,117</b> currently active COVID-19 cases.</p>	<p><b>Tests Reported</b></p> <p>There were <b>118,144</b> new COVID-19 molecular tests reported, bringing the cumulative total to <b>15,894,675</b> tests.</p> <p><b>Turn Around Time</b></p> <p>The current turn around time for a molecular test is <b>1.36</b> days.</p> <p><b>Percent Positivity</b></p> <p>The 7-day average of percent positivity is <b>1.85%</b>.</p>	<p><b>Hospitalizations</b></p> <p>There are <b>853</b> patients hospitalized for COVID-19.</p> <p><b>ICU &amp; Intubated Patients</b></p> <p>There are <b>221</b> patients in Intensive Care Units (ICU) and <b>142</b> patients are intubated.</p> <p><b>Average Age of Patients</b></p> <p>The average age of patients who were hospitalized for COVID-19 was <b>69</b> years old.</p>	<p><b>Confirmed Deaths</b></p> <p>There were <b>33</b> new, confirmed deaths reported. There have been <b>15,657</b> confirmed deaths in total.</p> <p><b>Probable Deaths</b></p> <p>There were <b>0</b> new, probable deaths reported. There have been <b>321</b> probable deaths in total.</p>																
	<p><b>Cases by age during the last two weeks</b> *Data updated weekly</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>0-19 Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">5,175</td></tr> <tr><td>20-29 Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">4,488</td></tr> <tr><td>30-39 Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">3,396</td></tr> <tr><td>40-49 Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">2,744</td></tr> <tr><td>50-59 Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">3,011</td></tr> <tr><td>60-69 Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">2,119</td></tr> <tr><td>70-79 Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">1,111</td></tr> <tr><td>80+ Years</td><td style="text-align: right;">684</td></tr> </table>	0-19 Years	5,175	20-29 Years	4,488	30-39 Years	3,396	40-49 Years	2,744	50-59 Years	3,011	60-69 Years	2,119	70-79 Years	1,111	80+ Years	684			
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	<p>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.</p>																			

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

Released on: February 25, 2021  
Data as of: February 24, 2021  
Caution: recent data may be incomplete

	Cases	Testing	Hospitalizations	Deaths
<p><b>Navigation</b></p> <p>Today's Overview</p> <p>Overview Trends</p> <p>COVID-19 Cases</p> <p>COVID-19 Testing</p> <p>Hospitalization</p> <p>COVID-19 Deaths</p> <p>Higher Ed &amp; LTCF</p> <p>Patient Breakdown</p> <p>City and Town</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Data Archive</p> <p><b>Date Filter</b> 3/1/2020 to 2/24/20..</p>	<p><b>7-day average of COVID-19 confirmed cases</b></p> <p>The lowest observed value was <b>156.7</b> on 7/4/2020.</p>	<p><b>7-day weighted average percent positivity</b></p> <p>The lowest observed value was <b>0.8%</b> on 9/21/2020.</p>	<p><b>7-day average of hospitalizations</b></p> <p>The lowest observed value was <b>155.3</b> on 8/26/2020.</p>	<p><b>7-day average of confirmed deaths</b></p> <p>The lowest observed value was <b>3.7</b> on 9/9/2020.</p>
	<p>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.</p>			

# 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, 2/25. 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](#).

	Feb 19 <sup>th</sup>	Feb 20 <sup>th</sup>	Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>	Feb 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Feb 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Feb 24 <sup>th</sup>	Feb 25 <sup>th</sup>
Doses shipped to MA providers (MIIS)*	1,158,050	1,293,075	1,293,075	1,293,075	1,302,395	1,502,375	1,502,475
Doses shipped to Pharmacies directly by the federal government - including FPPP providers (Tiberius)	390,745	390,745	393,085	395,285	427,155	471,525	489,335
<b>Grand Total Shipped to MA</b>	<b>1,548,795</b>	<b>1,683,820</b>	<b>1,686,160</b>	<b>1,688,360</b>	<b>1,729,550</b>	<b>1,973,900</b>	<b>1,991,810</b>
1st doses Administered (MIIS)* # of people with at least one dose	976,033	1,000,734	1,024,802	1,044,210	1,061,335	1,084,888	1,111,829
2nd doses Administered (MIIS)* # of people fully vaccinated	347,623	372,172	389,087	399,638	414,941	433,593	454,472
<b>Grand Total Doses Administered (MIIS)*</b>	<b>1,323,656</b>	<b>1,372,906</b>	<b>1,413,889</b>	<b>1,443,848</b>	<b>1,476,276</b>	<b>1,518,481</b>	<b>1,566,301</b>
% of total doses shipped that have been reported to MIIS as administered	85.5%	81.5%	83.9%	85.5%	85.4%	76.9%	78.6%

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

## Week in Review: State Actions

### \$4.7 Million for Vaccine Equity in Hardest-Hit Communities; Regional Vaccination Collaboratives

The Baker-Polito Administration yesterday announced a new \$4.7 million initiative to promote COVID-19 vaccine equity in the 20 communities most disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The Administration also announced 11 high-efficiency regional vaccination collaboratives involving local health officials and other regional partners. Governor Baker made the announcements after touring the new mass vaccination location in Natick.

**Vaccination Appointments:** Today, around 50,000 new appointments will be added at mass vaccination locations across the Commonwealth. This includes the mass vaccination locations at Fenway Park, Gillette Stadium, Springfield, Danvers, Dartmouth and Natick. Retail pharmacies like CVS and Walgreens will also administer over 20,000 doses next week as well.



Residents can go

to [www.mass.gov/COVIDvaccine](http://www.mass.gov/COVIDvaccine) tomorrow morning to find and schedule their appointments. Appointment availability is very limited due to the constrained supply of vaccine doses that the Commonwealth is receiving from the federal government.

**\$4.7 Million for Vaccine Equity:** The Administration today announced a \$4.7 million effort to support its [vaccine equity initiative announced last week](#), which focuses on reducing barriers to vaccination in the 20 hardest-hit communities in the Commonwealth. The Administration will work with Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG) and Health Care for All (HCFA) to best leverage these funds.

The initiative will support and coordinate with local leaders and community- and faith-based organizations to strengthen existing efforts in these cities and towns. These efforts will specifically focus on communities of

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color, homebound seniors, disabled individuals and other hard-to-reach populations. ASG and HCFA will provide hyperlocal, population-specific communication resources as well as hiring local residents and working with local organizations with cultural and linguistic competencies to reach disparately impacted populations in each priority municipality. ASG specializes in grassroots mobilization, partnering with local leaders, community organizations, and media partners to develop community-based solutions. As a subcontractor, HCFA will provide high-touch support for priority communities, including direct service support, community organizing, education, and outreach.

This work will complement the Commonwealth's \$2.5 million public awareness campaign, "[Trust the Facts, Get the Vax](#)," adapting the campaign's messaging for specific communities. The initiative will focus on the 20 municipalities with the greatest COVID-19 case burden, taking into account social determinants of health and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on people of color. 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**. This work will be coordinated with targeted opportunities for increased vaccine access through existing and new locations, including pop up sites and mobile clinics.

**Regional Collaboratives:** In addition, the Administration today also designated 11 new regional collaboratives that will support efforts to streamline vaccination efforts. These collaboratives will leverage local health officials, regional hospitals and others to deliver high-throughput, efficient vaccination sites for all eligible residents across the Commonwealth beginning March 1. Collaboratives must meet several criteria:

- Have capacity to vaccinate a minimum of 750 individuals per day, 5 days per week (subject to vaccine availability);
- Meet an administration rate threshold of 85% and report doses within 24 hours;
- Be open to all residents of the Commonwealth (collaborations may focus outreach efforts towards those who live or work in the area, but must be open to all Massachusetts residents)
- Provide public links for vaccine appointments on [www.mass.gov/COVIDVaccine](http://www.mass.gov/COVIDVaccine).

New and existing collaboratives announced today:

- Barnstable County
- Berkshire County Boards of Health Association
- Franklin County Regional Collaborative
- Harrington Hospital, in Collaboration with LBOH
- Heywood Hospital, in Collaboration with LBOH
- Lawrence General Hospital, in Collaboration with LBOH
- Marshfield-Plymouth
- Northampton & Amherst
- Randolph – Collaboration between Avon, Holbrook, and Randolph
- Rutland
- Worcester, Worcester State University, Commonwealth Medicine and St. Vincent Hospital

Information about booking appointments through these collaboratives will be available on [www.mass.gov/COVIDvaccine](http://www.mass.gov/COVIDvaccine) in the coming days.

**Regional collaborative leaders on their programs:**

**Marshfield-Plymouth:** "The Marshfield Fairgrounds drive-through site is a place for residents on the South Shore to get vaccinated while in their cars without the worry of parking, walking, or waiting in line. Special thanks to Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito and their administration for supporting this site to service so many people in South Eastern Mass. The more people we can get vaccinated the closer we get to 'herd immunity.' This

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pandemic does not recognize town borders, and neither can we.” – **Michael Maresco, Marshfield Town Administrator**

**Lawrence General Hospital, in collaboration with local health departments:** “Our Lawrence General Hospital vaccination team is currently vaccinating over 1,000 people a day including some of the most vulnerable in our community. The communities we serve have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and Lawrence General Hospital remains committed and eager to continue working closely with city leaders and state health officials as we ramp up vaccination efforts here in the Merrimack Valley.” – **Deborah J. Wilson, President and CEO of Lawrence General Hospital**

**Berkshire County Boards of Health Association:** “We recognized early-on that working together would be the most effective way to vaccinate our community here in the Berkshires. Our local health care organizations and public health departments had been partnering since the beginning of the pandemic, and collaborative vaccination clinics were the natural next step. We are grateful to the Commonwealth for helping us to formally create the Berkshire Vaccine Collaborative, and we look forward to continuing our work to vaccinate our entire community.” – **Laura Kittross, Director of the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association, and Darlene Rodowicz, Executive Vice President of Berkshire Health Systems**

**Randolph:** “Since February 5th, Randolph has been operating as a regional Covid-19 vaccination site in collaboration with our neighboring communities of Avon and Holbrook. As our efforts ramp up to vaccinate Massachusetts residents through the different phases of eligibility, we are grateful for this opportunity and partnership with the COVID Command Center. This step towards vaccine distribution equity is important and Randolph is proud to partner with the state to ensure a smooth and efficient process.” – **Gerard F. Cody, REHS/RS, Randolph Public Health Director**

**Rutland:** “The Town of Rutland is pleased to operate a regional COVID vaccination site. Rutland is the geographic center of the Commonwealth. We anticipate operating at 750 vaccine doses daily / 5 days a week. We are happy to fulfill this need in Central MA.” – **Richard C Stevens, Rutland Health Agent**

**Heywood Hospital, in collaboration with local health departments:** “In partnership with the City of Gardner, Heywood Healthcare opened its Covid-19 Vaccine Clinic on January 28, 2021. Located at the Polish American Citizens Club in Gardner, the clinic is staffed primarily by community volunteers consisting of retired physicians and RNs, in addition to Mount Wachusett Community College nursing students. It's an honor to provide this service to our community, and we look forward to expanding that service to more individuals eligible for vaccine. We are grateful for our partnership with the state as we work through this pandemic and look forward to coming out on the other side. During its first month of service, operations at the clinic quickly ramped up from 200 doses administered during one session per week to nearly 2,500 doses now being administered during three sessions per week.” – **Rozanna Penney, Vice President of Perioperative Services and Clinic Director at Heywood Hospital**

**Harrington Hospital, in collaboration with local health departments:** “Harrington began providing vaccine to its employees in mid-December and quickly moved to vaccinate first responders. We then began working with the State to receive more vaccine to become a Statewide site and partnered with the local and regional communities. We worked closely with Southbridge to utilize their community center and gained support from local police and fire/EMS. This is an ongoing critical partnership! We went from vaccinating about 150 per day and now are doing more than 500 per day. The Commonwealth has supported our program as essential to provide vaccine to all those that are eligible.” – **Ed Moore, President and CEO of Harrington Hospital**

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**Northampton & Amherst:** “I’m proud that Northampton has been chosen to fulfill this critical role for the people of Western Massachusetts. We take our responsibility very seriously as we work to get everyone vaccinated and get all our lives back to normal. I’m proud to have strong partners in the Town of Amherst and the State Department of Public Health to accomplish our mission as fast as possible.” – **Merridith O’Leary, Northampton Public Health Director**

### Plans for Continued Reopening

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that Massachusetts would advance to Step 2 of Phase III of the state’s reopening plan on Monday, March 1, and also announced its plan to transition to Step 1 of Phase IV on Monday, March 22. With public health metrics continuing to trend in a positive direction, including drops in average daily COVID cases and hospitalizations, and vaccination rates continuing to increase, the Administration is taking steps to continue to reopen the Commonwealth’s economy.

The Administration also announced more than \$49 million in awards to 1,108 additional small businesses in the eighth round of COVID-19 relief grants administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC). These new awards are the result of work by MGCC to engage with applicants that meet sector and demographic priorities but are missing certain documents that are necessary to be considered for an award.



### **Phase III, Step 2:**

On May 18, 2020, the Baker-Polito Administration released a four-phased plan to reopen the economy conditioned on sustained improvements in public health data. As of October 2020, the reopening had proceeded to Step 2 of Phase III of the plan. On December 13, 2020, in response to an increase in new COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations following the Thanksgiving holiday, the Commonwealth returned to Step 1 of Phase III, reducing capacities across a broad range of sectors and tightening several other workplace restrictions.

Since the beginning of this year, key public health data, such as new cases and hospitalizations, have been closely monitored and a significant decline has been documented, allowing for a return to Step 2 of Phase III, effective March 1 for all cities and towns. This includes the following updates to businesses, activities and capacities:

- Indoor performance venues such as concert halls, theaters, and other indoor performance spaces will be allowed to reopen at 50% capacity with no more than 500 persons
- Indoor recreational activities with greater potential for contact (laser tag, roller skating, trampolines, obstacle courses) will be allowed to reopen at 50% capacity
- Capacity limits across all sectors with capacity limits will be raised to 50% and exclude employees
- Restaurants will no longer have a percent capacity limit and will be permitted to host musical performances; six-foot social distancing, limits of six people per table, and 90-minute limits remain in place

Residents must continue to wear masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and are encouraged to avoid contact outside of their immediate households. The Travel Advisory and other public health orders remain in effect.

### **Gathering Changes and Phase IV Start**

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Provided public health metrics continue to improve, effective on 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 industries 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 gathering limits and event protocols. Other Phase IV sectors must continue to remain closed.

### **COVID-19 Business Relief Grants**

Today, an additional 1,108 businesses are receiving COVID-19 relief grants totaling more than \$49 million in awards to help with expenses like payroll, benefits, utilities and rent. To date, the Baker-Polito Administration has awarded more than \$563 million in direct financial support to 12,320 businesses impacted by the pandemic through the Small Business and Sector-Specific Grant Programs.

Each business meets sector and demographic priorities set for the two grant programs. More than half of grantees are restaurants, bars, caterers, operators of personal services like hair and nail salons, and independent retailers. Over half of the businesses receiving relief are women-and-minority-owned enterprises.

Today's awards are the result of a process by MGCC to engage directly with applicants that met sector and demographic priorities but were missing documents necessary to be considered for an award. MGCC is continuing to work with business owners in targeted sectors and demographic groups to allow for applicants to submit necessary documents.

## ***Important Updates***

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

- DPH will support and manage the \$4.7 million targeted COVID-19 vaccine equity outreach initiative to reduce barriers in the 20 cities and towns most disproportionately impacted by the virus (see article above). The funds will be leveraged through Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG) and Health Care for All (HCFA) to provide hyperlocal, population-specific communication resources as well as hiring local residents and working with local organizations to reach disparately impacted populations in each priority community.
- In its first two weeks, DPH's "Trust the Facts, Get the Vax" public information campaign earned 1.5 million impressions, 600,000 completed video views and 29,000 website pageviews. Campaign ads are 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 2/21. This Bulletin offers the Latest Numbers, Who to Vaccinate This Week, What to Know This Week,

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Where to go when you have questions about COVID-19 vaccination, and Resources and Learning Opportunities.

- DPH Epidemiology Line handled 330 COVID-19 calls and 70 non-COVID-19 calls for a total of 400 calls from 2/15 through 2/21.
- As of 2/23, 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. The APHVC will be hosting an Interdisciplinary Meeting with schools of nursing, pharmacy, medical, social work, informatics, physician assistants and nurse practitioner programs from the 13 academic partners on 2/26 at 10am via WebEx.
- COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Survey - The Academic Public Health Volunteer Corps (APHVC) developed a [survey](#) to assess vaccination attitudes and the degree of vaccine hesitancy among people in Massachusetts. Results from the survey will be used to understand communication needs and inform vaccine confidence messaging going forward. The initial deadline to complete the survey is March 12.
- DPH Office of Community Health Workers Webinar - CHWS and the COVID-19 Pandemic (Part Two) on 3/10, 10:30am – 12:00pm. This second session topic will be a discussion on Community Health Workers and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- MA211 received 17,115 calls from Monday 2/15 through Sunday 2/21 for a new total of 239,060. On Thursday, 2/18, MA 211 recorded the highest one-day call volume in MA 211 history. 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.
- DPH issued guidance to long-term care facilities (LTCF) for obtaining COVID-19 vaccine for their residents: [Vaccination Options for Long Term Care Residents and Staff following the Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program](#)
- HMCC Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4 remain in Tier 3. Due to decreasing COVID -19 cases and hospitalizations, improving hospital capacity, and a diminishing need for daily load balancing, HMCC Region 5 will be moved to Tier 3, effective today, February 25. This modification is 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 support strategies to improve hospital capacity statewide.
- For the date range of 2/12 – 2/18, 95 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 11 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 2 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: 64 individuals are currently housed in the program. Wakefield's last guest is scheduled to leave Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. The hotel will then close due to decreasing demand in the Isolation and Recovery Program.
  - Top 5 referring cities:
    - Boston (350)

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- Worcester (186)
- Springfield (166)
- Cambridge (117)
- Brockton (113)
- To date, a total of 2,063 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery, an increase of 41 since last week.

Community Food Box Program Update (2/19 to 2/25):

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
2,551	522	4

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 50 orders prepared for pickup or delivery from the MEMA State Logistics Warehouse from 2/19-2/25.
- The Everett Isolation hotel was resupplied with food, drinks, and PPE this week.
- DPH coordinated 28 deliveries to health care entities on Monday (2/22) ( 3 testing supplies, 388 BinaxNOW Kits and 3 therapeutics); 17 deliveries were made on Tuesday (2/23) (2 testing supplies, 658 BinaxNOW kits, 3 albuterol and 1 therapeutic); 10 deliveries were made on Wednesday (2/24) (1 PPE, 1 therapeutic and 82 BinaxNOW kits); 11 deliveries were made on Thursday (2/25) (2 PPE and 191 BinaxNOW kits); and 5 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday (2/26) (109 BinaxNOW kits).

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



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criteria, and the application process. Highlights from the Disaster Recovery process include the following:

- FEMA Requests for Public Assistance (RPA): 663
- Technical Assistant Requests: 515
- Continue to provide technical assistance for applicants planning to operate regional COVID-19 vaccination sites.
- Working with FEMA partners to obtain expanded eligibility guidance referenced in the 2-3-21 FEMA statement. This statement explained the Presidential Directive that increased the federal cost share to 100% federal funding under the Public Assistance Program.
- FEMA granted a 30-day extension to the Commonwealth’s emergency feeding program authorizing activities through March 26, 2021.

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 2/25)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	<b>34,666</b>
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	<b>424</b>
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	<b>8,531</b>



**Holyoke Soldiers’ Home Weekly Update (current as of 2/23/21)**

- The Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke has re-opened in-person visitation for veteran residents and their loved ones, starting February 10, 2021, and since then has hosted 151 visits.
  - 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 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.
  - Visitation is taking 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: The Soldiers’ Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- 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.

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- 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.
- This week, Phase III of the Refresh Project began 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.
- 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.
- 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

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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 23 is as follows:
  - Status:
    - 0 veteran residents are positive and not clinically recovered
    - 2 veteran residents are negative
    - 44 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.
    - 73 veteran residents have been determined clinically recovered
    - 0 veteran residents have refused testing
  - Resident locations:
    - 117 veteran residents are onsite
    - 2 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 2/23/21)**

- 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 56 in-person visits with veterans.
  - 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 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.
  - Visitation is taking 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.
  - 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.
- 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

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- 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 February 23 is as follows:
  - Residents
    - 1 veteran resident is positive, in independent living
    - 126 veteran residents are negative
    - 47 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:
    - 2 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](#)

**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](#)
- 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](#)**  
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](#)

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

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- [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](#)

## *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.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

### **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 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)