

Thursday, October 15, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

The Command Center Situation Report is published weekly on Thursdays.



On Tuesday, Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, and administration officials provided updates on a series of initiatives that will continue to support residents, reinforce the Commonwealth's efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, and ensure the state's readiness heading into the fall and winter seasons.

In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
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 - ICYMI: Halloween Tips from DPH
 - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
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Helpful Links:

- [Stop COVID-19](#)
- [State Guidance for Municipalities](#)
- [COVID-19 Travel Order](#)
- [Returning to School Safely](#)
- [Mass.gov/findfoodhelp](#)
- [Stop the Spread](#)
- [Reopening Massachusetts](#)
- [Mass.Gov/covid19](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [Emergency Childcare Site](#)



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts **current as of 10/15**

138,651 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

9,452 Deaths among confirmed cases

2,471,688 individuals tested for the virus to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.

United States **Last Updated 10/15**

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:

7,894,768 Total Cases

216,025 Deaths

55 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Marianas, and US V.I.)

Social Distancing Basics:

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

If you go out for essential needs:

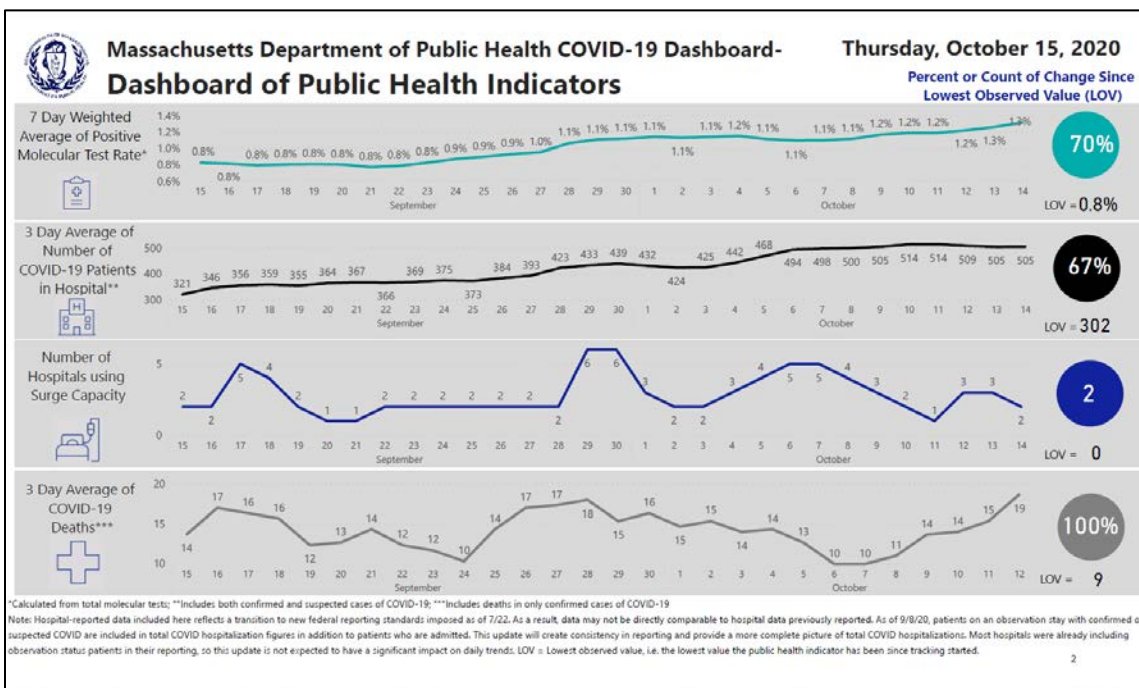
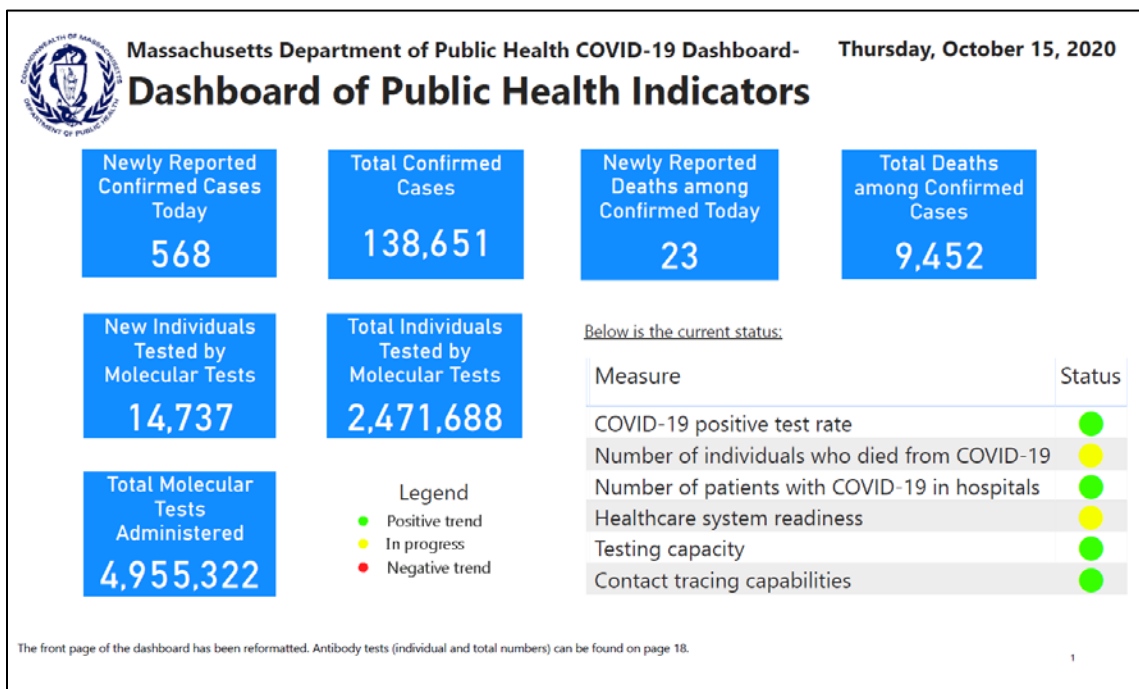
- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Wear a face covering or mask if physical distancing is not possible.

Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update

Testing Update:

Today, over **14,000** new individuals tested by molecular (viral) tests were reported in Massachusetts with **568** newly reported confirmed positive cases. The total molecular tests administered to date is over **4.9 million**.

Hospitalizations & Capacity Update: As of today, **503** people are hospitalized, with **92** reported to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Key indicators from today's Daily Dashboard are below.



COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

New Weekly Public Health Data Report Released

Yesterday, the Command Center released the comprehensive [COVID-19 Weekly Public Health Report](#), including community-specific COVID-19 case and testing data. The report also includes risk categories for each city and town based on the average daily incident rate over the past 14 days. [Communities in the high-risk category](#) will receive additional support from the Commonwealth through a cross-agency COVID Enforcement and Intervention Team (CEIT).

The report also includes information on nursing facility staff baseline testing, infection control audits, and more. You can also find information related to contact tracing by local boards of health, and the Community Tracing Collaborative. All the data reports, and raw data files, are available by visiting the [COVID-19 Response Reporting page](#).

Week in Review: State Actions

COVID-19 Fall Mitigation Strategy Update

On Tuesday, the Baker-Polito Administration provided an update on a series of initiatives that will keep supporting the residents of the Commonwealth to stop the spread of COVID-19, and ensure the state's readiness status heading into the fall and winter.

Led by the COVID-19 Command Center, the Administration outlined inter-departmental programs that have been built or expanded since the start of the pandemic in March, all of which strengthen the Commonwealth's ability and capacity to respond if COVID cases in Massachusetts increase. These programs include:

- One of the most robust testing networks in the nation
- A first-in-class contact tracing network
- Investments and strengthened initiatives to provide appropriate care for older adults and staff at long-term care facilities (LTCF)
- Hospital preparedness plans
- PPE stockpile investments
- Health and Safety requirements to protect teachers and students as schools re-open
- A cautious phased approach to resume business activity



Testing

Since the start of the pandemic, approximately 4.8 million tests have been administered to more than 2.4 million residents in Massachusetts. Growing steadily from approximately 2,000 tests per day in March to about 13,000 a day in May, today approximately 65,000 tests are administered every day. A key driver in this success has been the Stop the Spread initiative, which has sites in 18 of the highest-risk communities. The Stop the Spread initiative has been extended through December. As part of its readiness, the state now has the in-state lab capacity to process more than 100,000 tests per day if demand warrants. This level of testing, which has an average turnaround time of 1.8 days, is part of a strong readiness foundation to identify COVID, stop the spread, and inform policy through data analysis.

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Contact Tracing

In April, responding quickly to the increasing number of cases, the Commonwealth established the Contact Tracing Collaborative (CTC), a collaboration between the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, local boards of health and Partners in Health. Today, this network includes just under 2,000 workers who maintain regular connection with and support for individuals who are isolated in quarantine. A team of epidemiologists was recently added to the CTC to investigate cases, identify the source of transmission, and catch clusters early. To date, more than 100,000 people have been contacted.

Hospital Readiness

Hospitals are required to continue adherence to the policies put in place upon reopening to ensure continued readiness, including inventories of PPE, ICU nursing staffing ratios, and strict policies to ensure sufficient inpatient capacity. Massachusetts hospitals have approximately 50 percent ICU capacity available, plus additional beds can be made available by converting medical or surgical beds through established and proven procedures. Further, temporary spaces can be utilized again. In the spring, the state set up 5 alternative medical sites. MEMA is prepared to rapidly reinstate these if necessary.

LTCF Readiness

Caring for older adults in LTCF has been a priority since the earliest days of the pandemic. Early on, the state provided approximately 2.8 million pieces of PPE to nursing homes and opened dedicated COVID isolation spaces and facilities to safely cohort and protect residents and staff and help stop the spread. An additional measure to protect staff and residents, the state implemented a surveillance testing program ahead of federal guidance. From July 1 to October 8, approximately 280,000 state financed tests for residents and staff have occurred. The Commonwealth has retained clinical rapid response teams if severe staffing shortages occur. The latest set of reforms, which include more than \$400 million in new funding for infection control and staffing, build on the legislatively authorized Long Term Care Facility Commission's report.

PPE Stockpile

In the early days of the pandemic, the global supply chain struggled to deliver critical PPE. Massachusetts pursued every piece of this important protective measure and partnered with local manufacturers, which pivoted operations to support essential workers in a time of need. The Commonwealth has added millions of pieces of PPE to the state stockpile over the last several months with sufficient material to support medical institutions if their supplies run low through 2021. In addition to masks, gowns, gloves, and other PPE, the stockpile includes approximately 1,200 ventilators, almost double the number on-hand in the spring. For perspective, the peak number of ICU patients was 1,085 in April.

K-12

After extensive consultation with infectious disease physicians and pediatricians, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided districts with detailed guidance on how to develop plans for safely delivering in-person instruction. The guidance was endorsed by the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Department of Public Health (DPH) developed town-by-town health metrics to guide school districts on whether to be fully in-person, hybrid, or remote, based on three weeks of community-wide data. DPH has also made available rapid-response mobile testing for any school that experiences a COVID cluster. To help districts bring their children back to school, the Governor allocated nearly \$1 billion to municipalities and school districts, through formula distributions of COVID Relief Funds and targeted grants, providing students with access to computers and connectivity. In collaboration with legislative leaders, the Administration has committed to increasing Chapter 70 school aid, adjusting for inflation and enrollment, to ensure stable funding even in this very challenging economic and fiscal climate.

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Eviction Diversion Initiative Announced

On Monday, the Administration announced a comprehensive set of resources, known as the Eviction Diversion Initiative, to support tenants and landlords during the financial challenges caused by the pandemic. The goal of this initiative is to keep tenants safely in their homes and to support the ongoing expenses of landlords once the Commonwealth's pause of evictions and foreclosures expires on Saturday, October 17th. This strategy was developed by a cross-agency team assembled by the Administration in coordination with the Massachusetts Trial Court to manage the end of the moratorium on October 17th and reflects input from a broad range of stakeholders.



The Administration is making a \$171 million total commitment this fiscal year, with \$112 million of new funding to support new and expanded housing stability programs during the remainder of the fiscal year, including:

- \$100 million commitment this fiscal year to expand the capacity of the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program to provide relief to renters and landlords impacted by COVID-19;
- \$48.7 million to HomeBASE and other rapid rehousing programs for when tenants are evicted and are at risk of homelessness;
- \$12.3 million to provide tenants and landlords with access to legal representation and related services prior to and during the eviction process, as well as community mediation to help tenants and landlords resolve cases outside of court;
- \$6.5 million for Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs), the “front door” for those facing a housing emergency; and
- \$3.8 million for the Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP), to provide case management support and to act as a neutral party to help tenants and landlords come to agreement.

New investments will expand the capacity of the RAFT program and increase the maximum benefit available through RAFT from \$4,000 to \$10,000 per household, with a goal of helping more families stabilize their housing for six months, or until the end of June if there are school-age children in the household, on their path to recovery. New funding will also expand capacity at the nine regional Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) to provide housing counseling and coordinate with community mediators, legal services, and caseworkers. Income eligible tenants and landlords will also be able to access legal representation and related services as they navigate the eviction process.

The Administration is also updating the RAFT program to improve turnaround time on applications, while maintaining program integrity, by:

- streamlining the application process for both the RAFT and Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) programs for low to moderate income households;
- verifying applicant eligibility with data collected through MassHealth, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA), and the Department of Revenue (DOR);
- referring applicants to MassHIRE Career Centers; and
- allowing landlords who own fewer than 20 units to apply directly for RAFT and ERMA, with consent from tenants.

With the goal of bringing landlords and tenants together to avoid an eviction, the Administration will invest in expanding access to mediation services. In coordination with the Trial Court, the Administration is working to

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launch a new Community Mediation program that will be available prior to a court filing, and supplement court-provided mediation that is generally available after a filing has been made. The Administration will also provide funding to the Trial Courts to support bringing back recall judges to help handle caseload once the moratorium ends and to add additional housing specialists to help mediate agreements. Additionally, the existing Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) will be expanded to serve a broader population of vulnerable households.

Massachusetts will also provide additional funding for post-eviction diversion, helping households to find new housing quickly and prevent a longer period of homelessness. HomeBASE, the Commonwealth's rapid rehousing benefit, and the Strategic Prevention Initiative (SPI) will be expanded and continue to offer financial assistance and stabilization case management services to families as they are in the process of securing stable housing. A new temporary emergency program will also provide funds to households for periods of up to 12 months to assist with moving expenses, rent, including first or last month's, or security deposit, while transitioning into a stable housing situation.

CDC Moratorium

When the state moratorium expires, a moratorium established by the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) will become effective in Massachusetts. Through December, the CDC moratorium will prevent evictions for non-payment for qualified tenants who submit a written declaration to their landlord. Courts will accept filings and process cases and may enter judgments but will not issue an order of execution (the court order that allows a landlord to evict a tenant) until after the expiration of the CDC order. Protection is limited to households who meet certain income and vulnerability criteria. A copy of the declaration may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/declaration-form.pdf>

In order to ensure tenants are aware of available resources, the Administration has kicked off a public information campaign, including a new option available to call the Massachusetts 2-1-1 information hotline, effective Tuesday, October 13. Operators for 2-1-1 are trained to answer questions and connect residents to the agencies that administer RAFT and ERMA. An easier path to important information has also been launched on the state's website: mass.gov/CovidHousingHelp. This effort also includes outreach through social media, videos, webinars, and other mediums. All materials and messaging will be made available in multiple languages.

Together, the Administration estimates resources will help thousands of households with varying levels of needs; up to 50,000 households will have access to services at their local Housing and Consumer Education Centers, up to 25,000 households will have access to legal support or community mediation, and up to 18,000 households will have direct financial support. These investments reflect the Administration's strong commitment to stable housing for families. For people in need of assistance, please call 211, visit the frequently asked questions website [here](#), or see the fact sheet [here](#).

\$6.5 Million in New Manufacturing Emergency Response Team Grants Announced

The Administration has awarded over \$6.5 Million to 13 Massachusetts organizations to develop new products to assist in the response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The new grants from the Massachusetts Manufacturing Emergency Response Team (MERT) will expand the Commonwealth's work to drive in-state manufacturing of critical products, an effort which has produced more than 11 million pieces of personal protective equipment and other critical pieces as of September.



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The new grants, announced during National Manufacturing Month, bring the total MERT awards to \$16.2 million, and have spurred the production of critical items including N95 masks, protective gowns, hand sanitizer, and ventilators. Since its inception, the MERT has mobilized, organized, and operationalized the critical work streams that allowed Massachusetts manufacturers to pivot their operations to produce needed materials in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new awards support infrastructure and workforce training efforts at each company, driving increased production from these 'Made in Massachusetts' manufacturers.

[Launched in April 2020](#), the MERT grant program made its first set of awards [in May 2020](#), when it provided \$9.5 million to 15 Massachusetts organizations that are now producing masks, gowns, ventilators, swabs, and testing materials, as well as boosting the capacity to test these critical items. The MERT grants support the purchase of equipment, working capital, materials, and workforce development efforts with funding provided by a partnership that includes the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MasTech), Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, Commonwealth Corporation, and the Massachusetts Manufacturing Innovation Initiative (M2I2).

Of the \$16.1 million awarded through the MERT grant program:

- \$7.2 million to support the development of protective masks (45 percent of the total);
- \$3.2 million for COVID-19 testing (20 percent);
- \$3.2 million for gowns (20 percent);
- \$1.4 million for ventilators;
- \$630,000 for testing of PPE;
- \$341,000 for hand sanitizer; and
- \$257,000 for support of materials/supply chain.

The MERT is a coordinated effort comprised of members from academia, industry, and government to address the urgent need for PPE to support health care workers on the front lines of Massachusetts' COVID-19 response. More than 900 companies from around the world submitted their interest to the MERT, including over 550 from Massachusetts. Of those, over 50 companies have made it through the program, producing hundreds of thousands of pieces of PPE and other critical items each week, totaling more than 11 million since the start of the pandemic. [Managed by MasTech](#), the quasi-public economic development agency that oversees advanced manufacturing programs for the Commonwealth, the MERT was devised as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to assist manufacturers in targeted ways as the demand for PPE continues.

ICYMI: State public health officials offer tips for a safe and healthy Halloween:

For residents planning to celebrate Halloween, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today provided safety tips to help limit the risk of exposure to COVID-19. DPH is also reminding residents and communities to be aware that Halloween activities are subject to the current state [gathering size limits](#) as well as applicable [sector-specific workplace safety standards](#).

Tips for a Safe and Healthy Halloween

Consistent with the [Halloween activity guidance released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), some recommendations to keep in mind in celebrating Halloween this year include:

- Enjoy Halloween **outside** rather than attending indoor events.



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- Place candy on a platter instead of a bowl.
- Instead of traditional trick-or-treating, opt for one-way trick-or-treating, with treats placed outside of the home for trick-or-treaters as a “grab and go” while keeping distance from others.
- Consider leaving hand sanitizer by any treats left out for trick-or-treaters to use.
- Wear a face mask or face covering. For more information on face masks and face coverings, please see the state’s [Mask Up MA!](#) webpage.
- A costume mask is not a substitute for a face mask or face covering. To protect yourself and others, ensure you are wearing a protective face mask or covering instead of or in addition to a costume mask.
- Observe good hand hygiene, including hand washing and use of alcohol-based sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol. Carry hand sanitizer and use it often, especially after coming into contact with frequently touched surfaces and before eating candy.
- Refrain from touching your face.
- Decorate your yard for others to enjoy from their car or while on a socially-distanced walk.
- Hold virtual costume contests or pumpkin carving events.
- Celebrate with members of your household with a Halloween-themed meal, Halloween movie night, or by preparing a Halloween scavenger hunt.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet of physical distance from all other participants who are not members of the same household.
- **Avoid:**
 - Attending crowded costume parties held indoors, or any gatherings that exceed indoor or outdoor gathering limits;
 - Going to an indoor haunted house where people may be crowded together and screaming; and
 - Going on hayrides or tractor rides with people who are not in your household.
 - Indoor haunted houses.
- Stay home and refrain from Halloween activities, including handing out Halloween treats, if:
 - you feel unwell;
 - you have tested positive for COVID-19;
 - you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19; or
 - you have traveled to or from a state that is not classified as lower risk within the last 14 days. For more information on lower risk states, please see the state’s COVID-19 [Travel Order](#) webpage.

For specific guidance or questions regarding Halloween activities in your own city or town, contact your local health department.

Important Updates

Additional Department of Public Health Updates:

- Twenty-seven (27) municipalities (Abington, Auburn, Berkeley, Canton, East Bridgewater, East Longmeadow, Fairhaven, Fall River, Hanover, Hanson, Hingham, Holbrook, Holliston, Littleton, Marshfield, Milford, Milton, Oxford, Pembroke, Rockland, Saugus, Shrewsbury, Somerville, Tyngsborough, Wakefield, West Newbury, Weymouth) were added to the list of communities in Massachusetts at higher risk for COVID-19 based on the average daily cases per 100,000 residents.
 - Other communities remaining on the COVID-19 High Risk list are: Acushnet, Amherst, Attleboro, Boston, Brockton, Chelmsford, Chelsea, Dartmouth, Everett, Framingham, Haverhill, Holyoke, Hudson, Kingston, Lawrence, Leicester, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Marlborough, Methuen, Middleton, Nantucket, New Bedford, North Andover, Plymouth, Randolph, Revere, Southborough, Springfield, Sunderland, Waltham, Webster, Winthrop, Woburn and Worcester.
- MA 2-1-1 received 2,180 calls from Thursday 10/8 through Tuesday 10/13 for a new total of 127,910.

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Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:

Mass Care

- 1 state contracted quarantine/isolation hotel in the city of Everett continues to receive client placements.
 - Currently 12 residents are housed in this hotel (-7 change since last Thursday)
- A total of 133,258 meals have been distributed to date through state contracted hotel sites and distributions of food boxes and meal bags.

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 19 orders prepared for pickup or delivery between 10/9 and 10/15.
- Supported delivery of 33,048 heavy duty dish gloves, 48,780 aprons, and 29,124 alcohol-based hand wipes to Four Food Banks and the Salvation Army this week.
- Supported Salvation Army with a pickup of eight pallets (384 boxes) of Food Boxes for distribution in Waltham.
- Continued distribution of KN-95s to COVID Test Sites, with only two sites remaining from the initial list. To date, 1,954,000 KN-95s have been distributed in support of this program.
- Preparing to continue distribution of Sanitizer Stations, alcohol-based hand wipes, and KN-95s to support the CEIT initiative. Over the next week, approximately 91,000 KN-95s, 238 Sanitizer Stations, and 22,680 packages of alcohol-based hand wipes will be distributed.
- DPH coordinated 13 deliveries (5 PPE/8 testing supplies) to health care entities on Wednesday (10/14), (delayed one day due to the Monday holiday) and 13 deliveries (4 PPE/8 testing supplies/1 surplus biohazards bags) are scheduled for Friday (10/16).

Disaster Recovery

On March 27, the President [declared](#) a Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts related to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Through this declaration, federal aid will be made available to cities and towns, state agencies, and certain non-profits in all Massachusetts counties to help pay for emergency protective measures (response costs) related to the COVID-19 pandemic. MEMA's Recovery Unit has developed a [webpage](#) with information and guidance on, but not limited to, disaster declaration, eligibility criteria, and the application process. Highlights from the Disaster Recovery process include the following:

- Total FEMA RPA Applicants: 632 (+8)
- Total # Obligated Projects: 31 / +\$ 7,805,950.48 (+0 / +\$0)
- Total # of Payments Disbursed: 21 / \$ \$6,866,655.63 (+ 1/ +\$3,480.94)
- Total # of Partial Payments Disbursed: 1 / \$290,237.06 (+0 / +\$)
- Online Applicant Technical Assistant Requests: 457 (0)
- Anticipated Costs Being Submitted through RDU: \$624,067,093 (a decrease of \$21 million from last Thursday due to adjustments based on documentation and information received from applicants)
- MEMA's deadline for project submission is today (10/15). MEMA has seen a 39% increase in project submission from last week.
- Today, FEMA issued implementation guidance for use of HUD CDBG-DR Recovery Funds as Non-Federal Cost Share for FEMA PA Program.
- MEMA submitted the Alternate Care Sites (ACS) project to FEMA.

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COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 10/15)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	25,246
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	389
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	6,236



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

CALL US MONDAY THRU FRIDAY FROM 9AM-5PM



Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 10/13/20)

Note: The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is requiring mandatory COVID-19 testing for public employees at state operated 24/7 facilities, hospitals and congregate care settings beginning Wednesday, September 23. Until there is a safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19, surveillance testing will remain critically important for the safety of staff and residents.

- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke will be offering Flu vaccines to all employees of the Home at no cost starting this week.
- We are happy to report that Phase I of the Refresh Project to enhance residential units, an important initiative to ensure infection control continues to be met and that care areas are clean, safe, and comfortable is complete. The veterans that were on the second floor have successfully and safely moved to their new rooms on the third floor. Phase II of the Refresh Project will begin on the second floor of the Home in the next few weeks.
- The Soldiers' Home leadership is committed to ensuring the safety of the Veteran residents and restoring the Home to its rightful place that treats them with dignity, honor, and respect. The Soldiers' Home leadership is moving into the Transition & Rebuilding Phase that is focused on rebuilding staff leadership and team and positioning the facility to move forward safely. Over the past weeks, the Home welcomed the following new permanent staff:
 - Chief Operating Officer
 - Assistant Director of Nursing
 - In-House Clinical Nurse Educator
 - Occupational Health Nurse, a newly created position
 - Chaplain
 - DCAMM Coordinator
 - Informatics Coordinator
- Starting today, Tuesday, October 6, the Soldiers' Home began welcoming families and loved ones. Indoor visitation, which is replacing outdoor visitation as the weather gets cooler, is taking place in the Home's lobby following an indoor visitation plan that is contingent on the continued stability of infection control and public health metrics
 - Screening of all visitors will continue, including taking the temperature of each visitor and asking a series of questions. Two visitors are allowed per visit, and visitation will take place in the Home's lobby in four separate private areas with 16 slots available each day, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00am to 2:30pm.
 - Families and loved ones can schedule visits with veterans in advance using the Family Line.

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- Visitation is occurring in addition to continued video visits for regular family communication through video chat, and the Family Line is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff. Outdoor visits and video visits can be scheduled by calling the Family Line at 413-552-4764 Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Families can also request updates via email at CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov.
- Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- There have been 828 outdoor visits in total with veterans from families and loved ones.
- In addition to mandatory testing at state-operated 24/7 facilities, daily symptom checking and routine staff surveillance 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 Holyoke Soldiers' Home has been intently focused on following infection control procedures and maintaining best practices for the safety of veteran residents and staff. All veteran residents' health is being monitored and retesting is being conducted for veterans both on- and off-site as clinically appropriate.
 - The Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following [the latest CDC guidance](#), which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus. The CDC recommends making medical decisions regarding when to end isolation and determine that the patient has recovered based on symptoms and time elapsed.
 - Since the start of the pandemic, more than 80 residents had been determined clinically recovered, which means that they at one point tested positive for COVID-19 but are now considered clinically recovered as defined by federal CDC guidance.
- The Baker-Polito Administration is in the midst of the expedited capital project to reimagine the future of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, led by architecture firm Payette. The project team is actively gathering input from a broad community of stakeholders as part of the Rapid Planning Phase, in addition to working on the needs assessment, the clinical options, and the facility's infrastructure. This work will inform the development of the implementation plan to meet the April 15, 2021 federal Veterans' Affairs' State Home Construction Grant application deadline.
 - The team launched a website for the project, www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject, and an online survey to gather input: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WCX32P2>
- 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 as of October 13 is as follows:
 - The status of all residents:
 - 0 positive and not clinically recovered
 - 57 veterans are negative
 - 2 residents have a pending test
 - 75 residents have been determined clinically recovered
 - 1 resident has refused testing
 - Resident locations:
 - 110 veterans are onsite
 - 24 veterans are offsite
 - 23 veterans are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
 - 1 veteran are receiving acute care offsite

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- Since March 1, there have been 76 veteran deaths of veterans who tested positive
- From the most recent round of staff surveillance testing
 - 0 tested positive
 - All others who previously tested positive is clinically recovered

Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 10/13/20)

- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea will be releasing a live link for families and staff to virtually tour newly designed private spaces for veteran residents in the Long Term Care facility. This project will also incorporate negative air pressure to improve airflow, which will be utilized until the opening of the Community Living Center (Fall 2022). Click here to view a virtual tour of these areas.
- At this time, there are two non-clinical staff members of the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea that were identified COVID positive through testing. In the case of each positive staff person, per infection control protocol, the Home immediately puts in place necessary precautions including deep cleaning, contact tracing, and suspending visitation. The Home will continue to perform surveillance testing, and will continue to follow CMS, CDC and DPH guidance in identifying potential close contacts of each positive case.
 - The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea currently conducts bi-weekly staff surveillance testing. In accordance with [the recent CMS Interim Rule](#), the Soldiers' Home is now conducting weekly testing until the facility is 14 days without positive test results. These tests are provided at no cost to employees.
- Visitation has been temporarily suspended per infection control protocol to protect the health and safety of veteran residents and loved ones, as the [outdoor visitation plan](#) is contingent on the continued stability of infection control and public health metrics. Families and loved ones will be notified when it is safe to resume visitation.
 - Video visits between veteran residents and their loved ones are continuing, and the Social Work team is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff.
 - Families can also request updates on their loved ones by contacting the Home at CSH@mass.gov and through phone and video conversations. Medical information can only be shared with an authorized health care proxy.
- Clinical staff closely monitor any changes in residents, and the Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following [the latest CDC guidance](#), which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus. The CDC recommends making medical decisions regarding when to end isolation and determine that the patient has recovered based on symptoms and time elapsed.
 - Since the start of the pandemic, more than 40 residents had been determined clinically recovered, which means that they at one point tested positive for COVID-19 but are now considered clinically recovered as defined by federal CDC guidance.
 - Individuals are determined recovered according to CDC guidance, and may test positive even after being clinically recovered. This is a known consequence of the PCR test, which is extremely sensitive to picking up virus or viral remnants even weeks after recovery.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea 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 October 13 is as follows:
 - Residents

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- 0 veteran residents are positive
- 144 veteran residents are negative
- 43 residents have recovered, meaning they previously tested positive and are now clinically recovered
- 0 residents have pending tests
- Since March 1, there have been 31 deaths of veterans who tested positive
- Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing:
 - 2 employees are positive
 - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

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. MassSupport provides:

- Free and confidential counseling for stress and other emotional reactions to the Pandemic in multiple languages
- Referral to services
- Free mental health screenings on MassSupport website: www.MassSupport.org

MassSupport can help you:

- Take stock of needs
- Identify solutions
- Enhance or develop coping strategies
- Feel heard
- Understand and manage your reactions
- Be less stressed
- Get reliable, fact-based information

Contact MassSupport by phone at **888-215-4920** or by email at MassSupport@riversidecc.org

Red Cross Virtual Family Assistance Center

In order to provide support to families and communities who have suffered loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Red Cross has developed a Virtual Family Assistance Center (VFAC), staffed by a team of specially trained mental health, spiritual care, and health services volunteers who are:

- Connecting with families over the phone to offer condolences, emotional and spiritual support, and access to available resources
- Providing support for virtual memorial services for families, including connecting with local faith-based community partners
- Hosting online classes to foster resilience and facilitate coping skills
- Assisting families with access to national, state or local resources such as grief counseling, legal resources, funeral information, financial information services, or veterans' assistance
- Additional state- and local-specific resources are available.

People can visit: <https://www.redcross.org/virtual-family-assistance-center/ma-family-assistance-center.html>

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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 Public Resources Map

MEMA, together with MA VOAD and other partners, has developed a [COVID-19 Public Resources Map](#) showing the location of resources available to the public, such as food banks, houses of worship, and Project Bread site locations. Please note that this map is not inclusive of all resources and is only as accurate as the information that has been provided to MEMA.

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.

Stay Informed

- Get information from trusted sources. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid19> for the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results. Call 2-1-1 with questions. Text the keyword **COVIDMA to 888-777** to receive notifications to your phone. To receive these notifications in Spanish, text **COVIDMAESP to 888-777**
- 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.

Communications Resources

Public Messaging Resources for Higher-Risk Communities

- [Public messaging graphics & guidelines for use in your community](#)

Infographics

- [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
- Social distancing: for [youth](#) for [general audience](#)
- [Coping with stress or fear](#)
- What to do [if you are sick](#)

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- 10 tips for at-home [quarantine or self-monitoring](#)

Short videos:

Overview of COVID-19 Testing	Importance of COVID-19 Testing	How to Safely Cover Your Face Outside of Home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Spanish • Portuguese • Simplified Chinese • Traditional Chinese • Vietnamese • Haitian Creole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Spanish • Portuguese • Simplified Chinese • Traditional Chinese • Vietnamese • Haitian Creole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish • Portuguese • Simplified Chinese • Traditional Chinese • Haitian Creole • Vietnamese

- [10 Tips for at home quarantine or self-monitoring](#)
- [Stop the Spread of Germs like Seasonal Flu and COVID-19 \(:30\)](#)
- [Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing \(:30\)](#)
- [How Young People Can Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing \(:30\)](#)
- [Coping with Stress and Fear from COVID-19 \(:30\)](#)
- [Stay Home - Save Lives \(:06\)](#)

Spanish Radio Spots (available on request):

- “Prevent the Spread of Germs,” “Social Distancing and Stay Home,” and “Stay Safe. Save Lives.”

How to Help Out

- [Donate](#) to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.
- Volunteer opportunities for health professionals: [Please click here.](#)
- Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here.](#)

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 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