

Thursday, April 9, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

State Actions in Today's Report:

- Daily Case Update (Link in sidebar)
- BCEC Field Medical Station
- Additional Support for Health Care Workforce and COVID-19 Patients
- Expanded COVID-19 Demographic Data Collection
- Expanded Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Resources
- New CARES Act Unemployment Benefits
- New Job Application Portal for Temporary Care Sites
- Update on Cases in Long Term Care Facilities & Testing Program
- Update on Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes

Apply for Jobs at COVID-19 Temporary Care Sites (Details Below)



Helpful Links:

- [Mass.Gov/covid19](https://www.mass.gov/covid19)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [Emergency Childcare Site](#)
- [MBTA.com/covid19](https://www.mbtta.com/covid19)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)
- [Complete List of Emergency Orders & Guidance](#)

Background on the Command Center

The COVID Command Center, under the leadership of Secretary Marylou Sudders and reporting to Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, is the Commonwealth's single point of strategic decision making and coordination for the Administration's comprehensive COVID-19 response.



Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts *current as of 4/9*

18,941 Total Cases (click for more information)

503 Deaths

94,958 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.

United States *current as of 4/9*

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:

427,460 Total Cases

14,696 Deaths

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

Social Distancing Basics:

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

If you go out:

- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug

State Actions Today

At a 1:00 p.m. press conference, Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, Secretary Sudders, Partners HealthCare CEO Dr. Anne Klibanski, and Boston Planning & Development Agency Director Brian Golden provided the following updates and announcements: [\(see video of today's briefing\)](#)

Boston Convention Center Field Medical Station: (News Release)

In an effort to reduce the strain on the state's health care system and area hospitals, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced details for the Field Medical Station at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. Anticipating a surge in COVID-19 cases, the Administration worked collaboratively with the City of Boston and community partners to provide an additional 1,000 beds for COVID-19 patients at this new site. Partners HealthCare will lead clinical care efforts at the BCEC field medical station, in a collaboration with Boston Health Care for the Homeless called Boston HOPE. The Convention Center site is the latest Field Medical Station to be stood up by the Command Center and its partners in the health care community.

Support for Health Care Workforce and COVID-19 Patients:

Today, Governor Baker issued three emergency orders to further support the Commonwealth's health care workforce and expand its capacity, as well as ensure access to in-patient services for COVID-19 patients. These orders include:

Easing licensing restrictions for foreign-educated doctors to allow medical practice in the Commonwealth:

This order specifically allows graduates of international medical schools who have successfully completed at least two years of postgraduate resident medical training in the US to be eligible for licensure in the Commonwealth. [Read the Order.](#)

Expediting licensure of nursing students and graduates:

This order allows nursing school graduates and students in their final semesters of nursing programs to practice nursing in advance of receiving a license, provided that they are directly supervised by other licensed medical professionals. [Read the Order.](#)

Ensuring access to in-patient services:

This order mandates that insurers must cover all medically required costs of COVID-19 treatment in out-of-network hospitals or other medical facilities with no charge to the patient, including co-pays, deductibles or co-insurance payments. Health care providers and medical facility insurers must accept the following rates for out-of-plan treatment:

- If insurers have a contract with a provider or facility: contracted rate even if the patient is not in a network that covers the provider or facility
- If insurer has no contract with a provider or facility: 135 percent of the applicable Medicare rate
- Insurers may not balance bill, or charge, patients for amounts above the above specified payments.

[Read the Order.](#)

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Resources:

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced the expansion of SafeLink, the Commonwealth's statewide, 24/7, toll-free and confidential domestic violence hotline to now include resources and support for survivors of sexual assault. Previously, SafeLink served as a hotline to specifically connect domestic violence survivors to services. This expansion of services will allow SafeLink to triage calls to local area rape crisis centers and create a

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centralized number for any survivor of domestic violence or sexual assault to call and receive services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This hotline is designed for crisis intervention support for those who need assistance in safety planning measures for both themselves and their families. This resource is now available through the 2-1-1 line as an additional method for victims to access help and resources.

The SafeLink toll-free number is **(877) 785-2020**. For the hearing-impaired, the SafeLink TTY number is **(877) 521-2601**. Advocates are available in English and Spanish and can provide translation in more than 130 languages.

If you are experiencing violence within your home or concerned about a loved one that may be experiencing violence, please call the SafeLink hotline for support and resources.

If you are in immediate danger, please call 9-1-1.

CARES Act Unemployment Benefit Implementation: ([News Release](#))

The Baker-Polito Administration earlier today announced details for the initial implementation of federal unemployment benefits in the CARES Act, the federal based COVID-19 relief package. Understanding the great urgency of Commonwealth residents to access these benefits, DUA has issued new guidance to instruct all qualifying residents of what actions they can now take to access CARES Act benefit programs. These new unemployment benefit programs include:

- Retroactive and continuing additional \$600 per week for regular unemployment compensation for eligible claimants. **This program is being implemented now.**
- Expanded support for people not traditionally covered in the unemployment system, such as self-employed or gig economy workers. **DUA is building a platform to implement this program, which will be available soon.**
- 13-week extension of benefits for individuals who have exhausted previous unemployment benefits. **DUA continues to await federal implementation guidance for this program.**

Updates from the Command Center:

Job Application Portal for Temporary Care Sites:

In preparation for the expected surge of Massachusetts residents who will need medical care and other supports due to COVID-19, temporary care sites and long-term care facilities are being stood up statewide. All of these sites have ongoing staffing needs. In addition, existing skilled nursing and long term care facilities are also in urgent need of staffing support. Today, Secretary Sudders announced the creation of a job portal to connect healthcare professionals with these staffing opportunities. To learn more, or to apply for a position, visit <https://www.mass.gov/joincovidteam>.

Expansion of Long Term Care Mobile Testing Program

Secretary Sudders announce the expansion of the highly successful Mobile Testing Program that was launched on March 31. As of today, the National Guard team supporting the program increased to 250 personnel, and onsite testing was expanded to include Assisted Living Residences throughout Massachusetts. There are approximately 16,500 seniors living in roughly 260 assisted living residences across the Commonwealth. Another important change in the programs is that nursing facilities can now request to receive test kits to perform sample collection, rather than having National Guard specialists perform the testing onsite. These facilities will follow the same process to call the designated hotline. A facility may order test kits for the entire facility (both symptomatic and asymptomatic, residents and employees).

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COVID-19 Race & Ethnicity Data:

The Department of Public Health (DPH) today issued an order designed to expand COVID-19 demographic reporting data, including race and ethnicity, to address disparities in the virus' impact and support the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response efforts. This order mandates all health care providers and labs to collect and report complete demographic information of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients. [Read the Order.](#)

Other Important Updates

Known Cases in Long Term Care Facilities (as of 4/9 at 12:30 p.m.)

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	1,633
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	159

[Click here for the source](#)

Update on Mobile Testing Program for Long Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities

On March 31, the Commonwealth implemented a project that allows for safe, on-site testing of symptomatic residents of nursing and rest homes with a quick turnaround. The program is operating under the auspices of the Massachusetts National Guard in partnership with the Department of Public Health and Broad Institute of Cambridge. **Today, the initiative the program expanded to include assisted living residences.** Since launching the initiative, more than **2,700** tests have been collected. See a summary below of tests completed so far.

Date	Tests Completed	Facilities Visited
3/31	225	1
4/1	55	1
4/2	145	10
4/3	193	18
4/4	310	21
4/5	309	18
4/6	124	11
4/7	308	23
4/8	362	19
4/9	723	26
Total	2754	148

Update on Holyoke & Chelsea Soldiers' Home (as of 4/9)

The Commonwealth continues to make every resource available to the clinical command centers at the Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes as they work to care for the veteran residents and staff, including deploying additional staff, supplies, and support for veteran residents, families, and employees as they navigate the challenges of this public health emergency. Below are updates for 4/9:

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Holyoke Soldiers' Home

- As secondary testing of veterans continues, some additional veteran residents have tested positive and are being appropriately moved to isolation zones. Additional veteran residents are being transferred to the satellite unit at Holyoke Medical Center for monitoring and care.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home leadership continues to address staffing - bringing on board new staff to the facility, utilizing contracted staff and per-diem staff, all while continuing ongoing operations with herculean support from the Massachusetts National Guard.
 - This morning, staff are receiving supplementary infection control education as they are screened entering the building.
 - The clinical command structure has identified and is implementing new staffing patterns developed for all units that ensure their operations are aligned with industry standards
 - Staff testing is being wrapped up today for on-site employees. Any staff not yet tested due to being offsite (e.g., on medical leave) has been contacted about testing opportunities.
- With the support of the additional clinical case management nursing staff that was brought onboard this week, the Holyoke Soldiers' Home confirmed has reached all residents' health care proxies to provide an update and is scheduling regular updates for families.
 - Families can call the Family Hotline at [413-552-4764](tel:413-552-4764) Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., and Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 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. If a family member requests an update and is **not** the health care proxy, the name of the health care proxy will be shared and it will be suggested that the health care proxy should call and request the update.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home clinical command structure continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and outbreak at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home.
 - Holyoke continues to implement the guidance issued from CDC, DPH, CMS, and the VA.
 - The clinical command is enforcing quarantine zones for COVID-19 positive residents, and continues to distribute and require use of PPE, restricting visitors, increased personal hygiene measures, and increased disinfection protocols.
 - The personal protective equipment (PPE) supply is monitored daily and additional supplies are being delivered as needed to keep staff and residents safe.
 - Additional contracted housekeeping staff brought onsite for ongoing terminal cleaning to ensure that infection control measures are adhered to.
- **The total numbers at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home as of Thursday:**
 - 32 veteran resident deaths (28 positive tests, 4 negative)
 - 69 veteran residents have tested positive
 - 126 veteran residents have tested negative
 - 68 staff tested positive; 210 staff tested negative

Chelsea Soldiers' Home

- Veteran resident test results are coming in and are largely negative for veteran residents recently tested.
 - All residents of the Domiciliary building - a dormitory style residence - have tested negative.
 - In the long term care building, 91% of residents tested negative.

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- In the event of positive test results, the veteran resident's health care status is being evaluated and residents are being proactively moved to the VA Health Care System for further monitoring and treatment.
- Staff testing was offered to all staff on-site this week, and there will be a make-up session early next week for those who were out of office this week.
 - Staff that are currently on medical leave are also being screened via drive through testing in the parking lot.
- The personal protective equipment (PPE) supply is monitored daily, and a delivery of face shields, surgical masks, and other PPE is expected this week.
- Chelsea continues to leverage its clinical case management staff and social workers for resident communications with loved ones:
 - iPads have been delivered to Chelsea to support veteran resident communications, with assistance of social workers.
 - Families can also request updates on their loved ones by contacting the Home at CSH@mass.gov.
 - Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- The Chelsea Soldiers' Home clinical command has standing meetings to proactively prepare and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - The Chelsea Soldiers' Home has and continues to implement the guidance issued from CDC, DPH, CMS, and the VA.
 - Strictly enforcing isolation rooms and quarantine zones for COVID-19 positive residents, increased use of PPE, restricting visitors, increased personal hygiene measures, and increased disinfection protocols.
 - Chelsea is tracking PPE closely and late on Friday received an additional shipment of masks.
 - Deep cleaning has been and is continuing to be conducted throughout the facility per CDC guidelines and Chelsea has contracted with a cleaning vendor to augment staff housekeeping efforts.
 - The team continues to manage staffing to provide safe care for residents - and is putting in place per diem contracts with NP, RN, LPNs for immediate starts.
- **The total numbers at Chelsea Soldiers' Home as of Thursday:**
 - 7 veteran resident deaths (5 tested positive, 2 test negative)
 - 22 veteran residents who have tested positive
 - 213 veteran residents who have tested negative
 - 3 veteran residents have been tested and are awaiting results
 - 11 staff tested positive

How to Help Out

- [Donate](#) to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.
- Volunteer opportunities for health professionals: [Please click here.](#)
- Volunteer for the new Community Tracing Collaborative by visiting the [PIH Ma-Response](#) page [Or DIRECT link](#) to recruiter web.
- Donate or sell personal protective equipment: [Please click here.](#)
- Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here.](#)

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Give Blood:

As you are aware, the COVID-19 virus has caused the cancellation of blood drives across the Commonwealth. There is an urgent need **now**. The Governor has deemed “Blood and plasma donors and the employees of the organizations that operate and manage related activities” as an essential service. Your support is needed to communicate to your residents that the need is urgent, and donating is a necessity to supply the hospitals with the blood our neighbors require. Donating blood is safe and people should not hesitate to give. In addition, there is a need for community blood drive sites in the eastern part of the state. Identifying donation sites is vital to meet the demand as we go forward. Your local knowledge, suggestions of sites, and potential partners are crucial to meeting the needs of our neighbors who need blood and blood products. To schedule a new blood drive contact Bill Forsyth at (617) 699-3808 or at email William.Forsyth@redcross.org.

Those who are healthy, feeling well and eligible to give blood or platelets, are urged to make an appointment to donate as soon as possible by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

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.
- Take care of your emotional health and help others do the same. If you need emotional support during these stressful times:
 - 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.

Please share our Communications Resources

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

Short videos:

[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)

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[Coping with Stress and Fear from COVID-19](#) (:30)

[Stay Home - Save Lives](#) (:06)

10 Tips for at home quarantine or self-monitoring -- coming soon.

Spanish Radio Spots (available on request):

- Prevent the Spread of Germs
- Social Distancing
- Stay Home. Stay Safe. Save Lives.

Social media – please continue to follow and re-tweet DPH on Twitter @MassDPH, updated several times per day.

Requests for Red Cross Emergency Response

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross (ARC) of Massachusetts is committed to fulfilling our Mission of providing emergency relief to our neighbors following a home fire or other disaster. In order to maintain our commitment to assisting to those affected while balancing our volunteer workforce safety, we have implemented the below temporary changes to our response protocols. ARC we will be responding to your requests for service with a virtual response and ask your assistance in sharing this information with your Incident Commanders and Dispatch Center personnel.

Notification: Continue to request a response by contacting our long-standing emergency line **800-564-1234**.

When calling: Please have contact information for the head of household for each displaced family unit. A point of contact from the Fire Department or Emergency Management on-scene that we can coordinate with if needed. Quick assessment as to extent of damage.

What we will do:

- Contact each head of household by phone or video chat. Open a virtual case for each affected family.
- Arrange for lodging if needed.
- Deliver a Client Assistance Card (financial assistance) to hotel, family member's home, etc.
- Provide Recovery guidance and assistance in the days following the incident.

If a virtual response is not possible, we will send a minimal number of Red Cross volunteers to the scene to orchestrate the virtual intake process. We value our partnership with your department and encourage you to contact us with any questions.