Wednesday, December 23, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

Next Week's Command Center Situation Report will be published on Wednesday, December 30th.



Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a $668 million small business relief package, the second such initiative announced this week. Details below.

In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
  - Baker-Polito Administration Announces $668 Million Small Business Relief Package
  - Support for Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19 Recession
  - Further Measures to Stop the Spread of COVID-19
  - Administration Files Legislation to Maintain Unemployment Trust Fund, Provide Employer Relief
  - First State Employee in the Commonwealth Receives COVID-19 Vaccination
  - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
  - Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes Weekly Update

Helpful Links:

- COVID-19 Vaccine in Massachusetts
- Apply for jobs at COVID-19 Alternate Care Sites:
  - UMassMemorialResponds.com
  - LowellGeneralResponds.com
- Mass.gov/holidays
- Mass.gov/findfoodhelp
- Stop the Spread
- HandHoldMA.org
- Reopening Massachusetts
- Mass.Gov/covid19
- 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 12/23

322,652 Total Confirmed Cases (click here for more information)

11,630 Deaths among confirmed cases

10,399,569 tests for the virus conducted to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals, and commercial laboratories.

United States Last Updated 12/23

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:

18,170,062 Total Cases

321,734 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:

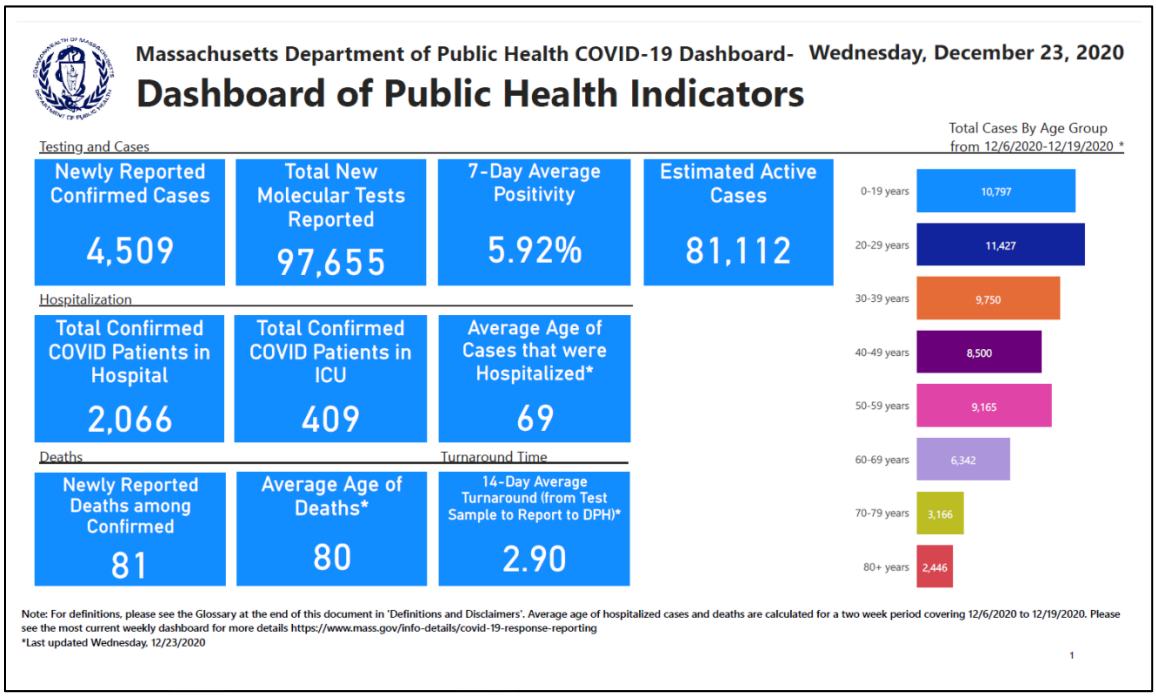
- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Wear a face covering or mask if physical distancing is not possible.

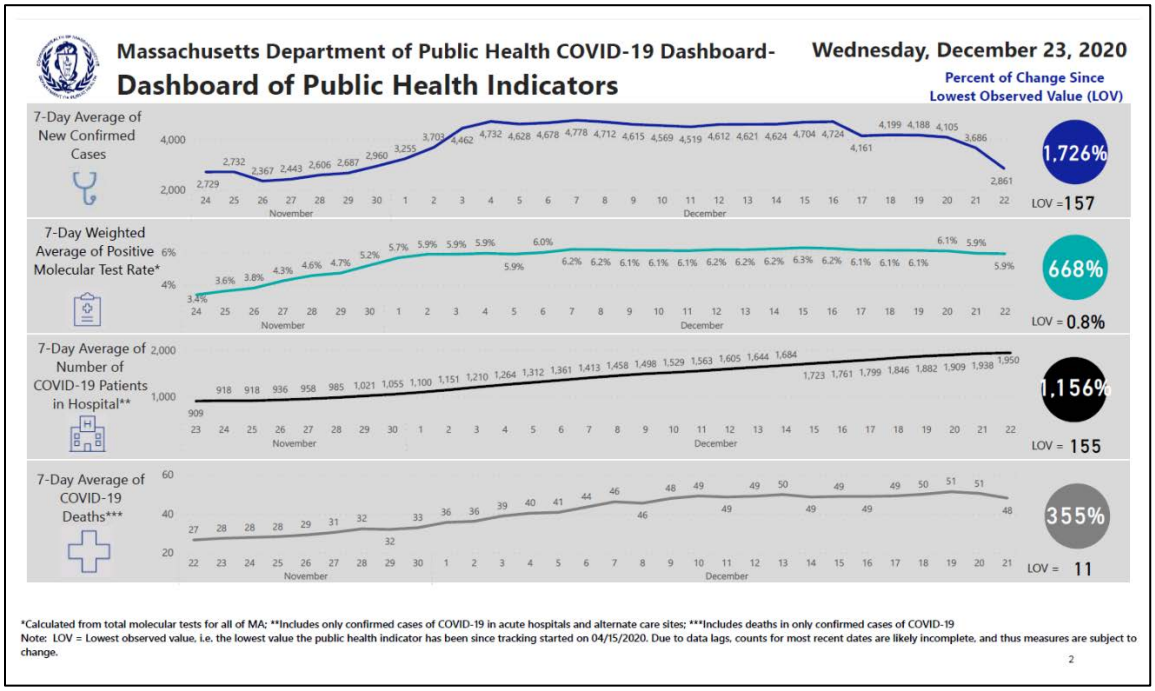
COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update

***Testing Update**:* Today, over **97,000** new molecular (viral) tests were reported in Massachusetts with **4,509** newly reported confirmed positive cases. The total number of molecular tests administered to date is nearly **10.4 million**.

***Hospitalizations & Capacity Update**:* As of today, **2,066** people are hospitalized, with **409** 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

Weekly Public Health Report:
The Command Center will release the **Weekly Public Health Report, with town by town information, including the weekly listing of city and town risk levels** on Thursday. The report will also include 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.

NOTICE: COVID-19 dashboard reports will NOT be published on Christmas Day, Friday, December 25th or on New Year's Day, Friday, January 1st. **Reports published on December 26 and on January 2 will each include two days of COVID-19 data.**

Week in Review: State Actions

Baker-Polito Administration Announces $668 Million Small Business Relief Package

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration launched a $668 million program to provide financial assistance to Massachusetts small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program in part relies on the pending federal COVID-19 relief bill recently passed by Congress. Regardless of the developments at the federal level, the Baker-Polito Administration will start releasing millions in new funding to restaurants, retailers, and other small businesses throughout the Commonwealth as soon as next week.



Earlier this week, the Administration announced nearly $49 million in grants through the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC) COVID-19 Small Business Program to support over 1,158 small businesses. More than 10,000 applicants had sought relief in this grant round.

Additional grants will be made available to eligible small businesses through MGCC. The Small Business Grant Program was established in the fall, and currently has a pool of eligible applicants awaiting funding. This additional funding will allow the Administration to award more of those pending applicants. Eligible businesses that already applied to the program, but were not funded due to limited funds available, will be prioritized for funding first and do not need to reapply.

The funds will also be used to stand up an additional grant program at MGCC. This program will target the industries most hard-hit during the pandemic.

Eligible industries for the new program include:

- Restaurants, bars, caterers
- Indoor recreation and entertainment establishments
- Gyms and fitness centers
- Event-support professionals (photographers, videographers, etc.)
- Personal services
- Retail

The new business relief program would offer grants up to $75,000, but not more than three months' operating expenses, to be used for employee wage and benefits costs, space-related costs, and debt service obligations.

The online application portal for the new program will open on Thursday, December 31, and will close on Friday, January 15. Awards are expected to be announced in early February.

More details on how to apply and eligibility requirements are available at www.empoweringsmallbusiness.org.

Administration Announces Further Measures to Stop the Spread of COVID-19

Yesterday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced further restrictions to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth, including new capacity and gathering limits. These measures will go into effect on Saturday, December 26 and will remain in effect until noon on January 10, 2021.



Read a summary of the restrictions here.

Read the emergency order here.

Capacity Limits
Effective Saturday, December 26, most industries in Massachusetts will be subject to a 25% capacity limit including:

- Restaurants (based on permitted seating capacity)
- Close Contact Personal Services
- Theatres and Performance Venues
- Casinos
- Office Spaces
- Places of Worship
- Retail Businesses
- Driving and Flight Schools
- Golf Facilities (for indoor spaces)
- Libraries
- Lodging (for common areas)
- Arcades and Indoor Recreation Businesses
- Fitness Centers and Health Clubs
- Museums, Cultural Facilities and Guided Tours

Workers and staff will not count towards the occupancy count for restaurants, places of worship, close contact personal services, and retain businesses.
All other rules and restrictions in each sector-specific guidance will remain in effect.

Gatherings Limit
Effective Saturday, December 26, the gatherings limits will be updated. Indoor gatherings will be limited to 10 people. Outdoor gatherings will be limited to 25 people outside.
The gatherings limit applies to private homes, event venues and public spaces.

Elective Surgeries

The Department of Public Health released updated guidance to hospitals around nonessential, elective invasive procedures. To preserve health care personnel resources, effective 12:01am on December 26, all hospitals are directed to postpone or cancel all nonessential inpatient elective invasive procedures in order to maintain and increase inpatient capacity. Hospitals shall make every effort to preserve their inpatient capacity by cancelling nonessential electives and redeploying staff.
Patients are reminded to still seek necessary care at their hospital or from their health care provider.

Support for Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19 Recession

On Monday, the Administration announced that nearly $49 million in grants to small businesses will be awarded through the COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation. In October, the $50.8 million grant program was announced as a key component of *Partnerships for Recovery*, the Administration's comprehensive plan to get people back to work, support small businesses, foster innovation, revitalize downtowns, and ensure housing stability.



Of the businesses being notified of their successful applications, each meets the preferred criteria of being owned by women, minorities, veterans, individuals with disabilities, or that identify as LGBTQ. Additionally, every completed application received from a qualified minority-owned business that has not been able to receive prior aid from federal, state, or local programs established to support businesses during the pandemic will be receiving relief.

To increase applications from underrepresented groups, MGCC worked with a statewide network of local non-profits, small business technical assistance providers, and other organizations that support minority enterprises, including BECMA, Amplify LatinX , the Business Equity Initiative, Massachusetts Association of CDCs (MACDC), LISC and the statewide Coalition for an Equitable Economy, to reach businesses and entrepreneurs that would match the program's priorities.

The Small Business Grant Program received over 10,000 applications seeking funds totaling over $500 million. Effective today, successful applicants will be notified that they have been awarded grants with further instructions on how to complete the process to receive funds. Nearly $49 million will be granted to small businesses, with the remaining funding having been used to encourage applications from targeted communities and to prevent fraudulent applications.

The grant program's priorities, set forth in legislation, resulted in 1,158 small businesses being designated for an award. Among the successful applicants:

- 100 percent of all grantees are minority-, veteran-, LGBTQ-, or individuals with disabilities-owned businesses;
- 100 percent of qualified applications submitted by minority-women, minority-male, veteran-, LGBTQ-, and individuals with disabilities-owned businesses that have not received prior aid will be receiving funding;
- 95 percent of award recipients are minority-owned businesses; and
- 76 percent of award recipients are women-owned businesses.

Governor Baker recently signed the FY21 budget, including an additional $17.5 million for the Small Business Grant Program. This funding will be distributed using the same criteria, and MGCC will review applications

already submitted. Small businesses that did not receive awards in the first round do not need to reapply, and no new applications will be accepted. The FY21 budget also includes $17.5 million for community development financial institutions (CDFI) grants and loans, $5 million for small business technical assistance, and $3.9 million for technical assistance and grants, including for small business online and digital tools. Additionally, the Baker-Polito Administration recently filed a $107.4 million supplemental budget bill for Fiscal Year 2021. This bill proposes $49.4 million to fully fund the economic recovery and small business relief plan included in the Administration's revised FY21 budget proposal and support the unique needs of small and minority- and women-owned businesses across the Commonwealth.

Finally, a comprehensive economic development bill currently pending before the Legislature includes additional substantial investments in small businesses. Beyond support for small businesses, *Partnerships for Recovery* includes substantial funding across both existing and new initiatives. In November, the 2020 Round of the MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program was announced, investing nearly $68 million in 36 projects to support housing, economic development and road safety projects across the Commonwealth. Community foundations received $10 million for COVID-19 Relief, funds that can be used for vital services such as food security, housing and utilities support, emergency childcare and transportation. Last week, the first grants from the Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Grant Program were awarded, directing $1.7 million to cities and towns to conceive, design, and implement tactical changes to curbs, streets, and parking areas in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce. In the coming weeks, the Administration will be announcing grants to support cultural facilities such as museums, new funding to support internet connectivity, and local rapid recovery planning support for communities.

Administration Files Legislation to Maintain Unemployment Trust Fund, Provide Employer Relief

Last week, the Baker-Polito Administration filed legislation to sustain unemployment benefits and provide an estimated $1.3 billion in unemployment insurance relief to the Commonwealth's employers over two years. In addition to a two-year unemployment insurance tax schedule freeze, the legislation also proposes financing measures designed to ensure the solvency of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and that federal borrowing that has occurred is repaid in a responsible and affordable manner.

The main provisions of this legislation include:

- **Short Term Employer Tax Relief** through a two-year tax schedule freeze. Current Massachusetts unemployment legislative statute requires the employer tax schedule to increase from schedule E to schedule G. This would cause an average per employee tax increase from $539 to $866 – a nearly 60% increase over the previous year. Remaining on schedule E for 2021 and 2022 slows annual employer contribution growth from $539 average per employee costs in 2020 to $635 in 2021 and $665 in 2022.
- **Authorization for the issuance of special obligation bonds** for the purposes of repaying federal advances. In order to fund the unprecedented increases in demand on the unemployment system in Massachusetts as a result of COVID-19, the Commonwealth has received federal cash advances. Through the issuance of bonds, the Commonwealth will be able to ensure positive trust fund solvency to enable the continued payment of benefits. The utilization of capital markets also allows Massachusetts to avoid paying punitive federal tax increases on employers regardless of their experience rating if federal advances are not repaid by November of 2022. Bonds issued will be supported by an unemployment obligation assessment and will not be general obligations of the Commonwealth.
- **Establishes an employer surcharge on contributory employers.** In 2020 all federal advances taken to pay benefits are interest free. However, interest on federal advances will begin to be charged beginning in January of 2021. The first interest payment is due in the Fall of 2021 and it cannot be paid from the state unemployment trust fund, per federal law. To fund interest payments on repayable advances, the legislation also establishes a separate fund to house surcharge proceeds. The passage of this provision

authorizes the Department of Unemployment Assistance to make this assessment but does not require the surcharge if interest is waived through future federal legislation.

First State Employee in the Commonwealth Receives COVID-19 Vaccination



On Friday, the first state employee in the Commonwealth received the COVID-19 vaccination at Lemuel Shattuck Hospital. This front-line worker is a janitorial supervisor who has worked at the hospital for 30 years. Lemuel Shattuck Hospital is a fully accredited teaching facility that provides acute, subacute, and ambulatory care to patients referred by public agencies and private sector providers.

The first state employee to receive the COVID-19 vaccination was front-line worker **Sophal "Paula" Soth,** 55, an Environmental Services Supervisor at Shattuck Hospital. Soth, a native of Cambodia, began working as a janitor at Shattuck 30 years ago and now supervises a janitorial team. Shattuck Chief Operating Officer Virginia McErlane and Chief Nursing Officer Justin Douglas were also present at the vaccination.

The Shattuck Hospital manages 255 inpatient beds, and an array of outpatient services, including surgical services, 26 outpatient specialty clinics and comprehensive radiological imaging and clinical laboratory services. The Hospital's services help economically and socially disadvantaged patients to get high quality, cost-effective care from a staff that respects their dignity.

On December 9, the Baker-Polito Administration announced allocation and distribution plans for the first round of COVID-19 vaccine shipments to Massachusetts. The state's first shipment of 59,475 doses of the Pfizer vaccine was ordered from the federal government on December 4 and was delivered directly to 21 hospitals across 8 counties, as well as to the State Public Health Laboratory. Doses were then redistributed for access to 74 hospitals across all 14 counties for front-line medical workers.

The next 40,000 doses of Pfizer vaccine will be allocated to the Federal Pharmacy Program to begin vaccinating staff and residents of skilled nursing facilities, rest homes and assisted living residences. The COVID-19 vaccine is being prioritized for these groups to reduce serious illness, maximize preservation of life, and to support the health care system. Based on information at this time, Massachusetts is expecting 266,000 first doses of the vaccine to be delivered by the end of December. The first vaccines, manufactured by Moderna and Pfizer, will require two doses administered 3-4 weeks apart.

Click here to view the administration's vaccine website: www.mass.gov/COVIDvaccine.

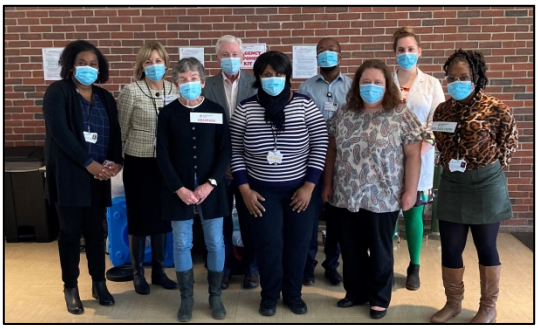
Click here to view the administration's vaccine presentation

Click here for Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Important Updates

Department of Public Health Updates:



- COVID vaccination began at DPH public health hospitals, including for the clinical staff at Pappas (in photo). Vaccinations continue for front line staff across the state. A new vaccine dashboard will be posted weekly beginning Thursday, 12/24.
- DPH posted new holiday guidance to help residents celebrate the holiday safely.
- MA211 received 4,564 calls from Monday 12/14 through Sunday 12/20 for a new total of 175,961.
- DPH received Week 7 allocations on 12/22 as follows: Bamlanivimab 1870 doses and Regeneron 450 doses. This allocation is for a two-week period (12/22/20-1/5/21). The Therapeutics Working Group is recommending an equitable allocation strategy.
- DPH Immunization Division has extended the deadline for students to receive a flu vaccination to February 28, 2021, unless they have obtained a medical or religious exemption. Updated guidance is available online.
- Planning continues relative to the allocation and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, including vaccination of first responders (EMS, police, and fire).
- DPH issued a memorandum directing all Massachusetts hospitals to postpone or cancel all nonessential inpatient elective invasive procedures in order to maintain and increase inpatient capacity (effective 12/26/20).
- DPH issued an Order allowing paramedics, EMTs, and medical and nursing students to administer influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.
- The Board of Registration in Medicine issued Interim Policy on Emergency Temporary Licenses for Full License Applicants 2020-09. Pursuant to Policy 2020-09, eligible physicians will be issued an Emergency Temporary License while the Board processes the physician's Full application.
- For the date range of 12/11-12/17, 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 14 Rapid Response Teams deployed to nursing homes across the Commonwealth.
- There are also 8 National Guard Teams deployed and supporting nursing and rest homes.

Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:

Mass Care

- 3 state contracted isolation/recovery hotels in the cities of Everett, Taunton, and Pittsfield continue to receive client placements: 187 individuals are currently housed in the program, an increase of 52 since last week and the highest single day total since the beginning of the pandemic.
    - Top 5 referring cities:
        - Boston (140)
        - Springfield (122)
        - Brockton (93)
        - Worcester (83)
        - Cambridge (74)
    - To date, a total of 1,254 residents have been placed in these hotels for safe isolation and recovery.

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Emergency Food Box Program Update (as of 12/18/20):

Food Bank/ MEMA Warehouse	Total Number of Food Boxes Distributed to Date	Total Number of Food Boxes Remaining in Inventory
Food Bank of Western MA	31259	0
Greater Boston Food Bank	205920	0
Merrimack Valley Food Bank	3312	0
Worcester County Food Bank	1440	0
MEMA Warehouse (Reserve)	36869	3,456
Total Food Boxes	**278,800**	**3,456**

Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)

- 12 orders prepared for pickup or delivery from 12/18-12/23
- The MEMA State Logistics Warehouse continues to support the three Isolation Hotels in Pittsfield, Taunton, and Everett with biweekly orders of PPE, cleaners/sanitizer, drinks, snacks, and other amenities as requested. A delivery was made to Pittsfield on 12/23.
- The warehouse will be closed for distribution on Christmas Day, 12/25.
- DPH coordinated 43 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday (12/22) (9 PPE/6 testing supplies and 28 BinaxNOW kits); 34 deliveries were made on Wednesday (12/23) (5 PPE/8 testing supplies and 21 BinaxNOW kits); 17 deliveries have been scheduled for Thursday (12/24) (1 PPE/2 testing supplies and 14 BinaxNOW kits). No deliveries will be made on Friday (12/25) due to the holiday.

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:

Data as of: 12/18/2020

MEMA COVID-19 EXECUTIVE DASHBOARD

AGGREGATE PROGRAM VIEW

Note: Financial data represents 75% federal cost share; figures do not include MEMA management cost allowance

Overall (Best Available Estimate)	Submitted (Eligibility & Cost Review)	Approved* (by FEMA)	Paid (by MEMA)
$608.8M +$1.71M	$455.5M +$14.94M	$45.8M +$242.74K	$7.3M $0
845 Projects +2	568 Projects +3	58 Projects +9	37 Projects 0

Approved Applicants: 628

- Online Applicant Technical Assistant Requests: 496
- FEMA Requests for Public Assistance (RPA) Applicants: 667
- MEMA has approved the Feeding Operations PW $9,325,068.48 (Federal Cost Share of$6,993,801.36). The project is pending final FEMA review and obligation.
- MEMA submitted Boston Housing Authority's Feeding Operations PW $330,799.00 (Federal Cost Share of $248,099.25) to FEMA for review.
- FEMA obligated six new projects this week totaling $168,573.30.
- FEMA eliminated the requirement to request time extensions for Non-Congregate Sheltering, allowing the Commonwealth to continue necessary sheltering operations for the duration of this COVID-19 disaster. The Commonwealth will begin to submit required monthly reporting to FEMA.
- MEMA requested approval from FEMA to continue Emergency Feeding Operations for an additional 30-day period.

Survivor Assistance:
Throughout the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season, the MAVOAD (Mass Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster) have been busy with supplying clothing, activity items, and refreshments to the residents and staff who are at the isolation and quarantine hotels.
Their great coordination and collaboration between 14+ organizations have helped make the holiday season a bit brighter for these folks who are in need.

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 12/23)	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	**29,907**
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	**412**
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	**7,191**



Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 12/22/20)

- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke is celebrating the Christmas Holiday Week with Veteran residents with activities throughout the week, culminating in a festive Christmas Day meal will to be served on all units, including shrimp cocktail, prime rib roast, mashed potatoes, green beans, roll, and cheesecake with strawberry sauce.
    - Veterans will enjoy music throughout the week including accordion music on Christmas Eve and virtual Christmas vocals by 6th Grade Westfield Mass Student via YouTube.
    - Hundreds of Christmas cards have been generously donated by many people and organizations in the community and will be distributed to residents throughout the week. The Soldiers' Home staff will assist in Holiday music and gift giving with residents.

  - Additionally, the Soldiers' Home will have staff on hand on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to place FaceTime and phone calls for families to connect with their loved ones while visitation is suspended. You can contact the Family Line at (413)-552-4764 to schedule a virtual visit.
  - Families are welcome to bring gifts and premade food in containers to the Home for their loved one to enjoy throughout the day.
  - On Christmas, homemade cinnamon rolls will start the day. The recreation staff will be at the Home on Christmas to go room to room to help our veterans enjoy fiddle playing by Sarah. In the afternoon, more room to room visits will happen with eggnog, punch, and cheese and crackers.
- The Veteran residents residing at the dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center were offered the COVID-19 vaccine on December 17. The vaccine was given with resident consent. This process is being managed by the Holyoke Medical Center.
- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke continues to prioritize virtual visitation and family communication as visitation and movement throughout the facility have been suspended, per infection control protocol, since November 20 for all units until further notice, and PPE protocols have been heightened. Families are encouraged to continue 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. Virtual 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. Note: The Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- 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 new permanent and interim leadership including a permanent Deputy Superintendent, and a new Interim Superintendent.
  - On December 21, Glen Hevy, a retired U.S. Army Infantry Officer, joined as the new permanent Deputy Superintendent for the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke from the Bedford VA Medical Center, where he was the Senior Operations Official for Patient Care Services at the 400-bed VA hospital.
  - On December 20, Michael Lazo began as the Interim Superintendent of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke following the departure of Interim Administration Valenda Liptak. Lazo was hired as the Chief Operating Officer for the Home in September and was a member of the National Guard team that was deployed to the Home to support clinical operations during the Spring and Summer. Lazo serves in the Joint Force Headquarters where his previous assignment was the Commander of the 126th Brigade Support Battalion, and his civilian professional experience includes nearly two decades in health care business administration.
- 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 has implemented mandatory 2 times per week testing for all staff and residents. Increased testing frequency will allow us to detect COVID-19 early and will continue until the Home receives 14 consecutive days of negative results.
  - The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke has been intently focused on following infection control procedures and maintaining best practices for the safety of veteran residents and staff. All veteran residents' health is being monitored and retesting is being conducted for veterans both on- and off-site as clinically appropriate. The Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following the latest CDC guidance, which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus.

- In addition to mandatory testing at state-operated 24/7 facilities, daily symptom checking and routine staff surveillance testing are important tools to protect staff, residents and visitors and will remain in place until such time there is a medical breakthrough or a safe and effective vaccine for COVID 19. Staff who are not feeling well are instructed not to come to work and to contact their health care provider. If staff show any signs of COVID-symptoms, they are required to self-quarantine at home, per CDC guidance for health care workers.
- The 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 a longer-term Rapid Planning Capital Project 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.
    - On Veterans Day, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the next steps for the expedited capital project for the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. Following the conclusion of the 12-week Rapid Planning Phase of the project, the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance released the needs assessment report, and announced the selection of Payette Associates for the next phase as the design firm to lead the design and planning phase, the next step of the expedited capital project. Payette will build on the evaluation they previously completed, and will develop a full project scope, refine the plan, and confirm the budget, timelines, and ensure conformity with the regulatory process. One of the early deliverables is the preparation of the submission for the VA State Home Construction Grant by its April 15, 2021 deadline. The website for the project is www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject.
- 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 December 22 is as follows:
    - Status:
        - 0 positive and not clinically recovered
        - 17 veterans are negative
        - 37 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 residents have been determined clinically recovered
        - 1 resident has refused testing
    - Resident locations:
        - 102 veterans are onsite
        - 26 veterans are offsite
            - 21 veterans are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
            - 5 veterans are receiving acute care offsite
    - Since March 1, there have been 77 veteran deaths of veterans who tested positive
        - On December 16, 2020, a resident of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, who has been residing at the dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center since April, died. The resident had tested positive for COVID-19 in early December.
    - Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing, there are:
        - 2 positive staff
        - All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER
WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 12/22/20)

- For the Christmas Holiday, the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea will be celebrating with veteran residents in Long-Term Care and the Domiciliary by providing a filet mignon dinner. Additionally, veteran organizations and others have generously donated gifts to the Soldiers' Home, which will be distributed to residents.

- Eric Johnson, MBA, began as the new permanent Superintendent of the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea on December 14. Johnson, a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator, is a health care executive and U.S. Army veteran who comes to Chelsea from Norwood Healthcare and Rehab, where he has been Executive Director since 2018. Prior to Norwood, Johnson was the Executive Director at two other skilled nursing facilities in Massachusetts.

- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea continues to prioritize virtual visitation, as visitation and movement throughout the facility remains suspended for all units until further notice per infection control protocol. 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. Visitation will resume after 14 consecutive days without a new positive test.

- Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting their assigned social worker, or emailing the Home at CSH@mass.gov. They can schedule virtual visits by video or phone call. 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.

- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea currently 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.

- 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 December 22 is as follows:

    - Residents
        - 2 veteran residents are positive
        - 136 veteran residents are negative
        - 40 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:

- 17 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 has produced many communication resources aimed at helping communities inform and educate residents on recent executive orders and guidance related to COVID-19.

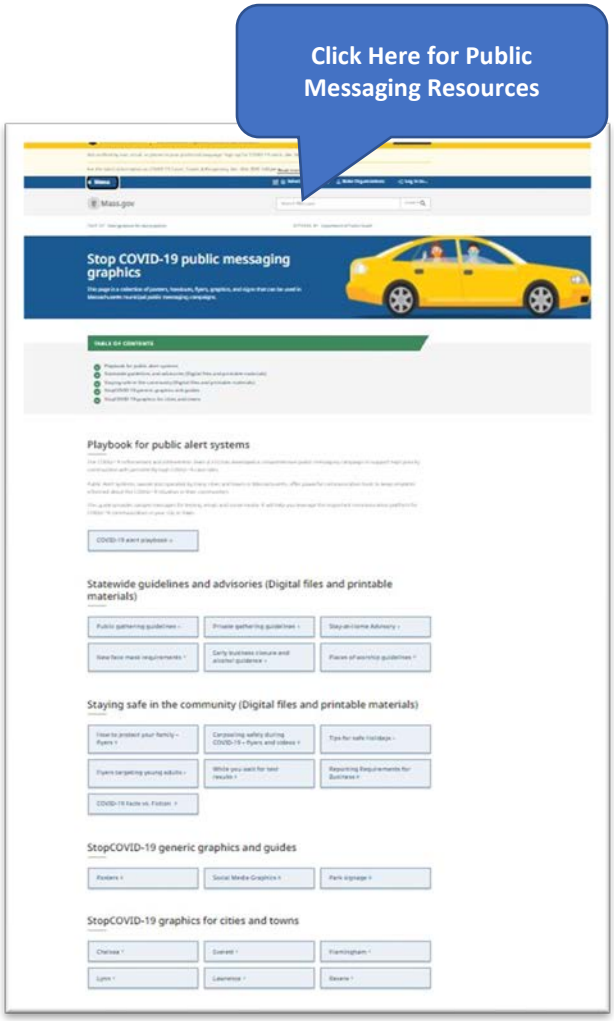
Visitors to the Stop COVID-19 Public Messaging webpage will find both printable flyers, posters, and digital resources in multiple languages on topics such as:

- Statewide guidelines, advisories, and orders
- Staying safe in the community
- Using local public alert systems for COVID-19 information

DPH Communication Materials in Multiple Languages

- **Facts Sheets**
- **Videos**

In addition, a website with tips on staying safe this holiday season has been developed**: Mass.gov/holidays**



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**

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 map that shows the locations of COVID-19 testing sites around the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts COVID-19 Response Dashboard

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

Health care facilities can learn more about **requesting personal protective equipment here**.

Stay Informed

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

- Work at an Alternate Care Site in either **Worcester** or **Lowell**
- 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 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