

Friday, April 24, 2020

COVID-19 Command Center

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

State Actions in Today's Report:

- Daily Case Update (link in sidebar)
- Update on MassHealth Waivers and Unemployment
- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance System Launch
- Commissioner Bharel Returns After Recovery From COVID-19
- Update on Distribution of PPE
- Update on Mobile Testing Numbers
- Update on Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes



Helpful Links:

- [Get Involved: Community Contact Tracing Collaborative](#)
- [Jobs Available to Assist Long Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Mass.Gov/covid19](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [FrontlineMA.org](#)
- [Emergency Childcare Site](#)
- [MBTA.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 4/24**

50,969 Total Cases ([click here for more information](#))

2,556 Deaths

215,213 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.

United States **current as of 4/23**

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:

Total Cases 865,585

Deaths 48,816

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

Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, and DPH Commissioner Monica Bharel to provide an update on the Commonwealth's response to the COVID-19 pandemic ([see video here](#)).

Medicaid Waiver for MassHealth Flexibility Filed and Update on Launch of New Unemployment System

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced new federal waiver requests to provide the state's MassHealth program more flexibility to respond to COVID-19, and provided an update on Massachusetts' successful implementation of the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program.

MassHealth Waiver Requests: Massachusetts is filing two waiver requests with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that will give the state and its Medicaid program, MassHealth, more flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. If allowed, the waivers will build upon the two [previously submitted waivers](#) and enable MassHealth to deliver the most effective care to its members and support health care providers.

Through these waiver requests, the Commonwealth is seeking flexibility to address key areas of need:

- Expand Medicare telehealth coverage to include services provided by phone and video, to increase access to health care for seniors and individuals with disabilities without readily accessible video technology. This expansion is consistent with telehealth coverage currently provided by MassHealth and commercial plans.
- Allow MassHealth to waive the requirement that certain applicants and members spend down to qualify for coverage in cases of financial hardship.
- Extend retroactive coverage for individuals who qualify for MassHealth to allow individuals to be covered up to 90 days prior to submitting their application.
- Provide flexibility for federal provider payment limits to enable MassHealth to provide critical stabilization funds to health care providers.
- Ease provider requirements that could result in unnecessary administrative burdens or barriers to care.

PUA Unemployment System Launch: Earlier this week, Massachusetts became one of the first states in the nation to successfully implement the [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance \(PUA\) program](#) established by the federal CARES Act. This program provides benefits for individuals who do not qualify for traditional unemployment benefits, but have lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

The platform launched on April 20, 10 days ahead of the previously scheduled launch date. Since then, the PUA system has so far processed well over 100,000 claims, and benefit checks, which include an additional \$600 as part of another federal CARES Act benefit implemented by the administration, are already being issued.

Commissioner Bharel returns to Full Time Duty

After recovering from COVID-19, DPH Commissioner Monica Bharel, returned full time to her position this week, much to the relief and joy of her colleagues at DPH, and throughout state government. Dr. Bharel, who continued to work from home throughout her illness, presided over a (virtual) Public Health Council Meeting yesterday, where council members greeted her warmly after she provided an update on DPH response efforts. This week, Commissioner also had an interview with WCVB to share her and her family's experience. ([See the Interview](#))

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Update on Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment

To date, the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) have supplied over **5.6 Million** pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to hospitals, first responders, nursing homes, state agencies and others through a massive logistics effort and assistance from the Massachusetts National Guard.

Snapshot of MEMA's Warehouse (posted to MEMA's Facebook page 4/24)



Update on Mobile Testing Numbers for Long Term Care, Assisted Living Residences and EOHHS Sites

Onsite Testing

Date	Number of Tests Completed	Facilities Visited
4/23	2051	24
Total (as of 4/23)	15,393	380

Mobile Testing at EOHHS Group Homes & Care Sites (as of 4/24)

DDS, DMH, DCF and DPH Facilities	
Clients	3434
Staff	3944
Total Tests	7378
Number of Locations	427

Cases in Long term Care Facilities (as of 4/24)

COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	9184
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	289
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	1429

Other Important Updates

Holyoke Soldiers' Home

- Employee use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is being monitored, enforced, and supplemented.
- In addition to increased environmental cleaning, two Ionizing Machines were brought in by the National Guard to purify the air.
- To support the emotional well-being of staff, National Guard Chaplains are offering a short service to allow staff to reflect, decompress, and pray in a peaceful setting.
- The Clinical Command continues to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak while bringing on additional management staff for nursing, facilities, operations and administration to complement the existing staff.
 - This week, consulting support is being provided by Baystate Medical Practice Management to assist in administrative procedures, and additional social work staff is onboard to support staff.
- Governor Charlie Baker has advised flags be lowered to half-staff until the end of the public health emergency at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, as well as the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam and Winchendon due to the fact Military Honors are unavailable during this public health crisis.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home continues regular communication with veteran residents' health care proxies, and is scheduling regular updates for families, which is made possible through the additional clinical case management nursing staff that was brought on board.
 - The Military Friends Foundation delivered/donated 20 iPads for veterans to use to communicate with their families and for personal entertainment during quarantine.
 - Families can call the Family Hotline at 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 total numbers at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home as of Friday:**
 - 73 veteran resident deaths (62 positive, 9 negatives, 1 pending, 1 unknown)
 - Today's update includes 5 deaths: 3 who tested positive and had DNR, DNH; 2 who tested positive and were being treated at the hospital
 - 85 veteran residents have tested positive
 - 60 veteran residents have tested negative
 - 8 veteran residents have pending tests
 - 81 employees have tested positive

Chelsea Soldiers' Home

- The Chelsea Soldiers' Home is coordinating to make additional dedicated spaces for Veterans who were proactively sent out to VA facilities after testing positive for COVID-19, and are being medically cleared to return to the Soldiers' Home.
- As retesting is being conducted and some veteran residents are testing positive, they are being appropriately cohorted, and many are being transferred to other facilities for higher acuity care.

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- The Chelsea Soldiers' Home clinical command continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including regular coordinating calls with the VA Health Care System, continuously reviewing and implementing infection control policy, and daily monitoring of personal protective equipment (PPE) supply and procuring additional PPE from regular supply chain and from emergency DPH sources.
- Staffing levels are being closely monitored by the Chelsea clinical command, and identified gaps driven by positive employees in self-quarantine per CDC guidelines are being filled by contractors from staffing agencies as needed. So far 47 slots have been filled through staffing agency contracted roles.
- Governor Charlie Baker has advised flags be lowered to half-staff until the end of the public health emergency at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, as well as the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam and Winchendon due to the fact Military Honors are unavailable during this public health crisis.
- Veteran residents are communicating with their families and loved ones via video with support from the Chelsea Soldiers' Home Social Work team.
 - Families can request updates on their loved ones by contacting the Home at CSH@mass.gov and through phone and video conversations. Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- **The total numbers at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home as of Friday:**
 - 19 veteran resident deaths (14 tested positive, 5 tested negative)
 - 30 veteran residents who have tested positive
 - 203 veteran residents who have tested negative
 - 52 staff tested positive

Department of Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard

An enhanced, comprehensive and detailed COVID-19 data report, which includes trend data in a variety of areas (e.g. information on cases rates, testing, geography of confirmed cases etc.), death related data and specific data on COVID-19 hospital census information, nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, rest homes (with known clusters), and PPE distribution is updated daily by 4PM. **City and town case data are published weekly each Wednesday.** ([Click here to access the report](#)). Key data reflected in today's report is provided below:

Newly Reported Cases Today 4,946	Confirmed Cases 50,969	Newly Reported Deaths Today 196	Deaths of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases 2,556
Percent of All Cases Currently Hospitalized 8%	Count of Cases Currently in ICU 1,048	New Tests Reported Today 20,137	Total Tests Performed 215,213

Note: Today's data reflects a correction of a reporting error made by Quest, a national commercial laboratory, which affected case counts in multiple states including Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health received a backlog this week of almost 10,000 patient results (both positive and negative) from Quest dating back to April 13. These cases are included for the first time in today's data. To most accurately reflect real-time trends, DPH sorted the Quest backlog and incorporated confirmed cases into state data based on when those test results should have been reported. In today's dashboard, daily case counts from April 13 through today now reflect the corrected data.

Resources

Disaster Recovery Information

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 [website](#) with information and guidance regarding the disaster declaration, eligibility criteria, and the application process.

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 on a daily basis as enhancements are continuously being added.

Buoy Health's free Online Symptom Checker

Individuals can use Buoy Health's free online symptom checker to connect with telemedicine options. This tool is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency that requires immediate attention please call 911 or the number for your local emergency service. Buoy is available at www.buoy.com/mass and is available in both English and Spanish.

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.

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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:

[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
- Stay Home. Stay Safe. Save Lives.

How to Help Out

- [Donate](#) to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.
- Volunteer opportunities for health professionals: [Please click here.](#)
- Get involved with the new Community Tracing Collaborative: [Please click here.](#)
- Donate or sell personal protective equipment: [Please click here.](#)
- Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here.](#)
- Apply for Jobs at COVID-19 Temporary Care Sites [\(Details Here\).](#)

Give Blood:

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).

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. We have implemented 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.