

# Massachusetts DoC announces plan to suspend housing operations at MCI-Cedar Junction

*Two-year reorganization strategy to enhance operational efficiency and cost-savings solutions amid historic low prison population.*

The Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) announced a three-phased, two-year plan to suspend housing operations at MCI-Cedar Junction in Walpole. Amid the state's lowest prison population in 35 years, the Department conducted a detailed, agency-wide review to identify opportunities to enhance operational efficiency and advance cost-saving solutions. The strategic decision to suspend Cedar Junction's general population housing and re-locate its reception and diagnostic center is based on a thorough assessment of decreased housing needs and the aging facility's exorbitant maintenance costs. Furthermore, this action aligns with the Department's commitment to eliminate restrictive housing and reform its approach to discipline.

Cedar Junction currently operates at 68% capacity with a population of approximately 525 inmates. The maximum-security facility provides three core functions within the DOC. It serves as the Department's reception and diagnostic center where newly incarcerated men are evaluated for security classification and await transfer to the appropriate facility. The facility also houses a small operational workforce of less than 50 men in a medium security setting and maintains two units for the most serious security concerns, the Department Disciplinary Unit (DDU) and the Behavioral Management Unit (BMU).

“The Baker-Polito Administration has worked closely with the Legislature, community partners and advocates to create successful reentry programs and implement meaningful reforms to criminal justice,” said Public Safety and Security Secretary Terrence Reidy. “The fruit of that work – the lowest level of incarceration in decades – was achieved by providing at-risk individuals with pathways to positive life choices, creating new re-entry services, and empowering returning citizens to rebuild their lives in meaningful ways. It also allows us to consolidate the number of operational facilities and renew our focus on delivering effective services to women and men in DOC’s care.”

Massachusetts has long been a leader in reducing incarceration. In reports from 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 the Vera Institute for Justice found that Massachusetts’ incarceration rate was the lowest in the nation, decreasing by over 2,000 during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a record low of nearly 6,000 incarcerated people.

The first phase of the two-year reorganization will start in 60-90 days with the relocation of the reception and diagnostic center to Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center (SBCC) in Lancaster. SBCC provides a more modern, climate-controlled facility where living spaces better reflect those that incarcerated individuals will experience after their initial 60-90-day classification is complete. Individuals currently living at Cedar Junction awaiting classification will complete the normal process and be transferred to an appropriate facility. The operational workforce will remain at Cedar Junction to support limited ongoing operations.

“DOC remains committed to stewarding taxpayer resources responsibly and fulfilling our rehabilitation-focused mission,” DOC Commissioner Carol Mici said. “This decision, and the subsequent consolidation of resources across fewer locations, allows us to eliminate redundancies and deepen our investments in programming, staffing, and services.”

Both the BMU and DDU will continue operating until 2024 while the Department identifies a suitable alternative for each population's very specific programming, services, and security needs. During phase two, inmates living in the BMU will be relocated to appropriate units in other state facilities. In phase three, the Department will dissolve the DDU and relocate inmates. Dissolving the DDU aligns with DOC's 3-year ongoing process to reform its approach to discipline.

Opened in 1955, Cedar Junction is one of Massachusetts oldest correctional facilities. Its aging infrastructure has become costly to maintain and requires significant repairs. After a thorough review with the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, experts identified nearly \$30M in necessary infrastructure repairs with the electrical upgrades alone estimated to cost \$22M.

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## **New Bedford roadwork sites for the upcoming week of April 11, 2022 – April 15, 2022**

The City of New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of April 11, 2022 – April 15, 2022, and they are as follows:

**Eversource will be working on the gas main relays and services at:**

- Main relay on Phillips Rd from Holly Tree Lane to Route 140

## Other:

- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working at the MassDOT project, Kings Highway, for road and sidewalk reconstruction along portions of Kings Highway and Tarkiln Hill Rd.
- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will continue site work at the future South Coast Rail station platform locations in the city. (Church St at Carlisle St and Wamsutta St at Acushnet Ave.) If you have questions, please email the project team at [SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us)
- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working on various streets, citywide, completing minor repairs and installations.

*\*\* Please note: Contractors will continue to follow guidelines and protocol regarding COVID-19 social distancing while conducting work in construction zone.*

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# Massachusetts Gov. Baker awards \$600,000 in grants to high schools to support innovation pathways

*These early career programs help students connect learning to in-demand industry sectors.*

The Baker-Polito Administration awarded more than \$600,000 to 22 school districts to help support Innovation Pathway programs, which provide high school students with opportunities to learn and gain experience in a particular industry through career exploration, technical courses and internships.

Students are also able to enroll in post-secondary courses, at no cost to them, to help them make progress toward industry-recognized credentials. Most Innovation Pathways are in STEM-related fields, including advanced manufacturing, information technology, environmental and life sciences, health care and social assistance, and business and finance.

“These programs provide students with hands-on skills learning and access to opportunities for future success in high-demand fields,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “The expansion of Innovation Pathways will allow more students to gain knowledge and work experiences that prepare them for successful careers before they graduate high school.”

“We remain committed to closing opportunity and workforce gaps for students in communities across the Commonwealth, and Innovation Pathways are another tool we can use to do so,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “These early career programs and rigorous learning opportunities offer chances for achievement both inside and outside the classroom.”

The Baker-Polito Administration launched these early career programs in 2017 to help students develop knowledge and skills related to a chosen field of study before they graduate high school. To date, 49 high schools across the Commonwealth have designated Innovation Pathways, totaling 121 different programs. Innovation Pathways differ from its sister program – Early College – in that students focus on a specific industry sector, with greater emphasis on career exploration, technical courses, work-based learning experiences and industry-recognized credentials, rather than college credit courses and college planning.

The 22 schools awarded grants today received designation from 2018 through 2020 and will use funding from the state to support work-based learning, industry recognized credential attainment, and dual-enrollment opportunities with partnering colleges and universities.

“When students have a sense of purpose, they become more interested and engaged in their studies, able to easily see how it all fits into their future,” said Secretary of Education James Peyser. “As more students gain skills and knowledge in a particular industry sector, they will have a better sense of what they want to do after they graduate and what additional post-secondary courses and training they will need to ensure their success.”

“Through participation in Innovation Pathways, students are empowered to explore firsthand and take steps toward possible future careers in promising sectors,” said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley.

The following school districts received awards:

- Atlantis Charter School – \$41,250
- Barnstable Public Schools – \$26,576
- Berkshire Hills Regional School District – \$41,250
- Boston Public Schools, Dearborn STEM Academy – \$52,250
- Burlington Public Schools – \$26,575
- Dudley Charlton Regional School District – \$30,000
- Everett Public Schools – \$30,000
- Gardner Public Schools – \$30,000
- Hadley Public Schools – \$3,000
- Haverhill Public Schools – \$15,000
- Lawrence Public Schools – \$15,000
- Mashpee Public Schools – \$15,000
- Nantucket Public Schools – \$30,000
- Northampton Public Schools – \$26,575
- Norwood Public Schools – \$26,575
- Somerset Berkley Regional School District – \$30,000
- Tewksbury Public Schools – \$15,000
- Uxbridge Public Schools – \$15,000
- West Springfield Public Schools – \$30,000
- Westfield Public Schools – \$15,000
- Woburn Public Schools – \$41,250
- Worcester Public Schools – \$29,449

Schools that apply for designation for an Innovation Pathways are required to follow five design principles:

- Equitable access for all students
  - Guided academic pathway, which, in the case of Innovation Pathways, must relate to one of five specified broad industry sectors
  - Enhanced student supports
  - Relevant connections to career
  - Deep partnerships between high schools and employers or workforce development boards
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## **Upcoming COVID-19 testing sites for the City of New Bedford; how to get FREE at-home test kits**

Project Beacon's appointment-based COVID-19 testing at New Bedford Regional Airport—part of the state's Stop the Spread program—is offering testing on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, through May 15.

Appointments for free COVID-19 tests can be made at [beacontesting.com](https://beacontesting.com). Airport officials ask that people reach the site via the airport's side entrance on Downey Street.

Contact Project Beacon by email at [help@beacontesting.com](mailto:help@beacontesting.com); or by calling 617-741-7310.

**Note: Today, March 31, is the last day of walk-up testing offered by Seven Hills Behavioral Health at former Fire**

## **Station 11 in the South End, at 745 Brock Ave.**

Seven Hills' testing at PAACA on Coggeshall St. ended March 30.

For rapid tests, the federal government is offering free at-home test kits online, at [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov). Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order four free at-home COVID-19 tests. If you test positive with a rapid test, isolate for at least five days and notify close contacts. State guidance on isolation and quarantining can be found [here](#).

If you test negative, re-testing a day or more later is advised, particularly if you have symptoms or a known exposure to the virus.

Testing sites in New Bedford and surrounding towns can be found on the state's Stop the Spread website, [www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test).

Upcoming testing locations in New Bedford include:

### **Thursday, March 31:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Seven Hills at former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Sunday, April 3:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Tuesday, April 5:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### **Thursday, April 7:**



- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**Sunday, April 10:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Tuesday, April 12:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Thursday, April 14:**

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.

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## **Massachusetts man pleads guilty to distributing drugs laced with Fentanyl**

A Peabody man pleaded guilty today in federal court in Boston to participating in a conspiracy that distributed fentanyl and drugs laced with fentanyl.

Francisco Tavaréz, a/k/a “Jose,” 25, pleaded guilty to one count of distribution of fentanyl and one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and distribute 100 grams or more of heroin and 40 grams or more of fentanyl. U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton scheduled sentencing for Aug. 9, 2022. Tavaréz was charged in November 2017 along with co-defendant Yeffry Reynoso.

In January 2017, a fatal opioid overdose in Melrose prompted an investigation into drug activity on the North Shore of Boston. Reynoso was identified as a heroin and fentanyl supplier who ran an active drug business and employed various individuals as runners who delivered the drugs on his behalf. The investigation determined that Reynoso supplied the opioids that led to the fatal overdose in January and that he had previously supplied the victim with heroin and a heroin/fentanyl mixture on a regular basis in 2016.

During the subsequent investigation into Reynoso's drug trafficking activities in the Spring of 2017, a cooperating witness made several controlled purchases of heroin and a heroin/fentanyl mixture from Reynoso. In March 2017, Tavaréz was identified as a runner for Reynoso when he delivered fentanyl to an undercover agent on Reynoso's behalf. Tavaréz was also observed engaging in multiple suspected drug transactions with individuals believed to be Reynoso's drug customers. Following a suspected hand-to-hand drug deal in Salem, local law enforcement stopped Tavaréz and seized fentanyl and a cocaine/fentanyl mixture from his car.

Reynoso pleaded guilty in January 2019 and, in June 2019, was sentenced to 150 months in prison and four years of supervised release. Reynoso was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$4,765 and a \$700 special assessment.

The charge of distribution of fentanyl provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, at least three years of supervised release and a fine of \$1 million. The charge of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and distribute 100 grams or more of heroin and 40 grams or more of fentanyl provides for a sentence of up to 40 years in prison, at least three years of supervised release and a fine of \$5 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Boston Field Division; Melrose Police Chief Michael Lyle; and Salem Police Chief Lucas J. Miller made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney James E. Arnold of Rollins' Narcotics & Money Laundering Unit is prosecuting the case.

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## **Freetown Fire Rescue responds to car fire on County Road**

"Yesterday on County Rd. in the area of The Point Gas was shut down for a car fire.

The Freetown Fire Department responded to the scene and quickly extinguished the fire while the Freetown Police diverted traffic.

Within 30 minutes the roadway was reponed and the damaged vehicle was towed from the scene." -Freetown Police Department.



*Freetown Police Department photo.,/center>*

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## **Southcoast Health's Charlton Memorial Hospital first in the world to enroll and treat patient in LIFE-BTK PK sub-study**

*Clinical study researches advanced treatment for patients with Critical Limb Ischemia (CLI).*

Southcoast Health Chief of Vascular Surgery Dr. Richard Pin and a team at the Heart and Vascular Center at Charlton Memorial Hospital became the first to enroll and treat a patient in the national LIFE-BTK randomized clinical trial PK sub-study, system officials announced today.

“We are honored to be part of this clinical trial,” says Dr. Pin. “It is an amazing achievement for a community health system to be asked to participate in a randomized clinical trial, and for Charlton to go above the pace that was expected in enrolling patients is testament to the hospital’s exceptional cardiovascular program. This trial serves a need for critical patients in the south coast region who would otherwise have limited options. I am proud of our team for their outstanding work to advance cardiovascular care in our community.”



*SouthCoast health photo.*

The LIFE-BTK trial is designed to evaluate the Esprit™ BTK Drug-eluting Resorbable Scaffold for the treatment of below-the-knee artery stenosis in symptomatic critical limb ischemia (CLI) patients, evaluating it against Percutaneous Transluminal Angioplasty (PTA). Unlike other drug-eluting stents, the Esprit-BTK investigational device is not a permanent implant; it provides support to an artery immediately after a balloon angioplasty, preventing the vessel from reclosing. Once implanted, the scaffold delivers a drug over a few months to promote healing and keep the artery open before dissolving.

CLI is a severe form of Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) that can lead to amputation. It involves the narrowing or blockage of the peripheral arteries carrying blood from the heart to the legs and arms and is estimated to affect approximately two million people nationwide. This decreased blood flow to lower limbs and can lead to increased mortality rates and amputations if left untreated.

The PK sub-study takes the clinical trial a step further to evaluate the effectiveness of the drug everolimus by analyzing numerous blood samples taken at predetermined times. This sub-study is only planning to enroll 7 patients nationally due to the very limited inclusion criteria.

“We are grateful to have had a patient willing to participate considering the number of blood draws that are required both at the hospital and for months thereafter,” says Debra Benevides, a Clinical Research Coordinator at Southcoast Health. “In this study, blood samples were collected every 15 minutes during the procedure and then at regular intervals over the next 60 days. Clinical trials are successful because of the patients who are willing to participate and donate their time.” The initial procedure was performed on February 10, 2022.

Charlton Memorial’s Heart and Vascular Center continues to be a regional leader in advanced cardiovascular services. “I want to congratulate Dr. Pin and his team once again for their outstanding work to provide advanced cardiovascular care to our patients,” says Dr. Peter Cohn, Physician in Chief of the Cardiovascular Care Center at Southcoast Health. “Participating in this randomized clinical trial sub-study demonstrates Southcoast Health’s commitment to bringing innovative technology and research to patients in our community.”

More information about the Heart and Vascular Center at Charlton Memorial Hospital can be found [here](#).

## About Southcoast Health

For more than 25 years, Southcoast Health has served communities across southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island as the largest provider of primary and specialty care in the region. The not-for-profit, charitable system includes three acute care hospitals – Charlton Memorial in Fall River, St. Luke's in New Bedford (a Level II Trauma Center), and Tobey in Wareham – as well as a network of over 700 physicians, hospitalists, and midlevel practitioners.

Southcoast Health has established seven Urgent Care Centers, two Cancer Centers, a Visiting Nurse Association, and numerous ambulatory facilities that ensure convenient access to services for 725,000 residents in 33 communities covering 900 square miles. In addition, the system partners with Acadia Healthcare to offer expanded resources at Southcoast Behavioral Health in Dartmouth.

Southcoast Health is a Newsweek's World's Best Hospital in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. In 2021, St. Luke's was named to Newsweek and Leapfrog's Best Maternity Hospitals for the second consecutive year, while US News ranked Southcoast among the 10 best hospitals in Massachusetts, and 2nd among those in the Providence Metro area. For three straight years, Southcoast Health has earned Best Hospitals and Best Place to Work in SouthCoast Media Group's Best of the Best Awards, voted on by residents and readers.

With upward of 7,500 employees, Southcoast Health is the largest employer in southeastern Massachusetts, and one of the largest employers in the Commonwealth, according to the Boston Business Journal. More information is available online at [www.southcoast.org](http://www.southcoast.org). Connect to Southcoast Health through social media on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Southcoast® is a registered trademark of Southcoast Health System.

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# Former Member of Massachusetts Latin Kings chapter sentenced for racketeering conspiracy

A member of the Massachusetts Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (Latin Kings) was sentenced today on racketeering charges.

Robert Lara, a/k/a “King Rizz,” 29, of Boston, was sentenced by U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel to time served (approximately four months in prison) and three years of supervised release. The government recommended a sentence of eight months in prison. On Oct. 28, 2021, Lara pleaded guilty to conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity, more commonly referred to as RICO conspiracy.

The Latin Kings are a violent criminal enterprise comprised of thousands of members across the United States. The Latin Kings adhere to a national manifesto, employ an internal judiciary and use a sophisticated system of communication to maintain the hierarchy of the organization. As alleged in court documents, the gang uses drug distribution to generate revenue, and engages in violence against witnesses and rival gangs to further its influence and to protect its turf.

Named for its origin on Devon Street in Boston, the Devon Street Kings, or D5K, Chapter of the Latin Kings, included approximately a dozen members. The Devon Street Kings, in turn, reported to the Massachusetts State Leadership of the Latin Kings, providing information, structure, funds and other



resources to further the Latin Kings goals and directives in the state. Lara attended numerous meetings of the gang, contributing to its joint account known as the “fundo” and participating in a violent assault of another member at a hotel in the Boston area, which was imposed as punishment for violating the rules of the gang.

In December 2019, a federal grand jury returned an indictment alleging racketeering conspiracy, drug conspiracy and firearms charges against 62 leaders, members and associates of the Latin Kings. Lara is the 46th defendant to be sentenced in the case.

First Assistant United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; Commissioner Carol Mici of the Massachusetts Department of Correction; and New Bedford Police Chief Joseph C. Cordeiro made the announcement.

Valuable assistance was also provided by the FBI North Shore Gang Task Force and the Bristol County and Suffolk County District Attorney’s Offices. Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip A. Mallard of the Organized Crime and Gang Unit prosecuted the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The remaining defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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# **New Bedford roadwork sites for the upcoming week of March 14, 2022 – March 18, 2022**

The City of New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of March 14, 2022 – March 18, 2022, and they are as follows:

**Eversource will be working on the gas main relays and services at:**

- No work scheduled

**Other:**

- DPI crews will be filling potholes as well as conducting street sweeping and sidewalk clearing in preparation of the New Bedford Half Marathon to take place on Sunday, March 20th.
- Contractor (JH Lynch) will be at MassDOT Project #608536, intersection improvements at Rockdale Ave X Allen St for utility trench pavement restoration. Detours during working hours will be required, signage will be posted for detour routes.
- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will be working on drainage installation at the railroad grade crossing located at Tarkiln Hill Rd and Kings Highway.
- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will continue site work at the future South Coast Rail station platform locations in the city. (Church St at Carlisle St and Wamsutta St at Acushnet Ave.) If you have questions, please email the project team at

SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us

Union St. Phase II Sewer Separation Project:

- Contractor (C. Naughton Corp.) will continue replacement of the Union St sewer main and service connections between Sixth St and County St. During working hours, Union St will be closed between County St and Sixth St. Union St westbound traffic will be detoured at Sixth St to School St. Union St eastbound traffic will be detoured at County St to Spring St.
- Access to local business will be maintained, construction/detour signs will be posted, and police details will be on-site to assist with traffic management.

**\*\* Please note: Contractors will continue to follow guidelines and protocol regarding COVID-19 social distancing while conducting work in construction zone.**

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# **U.S. Supreme Court reinstates death sentence for Boston Marathon Bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev**

Today, the U.S. Supreme Court released a 44-page ruling whereby they reinstated the death sentence for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev for his role in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Judge Clarence Thomas of Georgia wrote the majority opinion.

“On April 15, 2013, brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev planted and detonated two homemade pressure-cooker bombs near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing three and wounding hundreds,” said the ruling.

“Three days later, as investigators began to close in, the brothers fled. In the process, they murdered a Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus police officer, carjacked a graduate student, and fought a street battle with police during which Dzhokhar inadvertently ran over and killed Tamerlan. Dzhokhar eventually abandoned the vehicle and hid in a covered boat being stored in a nearby backyard. He was arrested the following day.”

Dzhokhar was subsequently indicted for 30 crimes, including 17 capital offenses.

In 2020 the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston ruled that the judge improperly excluded evidence that could have shown Tsarnaev had been influenced by his older brother, Tamerlan, and was, therefore, less responsible for the carnage. The death sentence was then thrown out.

The justices were in agreement with the Biden Administration when they voted by a 6-3 margin that the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had made the wrong decision, an action which reinstated Tsarnaev’s death sentence.