

Bristol County Sheriff's Office K9 COVID detection program has begun deployment

"The Bristol County Sheriff's Office's K9 Covid detection program is hitting another gear this month as the teams have started being deployed, and have also been training with the Delta and UK Variants.

Detectachem Inc. has provided the Sheriff's Office with liquids containing the Delta and UK Variant scents, as well as base COVID-19. K9 Capt. Paul Douglas uses a few drops of them on gauze pads to create training tools for K9s Huntah and Duke. The picture is of the kit that contains all the liquid samples.

"It's been going great so far," Capt. Douglas said. "The dogs picked up the variants very well. They already had the base COVID-19 down, so the variants were easy for them. It's been great working with Travis and the folks at DetectaChem on these variants."

It's the latest development as the BCSO COVID K9 program begins to sweep interiors around the county. In the last few weeks, Capt. Douglas and the dogs have been deployed to office spaces and schools in Fall River and New Bedford through partnerships with Fall River Fire Department, New Bedford Fire Department and the New Bedford Health Department. Of the seven requests for aid, the K9s have detected COVID in two locations with five areas being clear."-Bristol County Sheriff's Office.

COVID Booster Shots to Start in September

By Katie Lannan

State House News Service

The federal government plans to begin making COVID-19 booster shots available next month to adults who have already received both doses of a Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, an announcement Gov. Charlie Baker indicated came without advance guidance for states.

Baker said plans for a booster program did not come up in a regular Tuesday call between governors and Biden administration officials “on all things vaccines and all things COVID.”

“First time I heard about it was when I got home last night and saw the news,” he said during a GBH Radio interview. “So, I have no guidance, alright, even though we spent an hour on the phone yesterday with all of the people who probably knew something about what this is all about, which really bums me out.”

Baker described himself as an “enthusiastic supporter of a booster program” and said that once Massachusetts has more information about timing and other details, the state will “move very aggressively to make sure that those who are eligible to get boosters get them.”

“I think it’s really important that we do it, especially based on some of the studies that have come out of other countries that are farther ahead of us with respect to vaccines,” he said.

During a White House COVID-19 Response Team briefing Wednesday, top health officials said that while the three

vaccines used in the United States are highly effective at reducing risks of severe disease, hospitalization and death from the coronavirus, data show that levels of protection against infection decrease over time. Booster shots, they said, extend the protection.

The Biden administration's plan calls for the booster program to begin the week of Sept. 20, pending an independent evaluation by the Food and Drug Administration and dose recommendations from a Centers for Disease Control advisory panel.

Fully vaccinated adults age 18 and up would become eligible eight months after receiving their second doses of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

"The plan ensures that people who were fully vaccinated earliest in the vaccination rollout will be eligible for a booster first," Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said. "This includes our most vulnerable populations, like our health care providers, nursing home residents and other seniors."

The first COVID-19 vaccines in Massachusetts were administered last December. With the vaccine supply constrained at the time, the first waves concentrated on health care workers at the front lines of the pandemic, then the residents and workers of long-term care facilities, first responders and other populations deemed at higher risk of contracting the virus.

More than 4.4 million people in Massachusetts are now fully vaccinated, according to the latest Department of Public Health figures. That includes 4,131,001 who got the Pfizer and Moderna shots, and another 296,222 who received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

Murthy said recipients of the J&J vaccines, which were not administered in the U.S. until March 2021, will likely need boosters as well. He said to expect more data on those shots

in coming weeks, and that officials will keep the public informed of J&J booster plans.

Jeff Zients, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, said the federal government will work “very closely” with governors and states to make sure there are enough vaccination sites, and that the Federal Emergency Management Agency “stands ready to help in any way.”

“Thanks to the aggressive actions we have taken to establish our vaccination program, it will be just as easy and convenient to get a booster shot as it is to get a first shot today,” he said. “We have enough vaccine supply for every American, and you’ll be able to get a booster at roughly 80,000 places across the country, including over 40,000 local pharmacies.”

Like the initial vaccines, the boosters will be free regardless of immigration or health insurance status, Zients said.

Sen. Ed Markey applauded the Biden administration for its booster decision, calling vaccines “our best tool for combating COVID-19.”

“As we continue to combat COVID-19 here at home, we cannot forget that no one is safe until everyone is safe from COVID-19. The risk of mutating variants will continue to serve as a threat to all of humanity if we do not mobilize a swift and robust response that extinguishes this virus from all corners of our globe,” Markey said in a statement. “That means working with our international partners on efforts to increase global production of COVID-19 vaccines, share pandemic resources, construct minimum infrastructure required to deliver vaccines globally, and coordinate inoculation campaigns aimed at those most vulnerable. We have no time to spare.”

New Bedford Public Schools to Require Face Masks This Fall

In a letter dated August 16, Superintendent Thomas Anderson has notified New Bedford Public Schools Students, Parents/Guardians, and Staff that "Effective August 25, 2021, all students, staff, and visitors—regardless of vaccination status—must wear masks indoors while in any New Bedford Public Schools' facility."

The letter goes on to list areas and situations in which "Face-masks will not be required: (1) when outside; (2) when an individual works alone or in a segregated space; or (3), there are underlying conditions or extenuating circumstances as outlined last year."

Noting the new Delta variant of COVID-19 virus as a chief reason for continuing the mask policy, Superintendent Anderson stated, "It is clear that the pandemic will still be around, and we will face continued challenges in the upcoming school year... and safely conducting the teaching and learning process without interrupting in-person instruction is our goal."

As was implemented last year, comprehensive sanitization measures will remain a top priority of custodial staff in all district buildings, Superintendent Anderson said, adding, "We are using several of the mitigations strategies that proved to be effective this past school year including the air exchange units and mask wearing, which helped to keep the virus from spreading in schools."

The letter is available on the NBPS district homepage: www.newbedfordschools.org.

This revised mask requirement is consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations. Additional information and answers to frequently asked questions about COVID are also available on the NBPS district homepage and the Massachusetts Department of Education website: www.doe.mass.edu/covid19

Message from Dr. Correia, Southcoast Physicians Group family medicine, on COVID-19 Delta Variant

*A message from Dr. Carlos Correia, Southcoast Physicians Group
Family Medicine, Fall River:*

We have all been affected by this pandemic personally and professionally. As a doctor I have unfortunately seen some of my patients die from it. As a husband and father, I have been concerned for my family's safety and have had to put off vacationing to my homeland for two years. Fortunately, with our state-of-the-art technology, we have been able to come up with vaccines that are safe and very effective in preventing severe disease and death from COVID.

Yes, if vaccinated, you can still contract the virus; the vaccine is not a force field, but it gets your body ready to fight it. I am happy to say that not only am I vaccinated (for more than 7 months now), but so is my wife, all my children, all my siblings and their spouses, and all their children and grandchildren who are over 12 years old. It is safe, or I would not have highly recommended it – without hesitation – to

my family members.

Now with the Delta variant – which is much more contagious and spreading rapidly – it is extremely important that we all (anyone over 12 years old) get vaccinated to protect our youngest children. No one is immune from getting severe disease and dying. COVID-19 is a very unpredictable disease.

Unfortunately, many young unvaccinated people are getting very sick and dying with this new surge. And the saddest thing is that it can be prevented! Unlike most other countries of the world, which have a low supply, we have enough vaccine in this country for everyone.

So, please, pull up your sleeve and get vaccinated. Do it for yourself, your family, your neighbor, your co-workers, and your fellow human beings. We are all in this together.

We are at a crucial moment in human history, and our actions today will help shape the future for so many. #ArmYourself with the facts to make an informed decision. Visit www.southcoast.org/covid-19-vaccination to find upcoming vaccination opportunities at Southcoast Health, and please speak to your medical provider if you have questions or concerns. You can also find other places to get vaccinated at www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-locations. Have a vaccination story to share? Comment or message us.

Mensagem do Dr. Carlos Correia,
Todos nós estamos a ser afetados por esta pandemia pessoalmente e profissionalmente. Como médico, infelizmente, tenho visto alguns dos meus doentes morrer dela. Como marido e pai, tenho-me preocupado com a segurança da minha família e tenho adiado férias no meu país natal por dois anos. Felizmente, com a nossa tecnologia de última geração, temos

sido capazes de encontrar vacinas que são seguras e muito efectivas em evitar doença grave e morte de COVID.

Sim, se vacinado, ainda pode contrair o vírus; a vacina não é um campo de força magnética, mas torna o seu corpo pronto para a batalhar. Estou satisfeito por dizer que não só eu estou vacinado(há mais de 7 meses já) mas também estão a minha esposa, filhos, irmãos e esposos, filhos e netos com 12 ou mais anos de idade. A vacina é segura ou eu nunca a teria tão vivamente recomendado – sem hesitação – a todos os membros da minha família.

Agora, com a variante Delta – que é muito mais contagiante e de rápida propagação – é extremamente importante que todos nós (com idades de 12 ou maior) sejamos vacinados para proteger as nossas crianças mais jovens. Ninguém é imune a apanhar doença grave e morrer. O COVID 19 é uma doença muito imprevisível.

Infelizmente, muitos jovens não vacinados estão a ficar muito doentes e a morrer com este novo surto. E a coisa mais triste é que pode ser evitado! Contrariamente à maior parte dos outros países no mundo que têm um baixo abastecimento, nós temos vacinas suficientes neste país para toda a gente.

Por isso, por favor, arregace a manga e vacine-se. Faça-o por si próprio, pela sua família, vizinhos, colegas de trabalho e outros seres humanos. Estamos todos juntos nisso!

Estamos num momento crucial na história humana, e as nossas ações de hoje ajudarão a moldar o futuro para tantos. #ArmYourself com os factos para tomar uma decisão informada.

Visite o site www.southcoast.org/covid-19-vaccination para encontrar próximas oportunidades de vacinação no SouthCoast Health e, por favor fale com o seu médico ou pessoal médico se tem perguntas e preocupações. Também pode encontrar outros

sítios onde se pode vacinar no site www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccination-locations. Tem uma história de vacinação para contar? Comente ou envie-nos uma mensagem.

Upcoming New Bedford COVID-19 vaccination clinics

COVID-19 vaccination clinics are planned for the next several days in New Bedford. No appointment is needed at these walk-up clinics. All New Bedford residents receiving their first dose will receive a \$20 Dunkin' gift card.

Saturday, August 14:

- Riverside Park – 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Ashley Park – 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 15:

- Clasky Park (Pearl Street) – 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Presidential Heights (Mt. Pleasant & Van Buren Streets) – 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Monday, August 16

- McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman Street) – 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
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Danielle Allen pushes Gov. Baker to implement COVID-19 advisory system prior to school year start

Experiencing the same frustration that many parents in the Commonwealth are facing with the upcoming start of the school year amidst an evolving COVID pandemic and Delta variant spike, gubernatorial candidate Danielle Allen is calling on Governor Charlie Baker to create a COVID alert and advisory system to monitor surges in the virus's prevalence and provide for automatically triggered responses.

Background: Danielle Allen spearheaded a multi-disciplinary, cross-sector COVID response team that led to the Biden-Harris Pandemic Testing Board and an interstate compact to build out COVID testing resources, as well as Covid Collaborative guidance on infection prevention and control in K-12 settings that has been disseminated nationally, including through the US Dept of Education. She worked with DESE and the Cambridge Public School District throughout the 2020-21 school year to achieve a successful return to healthy and safe in-person teaching and learning.

Allen has released the following statement regarding the safety of our students and educators in Massachusetts public schools this fall:

"While I have the utmost confidence that our teachers, school committees, and district leaders across the Commonwealth are dutifully working to keep our students safe in this ongoing and evolving pandemic, the Governor's Office can and must do more to help them meet this moment head on," said Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate Danielle Allen. "Our children and

educators deserve healthy, in-person teaching and learning environments, and the Governor's Office and DESE can achieve this by providing better tools and broad, state- and sector-wide guidance for our schools."

"Now is the time for the Governor's Office to position the Commonwealth as a leader by developing and implementing a system of COVID alerts and advisories, similar to weather advisories, to communicate the levels of risk operative in the state, our communities, and our schools.

The core lesson from the Delta variant is that COVID will be an issue for the foreseeable future and we need to be prepared for its possible return to a community at any time. Rather than force school districts, parents, educators, and students to make difficult, time sensitive, high-pressure decisions in the event of a spike in COVID infection in a community, the Governor's Office should proactively develop processes, in consultation with regional and municipal partners, DESE, and DPH, that are automatically triggered if regional infections hit certain levels."

Examples of triggered processes include:

Districts under advisories to issue a universal mask requirement for all students and educators – which is particularly important since so many students are under the age of 12 and unable to get vaccinated and since the vaccinated are able to transmit the Delta variant.

- Higher frequency in free screening testing
- Deployment of additional contact tracing resources by school districts experiencing a COVID spike.

We will be living with the waves of the COVID pandemic for a long time, and with smart policy decisions and effective communication, Massachusetts can be the state best positioned to weather the impacts of this latest wave of the pandemic.

Third round of Massachusetts VaxMillions giveaway winners announced

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration, Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg and the Massachusetts State Lottery announced the winners for the third of five drawings for the Massachusetts VaxMillions Giveaway. As part of the giveaway, fully vaccinated residents ages 18 and older are eligible to enter to win one of five, \$1 million cash prizes. Residents between 12-17 years of age who are fully vaccinated may enter for the chance to win one of five \$300,000 scholarship grants.

The winner of this week's \$1 million prize is Leo Costinos of Attleboro. Leo is a controller at a financial firm. He got vaccinated to protect himself, his family and his community. Leo plans to use his winnings to support his children's college plans.

The winner of this week's \$300,000 college scholarship is Lilla Eliet of Reading. Lilla is entering the 8th grade at Coolidge Middle School in Reading this fall where she is a member of the Coolidge Science Olympiad team. Lilla is already thinking about where she might attend college and is interested in science and technology. She hopes to have a career in the field of medicine. Lilla received the vaccine as soon as she was eligible in order to protect herself and others.

New Bedford vaccination center at McCoy Recreation Center adjusts hours

The City of New Bedford's COVID-19 vaccination center at the Andrea McCoy Recreation Center at 181 Hillman Street will adjust its hours beginning Monday, August 9 and will now be available for walk-in COVID-19 vaccinations, with no appointment needed, from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. every Monday through the month of August, and on Tuesday, September 7 on the Labor Day week.

The site is one of many convenient locations where New Bedford residents may get a COVID-19 vaccination, with no appointment needed, and receive a \$20 Dunkin' gift card.

Further announcements about other adjustments to the McCoy Recreation Center's COVID-19 vaccination site will be announced later this summer.

City of New Bedford to require municipal employees to be vaccinated

City among first in nation to adopt requirement as regional vaccination rates remain low; City workers may choose regular testing as alternative.

Mayor Jon Mitchell has announced that the City of New Bedford will require COVID-19 vaccinations of city government

employees. Municipal employees who choose not to be vaccinated may choose instead to be tested regularly for COVID.

As the Delta variant of COVID-19, which is more contagious than past variants, spreads in New Bedford and beyond, it is more important than ever for individuals to be vaccinated to prevent against contracting COVID. Regionally, cases are rising primarily among the unvaccinated, across Bristol County including New Bedford and its suburbs, where vaccination rates remain low. In a little over a month, since the week of June 23, cases have gone from daily increases of low single digits (weekly average: just over one new cases a day), to an average daily increase of 38 cases per day over the past week – with a high of 61 new cases in a single day reported on August 4.

Those who are becoming seriously ill, including requiring hospitalizations, from COVID-19 are overwhelmingly unvaccinated individuals, and the low vaccination rate is contributing to the spread of the disease.

With local vaccination rates remaining low, the early adoption of a municipal employee vaccination requirement, is a clear signal that the City's proactive pandemic response will continue, and it is hoped that the City's leadership on this issue will encourage other local institutions and employers to adopt similar policies for their employees.

With the federal government having announced a vaccination requirement for all of its employees, and with the recent announcement that the Pfizer vaccine is close to full approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a consensus among public health experts has emerged that mandatory vaccination is the most effective remaining strategy for bringing overall vaccination rates to a level that protects the vulnerable and returns stability and normalcy to daily life and the economy.

The announcement is consistent with the proactive approach New Bedford has pursued since the beginning of the pandemic. New

Bedford has often been in the vanguard of forward-thinking, proactive cities that established model initiatives which were then broadly adopted, including becoming the first city in the country to provide a free mask to city residents, taking steps to protect workers at seafood processing, mandating stringent safety requirements at industrial facilities, safeguarding nursing homes and senior living facilities, opening local COVID-19 surge facilities, and offering incentives for vaccines in convenient neighborhood locations across the city.

A policy detailing the vaccination requirement will be released in the near future, but is expected to align closely with those being contemplated by other public and private sector organizations. The City policy will address timing and vaccination deadlines, testing procedures, and reasonable accommodations that will be provided for medical or religious reasons.

The City's vaccination requirement does not extend to employees of New Bedford Public Schools or the New Bedford Port Authority. The City will also work with its public employee unions so that the policy conforms with collective bargaining agreements.

"With its lower vaccination rates, Greater New Bedford is especially vulnerable to the Delta variant," said Mayor Jon Mitchell. "We've made the vaccines readily available, but to ensure that the vulnerable in our region are fully protected, we need to do more. By requiring the City's employees to be vaccinated, we can protect our workforce and their families, and encourage other employers to follow suit."

Massachusetts Gov. Baker announces second round of VaxMillions Giveaway winners

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration, Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg and the Massachusetts State Lottery announced the winners for the second of five drawings for the Massachusetts VaxMillions Giveaway. As part of the giveaway, fully vaccinated residents ages 18 and older are eligible to enter to win one of five, \$1 million cash prizes. Residents between 12-17 years of age who are fully vaccinated may enter for the chance to win one of five \$300,000 scholarship grants.

The winner of this week's \$1 million prize is Donna McNulty of Billerica. Donna is a longtime employee of a small publishing and software company in Billerica. She received her vaccine to protect herself and a friend who is at high risk for COVID due to health issues. Donna plans to use her winnings to support preparing for her retirement in December 2022.

The winner of the \$300,000 college scholarship is Dylan Barron of Norwood. Dylan is a student at Blue Hills Regional Technical School and is going into his Junior year studying automotive. He is still exploring what school he will be attending after graduating. Dylan got vaccinated to keep his family, friends, himself and anyone he comes in contact with safe.