

Acushnet to conduct their fourth community-wide, free COVID testing clinic

"We will be conducting our fourth community-wide, free Covid testing clinic on Saturday, November 7th from 9:00am-noon at the parking lot between the schools on Middle Road.

"These testing clinics are proving to be beneficial to the community. New cases were reported this week with residents taking the appropriate quarantine actions. Obviously we are not catching every non-symptomatic person in town but it is a step in the right direction.

"Every indication is that things will get worse before they get better. We will continue to offer free testing outside (safest method) for as long as the weather cooperates. We will be sharing some news very soon on how we plan on addressing testing during the colder months.

"We have heard some frustrations with accessing test results and those have been passed along to the lab. A few hints, use a desktop to access the website and provide a cellphone number when filling out the paperwork so an access code can be sent by text. If all that fails, call us and we can help.

"Finally, this project is working for Acushnet. By doing testing locally we are able to ensure (through our doctor) that individuals testing positive are contacted as soon as possible. Equally important, residents testing negative are able to know that the personal protection practices that they are using is working!

"This entire project only works because of the dedicate staff and volunteers who are committed to making a difference. Each and every one has my deepest appreciation and respect." -Chief

Kevin A. Gallagher, Acushnet Fire & EMS Department.



Acushnet Fire & EMS Department photo.

Baker announces stay at home advisory, targeted measures to curb rising COVID-19 hospitalizations

Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a series of targeted measures to disrupt the increasing trend of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Governor Charlie Baker announced these changes at a time where public health data has indicated that cases are rising, with cases up by 278% and hospitalizations up by 145% since Labor Day. These measures

are meant to disrupt rising trends now, so the Commonwealth can keep the economy and schools open for residents and to prevent the need to roll back to Phase I or Phase II of the reopening plan.

All orders and advisories will be effective Friday, November 6th at 12:01 AM.

New Orders & Advisories:

Stay At Home Advisory: The Administration issued a revised Stay At Home Advisory to ensure residents avoid unnecessary activities that can lead to increased COVID-19 transmission. The revised Stay At Home Advisory instructs residents to stay home between 10 PM and 5 AM. The Advisory allows for activities such as going to work, running critical errands to get groceries and address health needs, and taking a walk.

Click here to read the revised Stay At Home Advisory: www.mass.gov/stayhome.

Early Closure of Businesses and Activities: Governor Baker issued a new executive order that requires the early closure of certain businesses and activities each night at 9:30 PM. The 9:30 PM closure requirement is aligned with the Stay At Home Advisory and together the two new initiatives are designed to further limit activities that could lead to COVID-19 transmission.

Effective November 6, the following businesses and activities must close to the public each day between the hours of 9:30 PM and 5:00 AM.

- Restaurants (in-person dining must cease at 9:30 PM, although takeout and delivery may continue for food and non-alcoholic beverages, but not alcohol)
- Liquor stores and other retail establishments that sell alcohol must cease alcohol sales at 9:30 PM (but may continue

to sell other products)

- Adult-use marijuana sales must cease at 9:30 PM (not including medical marijuana)
- Indoor & outdoor events
- Theaters/movie theaters (including drive-in movie theaters), and performance venues (indoor and outdoor)
- Youth and adult amateur sports activities
- Golf facilities
- Recreational boating and boating businesses
- Outdoor recreational experiences
- Casinos and horse tracks/simulcast facilities
- Driving and flight schools
- Zoos, botanical gardens, wildlife reserves, nature centers
- Close contact personal services (such as hair and nail salons)
- Gyms, Fitness Centers and Health Clubs
- Indoor and outdoor pools
- Museums/cultural & historical facilities/guided tours

Click **here** to read the new executive order (including full list of businesses required to close at 9:30 PM).

Face Covering Order: Governor Baker also signed an updated order related to face-coverings. The revised order requires all persons to wear face-coverings in all public places, even where they are able to maintain 6 feet of distance from others. The revised order still allows for an exception for residents who cannot wear a face-covering due to a medical or disabling condition, but it allows employers to require employees to provide proof of such a condition. It also allows schools to require that students participating in in-person learning provide proof of such a medical or disabling condition.

Gatherings Order: Governor Baker also signed an updated order restricting gatherings. The new gatherings order reduces the gathering size limit for gatherings at private residences: indoor gatherings at private residences are limited to 10

people and outdoor gatherings at private residences are limited to 25 people. The limit on gatherings held in public spaces and at event venues (e.g. wedding venues) remains the same. The new order also requires that all gatherings (regardless of size or location) must end and disperse by 9:30 PM.

The new gatherings order also requires that organizers of gatherings report known positive COVID-19 cases to the local health department in that community and requires organizers to cooperate with contact tracing. The gatherings order authorizes continued enforcement by local health and police departments and specifies that fines for violating the gathering order will be \$500 for each person above the limit at a particular gathering.

201 new student COVID-19 cases reported in Massachusetts

A total of 286 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Massachusetts schools this week, the highest number in the five weeks the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has been publishing data provided to it by local officials. That number includes 201 cases among students participating in hybrid or fully in-person education, and 85 cases among district staff who had access to school buildings from Oct. 22 to Oct 28.

Among districts reporting student cases this week, Beverly had the highest total, with eight, followed by Braintree and Rockland, with seven each. New Bedford had the most staff

cases, with four, followed by the three each in Haverhill, Waltham and Taunton.

DESE's data shows no new cases logged in Bedford over the past week, but officials in that town sent a note to public school families Thursday, saying that recent "data and contact tracing details from current cases support the occurrence of in-school transmission of COVID-19 at Bedford High School," and that there are eight active cases in the high school community.

"We continue to get reports of gatherings and after-school and weekend 'hang-outs' where lack of social distancing appears to be contributing to transmission. Over the last 2 weeks, 19 new COVID-19 positive cases were identified in Bedford," superintendent Philip Conrad, School Committee chair Dan Brosgol, town manager Sarah Stanton and health and human services director Heidi Porter said in the message where they informed families that Bedford High School would operate in a remote mode for at least the next two weeks.

Baker administration education officials said this week that districts should keep up in-person learning unless the virus is spreading in schools. "It is increasingly clear that schools are not a source of transmission," Education Secretary James Peyser said.

Voting safely during COVID-19

Dr. Michael Rocha, a cardiologist in New Bedford, MA and a member of the COVID19 Action Coalition, a physician-led group that is working to keep everyone safe in MA during this pandemic talks about voting safely in these times of COVID.

Voting in person increases the number of people gathering indoors. Already, we have seen an increase in COVID over the last week in Massachusetts.

These simple steps and tips in this video will help you vote safely and can go a long way to stop the spread.

What to Bring:

- Wear a 2 or more-layer cloth mask that snugly covers your nose and mouth and is secure under your chin.
- Bring your own personal hand sanitizer.
- Bring your own black ink pen.
- Optional protective items include a face shield that can be used over the mask but NOT in place of a mask.
- You also want to avoid masks that have exhalation valves.

Wash Your Hands:

- You may be tired of hearing it but we need to keep washing our hands.
- Wash your hands before entering and after leaving the polling locations.
- While in the polling location, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol frequently, especially after touching surfaces.

Socially Distance:

- Wear your mask and maintain at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) of distance from others.

Try to avoid crowds.

- Use early voting options including in-person(by Oct 30), mail-in, or drop off boxes.
- Vote at off-peak times, such as mid-morning.
- If driving to the polls, monitor the voter line from your car and join it when it's shorter.

Be Prepared:

- Check your voting location and requirements in advance.
- Verify your voter registration information is correct in advance.
- Read Question 1 and 2 and a sample ballot before entering the polling station to be ready to go when you are in the booth.

Be well. Be safe. Let's Beat COVID together and let's vote!

☐☐Source @CDC.gov

New Bedford Public Schools launches online COVID Tracker

In a letter today to New Bedford Public Schools families, staff and students, Superintendent Thomas Anderson announced the launching of a dashboard-style tracker of COVID-19 test positivity rates for the district. Linked directly to the district homepage, www.newbedfordschools.org, the data will be updated weekly.

Emphasizing transparency and noting the district has “been working to ensure families are informed of the most up-to-date information,” Superintendent Anderson stated the work includes strict adherence to health and safety guidelines “in collaboration with the New Bedford Department of Public Health, the Mass. Department of Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). This includes steps we must take to address individuals who test positive.”

If a NBPS student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the contact tracing protocol starts immediately. Any adult or

student who is considered a CDC Close Contact of a person who tests positive is notified by the Public Health Department and/or New Bedford Public Schools. NBPS follows this 5-step protocol:

- 1). Families and staff considered “close contacts” are advised to call their healthcare provider for evaluation and to get a COVID-19 PCR test.
- 2). Children and/or staff in certain classes or in certain schools must stay home during contact tracing.
- 3). If individuals are not notified, they are not close contacts and do not need to be quarantined.
- 4). Specific school cases are communicated directly with the school community.
- 5). If there is a suspected in-school or in-district transmission, the Superintendent will communicate next steps with staff and families as well as with the public. Steps could include: a) closing part of a school, the entire school, or the district for a short time for thorough cleaning; b) closing for the duration of a 14-day quarantine; and c) school will communicate with families about how learning will continue during this time.

Communication is supported by launching the NBPS COVID-19 Tracker on the NBPS homepage to provide timely and updated information about positive cases within the NBPS (updated by 4:00 p.m. every Friday). Please refer to the dashboard for updated information.

The NBPS COVID-19 Tracker is for informational purposes only. Located on the district website homepage, it shares the number of known COVID-19 cases. Tracker data does not include any personally identifiable information and is reported, as required, to DESE. Currently, the Tracker notes: “To date there has been NO evidence of transmission in our schools or offices.”

Superintendent Anderson emphasized, “Families can help by

keeping sick students and those students who have been tested but are awaiting test results at home. If your student is ill, please call your school nurse first so that we can ensure you receive the appropriate information to confirm contact tracing begins immediately. Our communication process is dedicated to supporting the health and safety of our students, staff and families.”

Three New Bedford businesses fined for violating COVID-19 orders to protect residents

The New Bedford Health Department has issued fines to three New Bedford businesses for failure to comply with the City’s COVID-19 regulations and protections for residents.

El Caribe Restaurant at 884 Brock Avenue, Expo’s Convenience Store at 309 Dartmouth Street, and Crown Fried Chicken at 1570 Acushnet Avenue, were each fined for their failure to comply with the regulations. Each business was cited for failure of employees to wear masks.

El Caribe: Fined \$100

Expo’s: Fined \$200

Crown Fried Chicken: Fined \$200

Violation orders were issued the week of October 19 after inspections by the New Bedford Health Department. Businesses and employees are reminded to comply with mask-wearing to keep themselves and others safe.

Earlier this year, Mayor Jon Mitchell and the Board of Health

announced emergency orders to keep employees safe at their place of work, and to outline reporting requirements of COVID-19 in the workplace. The orders include strong measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces.

Businesses will be subject to fines for failure to comply with the City's orders, including failure to protect employees and failure to notify the Health Department of an outbreaks. The orders can be found on New Bedford's COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/health-department/coronavirus/>.

Baker Warns: Thanksgiving celebrations carry huge COVID-19 risks

By Katie Lannan
State House News Service

Holidays will need to look different this year, state officials said as they recommended Thanksgiving celebrations be held virtually or limited to one household to minimize COVID-19 transmission risks.

"The science on this one's pretty clear – gathering in groups indoors for an extended period of time with family and friends is likely the worst possible scenario for spreading the virus," Gov. Charlie Baker said during an afternoon press conference.

Pointing to rising COVID-19 case numbers among Massachusetts residents under age 30, Baker again said people should stop hosting parties and other large social gatherings. He urged

younger people, who may not experience severe symptoms of the respiratory disease, to think about the relatives they might infect, the health care workers gearing up for a second surge, and the children whose ability to attend in-person school hinges on the rate of virus spread.

Baker said his own Thanksgiving celebration this year will be “immediate family, and that’s it,” and said all families should “think long and hard about the well-being of your loved ones before you make your plans.”

For many, a household-only Thanksgiving would represent a smaller get-together than the state’s indoor gathering limit of 25 people or the 10 people allowed to be seated together at a restaurant.

If people do mark the holiday with friends and family outside their household, Baker said, they should limit guests as much as possible, keeping it “to your limited social network, those that you’ve seen on a pretty regular basis.”

Sudders said people should wear masks while together and as they prepare meals, plate each person’s food rather than serving family-style, spend time outside and open doors and windows for ventilation when indoors, and get tested for COVID-19. She said the state is working with testing sites to increase their hours before Thanksgiving.

“There’s just no way around it,” she said. “The holidays need to look and feel very different this year.”

The Department of Public Health suggests keeping visits short and dropping off meals made from traditional family recipes for relatives or neighbors. For those who do plan to celebrate with people they do not live with, the DPH says they should avoid hugging, shaking hands, singing, dancing, shouting or sharing food, and should not gather in-person with older adults, people with certain medical conditions or others at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

The department's holiday recommendations also include seating people with plenty of space instead of at one large table, minimizing contact with others and trips outside the home for 14 days before and after the celebration, and encouraging guests to bring food and drinks for themselves and their household only.

"If people let their guard down, and they don't do their part, all that preparation and all that sacrifice that we've made to bring our numbers down won't be sustained," Baker said. "We can all do our part to stop the spread. It's the simple things that we have to repeat over and over that are the best weapon we have to slow the spread of COVID. Wherever you are, whoever you're with, you should wear a face covering, social distance, practice good hygiene. Stay home if you're sick. Get a test if you think you've been exposed, and don't host or attend gatherings with people who aren't part of your core network."

Baker, who reiterated his call for people to avoid indoor Halloween parties this weekend, said contact tracing indicates that more than half of new cases are attributed to social gatherings and household transmission.

"As we head into this holiday season, as we move indoors, as our cases, as we said almost three weeks ago, have continued to climb, use your head and think about how your actions will affect those around you," he said.

More than 1,000 new COVID-19 cases were logged in Massachusetts each day from Saturday through Tuesday, numbers not previously seen here since May, when the virus trend was on a downward swing from a mid-April surge.

Baker said there has been a "significant increase" in the number of people under age 30 who are testing positive. In April, he said, the under 30 age range represented 15 percent of the COVID-19 caseload, with people over 60 accounting for 42 percent. Now, the under 30 group represents 27 percent of

cases, and the over 60 group 18 percent.

“There is a little good news in there,” Baker said. “It means that our most vulnerable residents have seen a significant decrease in their share of new cases, which has much to do with many of the measures that we put in place over the spring and summer.”

Recent data shows about 300 people per day who are under age 30 testing positive, Baker said.

“We get the fact that for many young people, they have mild symptoms or in some cases no symptoms at all,” the governor said. “But their contact, especially close, informal contact indoors over an extended period of time, like watching a football game on a weekend with older people, or those who have other medical conditions, can create terrible circumstances for many of our most vulnerable.”

Fairhaven's St. Joseph Catholic School retains full staff during pandemic

When Governor Charlie Baker closed all of the schools on Friday, March 13, 2020, all of the Catholic schools within the Diocese of Fall River were able to pivot to a robust remote learning platform on Monday, March 16, 2020. As the weeks turned into months and it became apparent that the end of the school year would end remotely, Catholic school leaders began to plan for the return to school for the 2020-21 academic year.

St. Joseph School in Fairhaven initiated their “Back to School” plans early in the summer amid many uncertainties brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite these uncertainties, the school leaders had a goal to retain all of the faculty and staff from the 2019-20 school year, as many local organizations experienced layoffs due to severe reductions in revenue brought on by the pandemic.



St. Joseph School photo.

Throughout the summer as revisions were made to the “Back to School” plan, St. Joseph’s realized that retaining their full staff was achievable as well as ideal under the new social distancing guidelines set forth by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Health. Moreover, an initial concern about enrollment early in the summer turned into an uptick in inquiries and ultimately an increase in students from the prior year.

“We are so blessed to have a dedicated and passionate faculty and staff,” says Faith Piazza, principal of St. Joseph School. “There were so many changes and unknowns early in the summer that made our goal very challenging. That said, our staff is committed to St. Joseph’s so we wanted to demonstrate our

commitment to them for all of the hard work and time they gave to the remote learning program. There is no better feeling than being able to retain everyone on your team when there are economic challenges all around us.”

Daniel S. Roy, Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Fall River adds, “The past six months have been like no other time in recent history for all of our schools. How our enrollment and subsequent staffing needs for each school would end up was a top priority throughout the summer. St. Joseph School exemplifies commitment, teamwork, and faith that is so well-known in our Catholic schools.”

“Because I was a pre-school aide last school year, I was initially concerned for my job,” according to Jennifer Sherman, second grade teacher at St. Joseph School. “When I was offered a promotion to be the second grade teacher, I was so excited to continue my teaching career at St. Joseph School. My classroom is full this year so it is wonderful to teach all of these students – mostly in-person, but a few remotely – and bring a bit of ‘normalcy’ back into our lives.”

For more information about St. Joseph’s School, please go to www.saintjosephschool.org.

For more information about the Catholic Schools Alliance, please go to <https://www.catholicschoolsalliance.org/we-have-a-place-for-you/>.

About the Catholic Schools Alliance

The Catholic Schools Alliance comprises administrators, teachers, staff, parents and clergy joined in partnership to educate the children of the Diocese of Fall River in Catholic faith and values. Our schools have a demanding educational culture that helps students from across the academic spectrum

reach their God-given potential. With an emphasis on service and respect for the dignity of every person, we prepare students to meet the challenges of today's diverse world and become meaningful contributors to society.

77 Massachusetts towns now in 'Highest Risk' for COVID-19 category

Colin A. Young
State House News Service

Almost one quarter of the cities or towns in Massachusetts are now designated by the state as being at the highest-risk for COVID-19 transmission.

In its weekly update on municipality-specific coronavirus activity, the Department of Public Health said 22 new towns – Ashland, Avon, Boxford, Chicopee, Clinton, Gloucester, Lynnfield, Mattapoisett, Middleborough, Millville, Monson, Norwood, Raynham, Rochester, Scituate, Seekonk, Somerset, Swampscott, West Bridgewater, Westfield, Westport, and Wrentham – have been color-coded red this week, signifying that the average daily incidence rate is more than eight cases per 100,000 residents there, while nine communities – Amherst, Auburn, Dartmouth, East Bridgewater, Holbrook, Littleton, Nantucket, Southborough, and Sunderland – upgraded from the highest-risk category into the moderate risk category.

The 77 communities that are color-coded red and where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is highest are: Abington, Acushnet, Ashland, Attleboro, Avon, Berkley, Boston, Boxford, Brockton,

Buckland, Canton, Chelmsford, Chelsea, Chicopee, Clinton, East Longmeadow, Everett, Fairhaven, Fall River, Framingham, Gloucester, Hanover, Hanson, Haverhill, Hingham, Holliston, Holyoke, Hudson, Kingston, Lawrence, Leicester, Lowell, Lynn, Lynnfield, Malden, Marlborough, Marshfield, Mattapoisett, Methuen, Middleborough, Middleton, Milford, Millville, Milton, Monson, New Bedford, North Andover, Norwood, Oxford, Pembroke, Plymouth, Randolph, Raynham, Revere, Rochester, Rockland, Saugus, Scituate, Seekonk, Shrewsbury, Somerset, Somerville, Springfield, Swampscott, Tyngsborough, Wakefield, Waltham, Webster, West Bridgewater, West Newbury, Westfield, Westport, Weymouth, Winthrop, Woburn, Worcester, and Wrentham.

The statewide average daily case rate over the past 14 days climbed to 9.2 cases per 100,000 residents in the weekly update published Thursday, up from an average of 8.7 cases per 100,000 residents a week ago.

Massachusetts sees nearly 1,000 new COVID-19 cases on Thursday

State House News Service

The Department of Public Health reported more new COVID-19 cases Thursday than it has in months – 986 new cases of the highly-contagious virus that has been spreading largely uncontrolled for months. DPH also reported the recent COVID-19 deaths of 30 people.

Since the virus was first confirmed in Massachusetts on Feb. 1, 143,927 people have been infected and 9,810 people have

died. All four of the main metrics that the Baker administration says it watches to make public health decisions are trending in the wrong direction. The seven-day average of the positive test rate ticked up to 1.4 percent, up more than 75 percent in the last month. The three-day average number of people with COVID-19 in Massachusetts hospitals stands at 519, up more than 40 percent in the last month.

Four hospitals are using surge capacity, up from zero as recently as earlier this week. And the three-day average of the number of COVID-19 deaths is up 60 percent from earlier this month. Despite that, DPH reported Thursday that it sees a “positive trend” on the positive test rate, the number of patients with COVID-19 in hospitals, the state’s testing capacity and its contact tracing capabilities. The number of people who have died of COVID-19 and the health care system’s readiness are assessed as “in progress” in DPH’s latest update.