

# Massachusetts will give vaccine priority to three groups

By Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

Adults over 65 will join frontline health care workers, residents with underlying medical conditions that increase their risks from COVID-19, and other essential workers as the first to qualify for COVID-19 vaccines in Massachusetts, the Baker administration said Tuesday.

During a visit to a new Suffolk Downs testing facility Tuesday, Gov. Charlie Baker outlined a rough sketch of the state's draft plan for distributing an inoculation for the highly infectious virus once it becomes available.

The plan was submitted by the administration to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last week.

"The plan also outlines our messaging efforts to make sure people know, once there is a vaccine available, that it has been approved by the federal government and is safe and effective," Baker said. "We'll also make it a priority to reach out specifically to groups that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including people and communities of color."

Massachusetts can expect between 20,000 and 60,000 doses of a vaccine in the first phase of distribution, according to the plan.

Those on the other end of the age range appear to be driving the most significant chunk of new infections: over the past two weeks, young adults between 20 and 39 represented the

highest positive test rate in the state.

The rising infection numbers – higher on Monday than any day since May, albeit with far more tests conducted – prompted Baker and his top deputies to renew their warnings Tuesday against large gatherings and other unregulated social events.

Asked if the uptick in cases would prompt him to scale back reopening, Baker told reporters that most of the recent growth in infections has come not from dining or other public activities, but instead from “informal events and social gatherings.”

“Those are the places and spaces where, if people are asymptomatic, they will give it to somebody else, and neither of them are wearing a mask, and they’re engaged in close contact over an extended period of time,” Baker said. “That’s exactly what happens when people get together to have a house party or a backyard party or some other celebration – the kinds of stuff we used to do, once upon a time, as a matter of course almost every weekend.”

In recent weeks, the state’s COVID enforcement team has observed several private parties bringing together dozens or hundreds of people – often young – in close quarters and with spotty use of masks, according to Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders.

One event in Everett last month “attracted more than 300 people,” she said.

“Typically, these are held on private property, away from all of our eyes, without the owner’s permission,” Sudders said.

Authorities have in some cases broken up events in progress, citing the state’s ban on large gatherings, or prevented them from taking place.

Both Sudders and Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo pointed to a party

that individuals allegedly attempted to organize in the city for Oct. 10. After noticing promotion of the event on social media, State Police contacted those behind the effort and warned them that going through with it would violate COVID regulations.

Arrigo said during the press conference that an individual was arrested in connection with the incident, though a State Police spokesperson told the News Service the arrest was due to an outstanding warrant “unrelated to COVID guideline violations.”

The defendant, 21-year-old Felipe Moreira Oliveria of Chelsea, was arrested on a warrant for malicious damage to a motor vehicle, Massachusetts State Police spokesperson David Procopio wrote in an email.

“We are assisting the COVID command center in identifying organizers of large-scale events that violate the state’s COVID restrictions on large gatherings,” Procopio said. “As part of that mission we recently identified and located two young adult males who were separately planning rave-type gatherings. We made contact with both men and advised them that the events they were planning were in violation of the state COVID order and instructed them to cease and desist planning and advertising those events. In the process of doing that we determined that one of the young men was the subject of an outstanding criminal warrant unrelated to COVID restrictions.”

Baker said during the press conference that those between the ages of 19 and 39 represent “where the vast majority of the increase in positive tests has been happening.”

According to weekly data published by the Department of Public Health, the 20-to-29 and 30-to-39 age groups posted the second- and third-largest increases in total cases between Sept. 2 and Oct. 14 – lagging only the 0-to-19 group.

In terms of total cases, the 0-to-19 age group saw the largest increase between Sept. 2 and Oct. 14 with 996 more cases counted in the weekly DPH report. The second-highest raw increase was for ages 20 to 29, which jumped 816, while the third-highest was for the 30-to-39 cohort, which grew 730.

Altogether, individuals between 20 and 39 represented about 37 percent of total cases in the past two weeks tracked in the DPH's Oct. 14 report.

As infections trend upward, some local officials have increased their efforts to crack down on the kinds of activities – particularly maskless and in close quarters – that health experts warn are most likely to contribute to viral spread.

Boston Mayor Martin Walsh said last week that city departments are planning to increase enforcement, including fines on violations of COVID-19 regulations.

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## **Bristol Community College's Education Department creates family-friendly COVID-19 information resource**

Students and faculty from Bristol Community College's Education Department, including the college's Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Elementary Education programs, have created a free, family-friendly resource for COVID-19 related information using the increasingly popular new digital platform Padlet.

As a component of the department's curriculum, Bristol's COVID-19 Resources Padlet provides an interactive source for families seeking credible information, videos, websites, activities, stories and books related to the current pandemic. The project was developed by Bristol's Education Department Faculty and Staff members: Engin Atasay, Melissa Cardelli, MaryAnn Casavant and Carole Norberg, to engage students in current program-related resources while assisting the community with valuable information.

Bristol Community College Education Department COVID-19 Resources Padlet:  
[https://padlet.com/melissa\\_cardelli/yhsup5ulu49038rq](https://padlet.com/melissa_cardelli/yhsup5ulu49038rq)

With the guidance of faculty, students in the first year of the ECE program have contributed resources related to mindfulness and assisting children and adults dealing with stress at various levels, while second-year students have contributed activities and materials for children as well as helpful tips for families of children in infant/toddler programs, preschools and elementary schools.

The multiplatform collaboration tool, Padlet, was chosen for its ease of access to community members, by computer or mobile devices, as well as the ability for students to share and interact with content by uploading and creating materials in one central location. Students were also able to utilize the resources they found and share them or incorporate them into their practicum.

The Padlet tool was also already being utilized by Bristol's ECE faculty to support students constructing their final portfolio for the program. The college's ECE faculty hopes to further expand its use, given the ability to present work using a variety of visual and written modalities, supporting different learning styles.

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# Six New Bedford restaurants fined for violations of COVID-19 orders to protect residents

The New Bedford Health Department has issued fines to six New Bedford-based restaurants and bars for failure to comply with the City's COVID-19 regulations and protections for residents.

Hong Kong Restaurant at 2899 Acushnet Avenue, Mikey B's Restaurant at 989 Victoria Street, Taqueria La Raza at 1408 Acushnet Avenue, Whiskey Lounge at 1669 Acushnet Avenue, The Bar at 266 Dartmouth Street, and Casa Benfica at 1484 Acushnet Avenue were fined for their failure to comply with the regulations.

Hong Kong Restaurant, Whiskey Lounge and The Bar were cited for serving alcoholic beverages without food, and for failure for employees to wear masks.

Mikey B's and Taqueria La Raza were cited for failure of employees to wear masks.

Casa Benfica was cited for serving alcoholic beverages without food.

Fines were issued in the following amounts:

Hong Kong Restaurant: Fined \$300

Mike B's Restaurant: Fined \$100

Taqueria La Raza: Fined \$100

Whiskey Lounge: Fined \$300

The Bar: Fined \$300

Casa Benfica: Fined \$100

Violation orders were issued on October 14 after inspections by the New Bedford Police Department and the New Bedford Health Department.

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/>.

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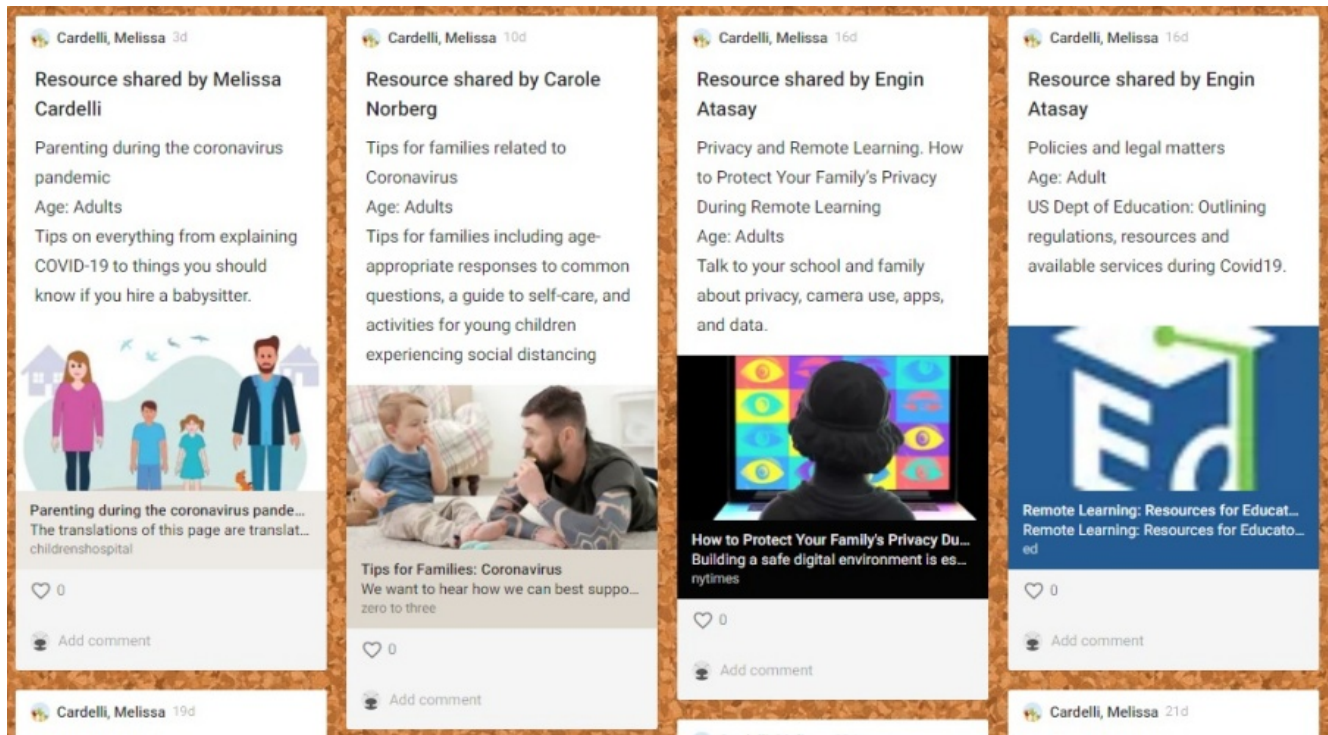
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# 1,922 COVID-19 cases, 39 deaths reported in Massachusetts over long Columbus Day weekend

Colin A. Young  
State House News Service

More than 1,900 new people were confirmed to have COVID-19 over the three-day weekend as single-day positivity rates remained above 3 percent, continuing a trend that began in late September.

The Department of Public Health reported 587 new cases of the coronavirus on Saturday, 570 additional cases on Sunday, and 765 fresh cases on Monday, though the agency said Monday's

total included “data from a national laboratory that had a delay in reporting.” Along with the 1,922 new cases DPH reported 39 recent COVID-19 deaths since Friday, bringing the death toll to 9,617 people. Since Feb. 1, 136,933 people in Massachusetts have become infected with the virus.

Though DPH said Monday the seven-day average of the positive test rate of all tests conducted remained at 1.1 percent, the agency also reported that 4.2 percent of people tested for the first time Friday were found to be positive for COVID-19, 3.4 percent of people first tested Saturday had the virus, and 3.2 percent of people first tested Sunday were confirmed to have COVID-19. The single-day positivity percentage has been above 3 percent since late September, according to DPH.

As of midday Monday, there were 501 people with COVID-19 hospitalized in Massachusetts. That’s down by 30 patients from midday Saturday, but DPH said the three-day average number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients is up 70 percent from the low of about 300 patients in late August. As of midday Monday, 82 people were being treated in an intensive care unit including 32 COVID-19 patients on ventilators.

Dr. David Rosman, president of the Massachusetts Medical Society, took to Twitter each evening this weekend to call attention to trend lines that he said “are still pointing up” and to encourage people to remain vigilant about social distancing and mask-wearing.

“Evening #MA. 765 new #COVID19 cases on 18.8k new tests. That’s not good. Unusually high for a Monday. 3.2% positive. That’s better than the last week which is good. Interesting that # of tests are going up. #StayHealthy #WearAMask #StayHome,” he tweeted Monday.

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# **New Bedford Health Department issues tips for a safe and healthy Halloween**

The New Bedford Health Department is providing tips for a safe, healthy Halloween 2020 during COVID-19.

Halloween will look different this year, but families can still celebrate, and they can do so safely. Many of the tips are habits everyone has already adopted during the pandemic.

Here are some simple tips to keep in mind for Halloween this year.

## **Trick-or-treat safely by keeping good habits.**

- Wear a mask. You can do this under a Halloween mask, or you can wear one with your costume if it doesn't include a mask. Wear a mask at your doorstep or in your yard if you are outside during Halloween.
- Practice social distancing. Stay six feet away from anyone in your group. Don't interact directly with trick-or-treaters.
- Provide your treats without making hand-to-hand contact. Instead of using a bowl to hand out goodies, separate them and leave them on an outdoor surface. Don't hand them out, and don't get close to trick-or-treaters or anyone outside your group. You can also provide hand sanitizer where you leave your goodies.
- Skip Halloween parties or Trunk-or-Treat events because of the large gatherings. Stick with small groups and stay outdoors.
- Keep your group small. Limit group activities to household members when possible. Carry hand sanitizer, and wash your

hands well after trick-or-treating.

- Remember, some people will not be celebrating this year. Respect those who won't be participating in Halloween this year. If the lights are off or goodies aren't offered on the porch, head to the next house that's celebrating Halloween.
- If you are feeling sick or have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19, stay home and don't hand out goodies. Keep your lights off to let trick-or-treaters know.

You can learn more at the CDC's Halloween page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html> or at the state Department of Public Health's Halloween page: <https://www.mass.gov/news/halloween-during-covid-19>.

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## **New Bedford Public Schools “ahead of the curve” adding HEPA air scrubbers to classrooms**

*Schools receive HEPA air filtration units as Phase III of reopening begins.*

New Bedford Public Schools are being equipped with state-of-the-art HEPA air scrubbers as schools began Phase 3 of students' gradual return to classroom instruction this week.

Stressing strict adherence to health and safety protocols, Superintendent Thomas Anderson stated “We are effectively implementing our reopening plan with improved ventilation in

classrooms with over 600 portable air exchange units, improved window functioning, frequent disinfecting, and clear rules on wearing masks for all students and staff, and appropriate distancing.”

The purchase of the HEPA air scrubbers comes in response to a comprehensive study of airflow over the last 3 months. New Bedford Public Schools engaged with a pre-qualified state contract vendor to assess airflow within its school buildings. The objective of the effort was to establish a complete understanding of each school building’s ability to meet and maintain appropriate air exchange and airflow at a healthy level for school reopening.

A district stakeholder group studied the reports. The group included a school committee member, school principals, operations staff and the heads of staff collective bargaining units. Andrew O’Leary, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations, noted, “This comprehensive process puts our district well ahead of the curve in terms of delineating areas needing improvement and addressing them with state of the art equipment,”

Adding that the air scrubbers represent a significant investment to ensure air quality, Mr. O’Leary, said the estimated final cost of the investment is over \$450,000, which is supported by per pupil COVID Relief funding awarded in July.

“Engineers performed a site analysis of 24 sites to review the existing HVAC and ventilation systems. Our month-long review of our ventilation needs has led us to a consensus on widespread deployment of HEPA air purification devices,” Mr. O’ Leary said.

The new air scrubbers come at the start of Phase III of the district reopening plan, October 5. In his weekly video update, Superintendent Anderson stated, “This week we added

Cohort B students, 1,070 in B1 and 1080 in B2, in addition to the current 400 students in Cohort A. These totals equal 19% of our total population of over 13,000 students. Our precautions are in place, including strict enforcement of 6-foot physical distancing and mask wearing for everyone.”

The air scrubber units have a four-stage filter system and an airflow rate of 600 cubic feet per minute, according to the manufacturer’s product data.

Speaking on the distribution plan, Mr. O’Leary said, “The first round of 300 air scrubbers were deployed to the older school buildings last week with a second round of an additional 330 units delivered this week for the secondary schools and newer elementary schools, which all have advanced building management systems.”

The work of the district stakeholder group on airflow also drew from recommendations from the Healthy Buildings initiative of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s guidance on facilities reopening. The review process led to recommended steps for each building type, including initial steps such as opening windows and use of box fans, to air “flush outs” mornings and evenings, to modification of mechanical system settings to maximize outdoor air.

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## **Acushnet and Dartmouth joins New Bedford as COVID-19**

# **“high-risk”**

After seeing case numbers rising over the past few weeks, both Dartmouth and Acushnet were elevated to high-risk by Massachusetts Health Officials which means that there are more than eight cases per 100,000 residents.

This comes as no surprise to Acushnet Police Chief Kevin Gallagher who had been expressing his frustrations over the past few months when it came to his requests for help from the state as far back as July. He felt the state had a lack of interest in helping and had made