

Settlement reached between Massachusetts, plaintiffs in COVID-19 outbreak case at Soldiers' Home

The Baker-Polito Administration announced that a settlement has been reached between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and plaintiffs in a class action lawsuit related to the COVID-19 outbreak at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home in the spring of 2020.

"The COVID-19 outbreak at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home was a terrible tragedy. While we know nothing can bring back those who were lost, we hope that this settlement brings a sense of closure to the loved ones of the veterans," said Governor Charlie Baker.

The agreement is subject to approval by the federal district court for Massachusetts and totals \$56 million. The terms of the settlement will cover veterans who lived at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home at any time between March 1, 2020 and June 23, 2020 and who became ill or died from COVID during that period. Former U.S. Attorney Donald K. Stern will serve as the settlement claims administrator and will make awards to participating claimants based on his review of each claimant's individual circumstances. Estates of deceased veterans would receive a minimum award of \$400,000 and veterans who contracted COVID but survived would receive a minimum of \$10,000. The fund will also provide for payment of court approved attorneys' fees for the plaintiffs.

This settlement, when approved, will resolve all potential claims relating to the outbreak of COVID-19 during the covered period. Claimants will receive further details on the settlement directly from their attorneys and through a court

approved process.

Governor Baker plans to file legislation seeking \$56 million for the claims fund in the coming weeks.

“There is no amount of money that can compensate our clients for the loss of their loved ones. But our clients are grateful that the Commonwealth has acted to resolve this matter without the need for protracted litigation by agreeing to compensate both the families of those who died of COVID, as well as the veterans who survived. The settlement is fair and just,” said Plaintiffs’ lawyer Tom Lesser.

Since 2020, the Baker-Polito Administration has focused on strengthening the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home, and since that time, the Home has passed all required federal inspections. In August 2021, the Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke received accreditation from the Joint Commission following the most recent survey of the facility, with no deficiencies cited in the report. The Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke is also certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Annual surveys are conducted by the VA to maintain certification. Holyoke received VA certification in 2021 and is awaiting final certification following its 2022 inspection.

Upcoming City of New Bedford COVID-19 testing sites, 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. 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; or by calling 617-741-7310.

Note: Project Beacon will be open for its normal hours on Easter Sunday, April 17, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at New Bedford Regional Airport

The federal government is offering free at-home rapid COVID-19 test kits online, at COVIDtests.gov. Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order TWO SETS of four free tests. If you've only ordered one set of four, you are now eligible to order a second set.

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.

Upcoming testing locations in New Bedford include:

Sunday, April 17:

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

Tuesday, April 19:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport

Road) – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday, April 21:

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

Sunday, April 24:

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

Tuesday, April 26:

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

Thursday, May 5:

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

Upcoming City of New Bedford free COVID-19 vaccine clinics

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer first- and second-dose vaccines, CDC-approved booster shots, and pediatric vaccines and boosters for teens 12-17. Bringing your vaccination card when getting a booster is helpful, but not required. Clinics are provided by Seven Hills Behavioral Health, unless otherwise marked.

NOTE: Local vaccine clinics will not be held on Saturday, April 16, and Monday, April 18, due to Easter Weekend and the Patriots Day holiday.

Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations in New Bedford include:

Friday, April 15:

PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Wednesday, April 20:

- Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, all vaccines and boosters for those 5+; walk-ins welcome

Friday, April 22:

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

- WonderBowl (66 Hathaway Road) – 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., provider Purple Shield Medical, Pfizer vaccines and boosters for ages 5 and up, all youth 5 – 18 years old who receive a vaccine or booster dose will get a free hour of bowling; anyone who receives a vaccine will get a \$25 gift card

Saturday, April 23:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

- Buttonwood Park Zoo (425 Hawthorn St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer vaccines and boosters for ages 5 and up, all youth 5 – 18 years old who receive a vaccine or booster dose will get free admission for themselves and an adult; anyone who receives a vaccine will get a \$25 gift card

- WonderBowl (66 Hathaway Road) – 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., provider Purple Shield Medical, Pfizer vaccines and boosters for ages 5 and up, all youth 5 – 18 years old who receive a vaccine or booster dose will get a free hour of bowling; anyone who receives a vaccine will get a \$25 gift card

Sunday, April 24:

- Buttonwood Park Zoo (425 Hawthorn St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer vaccines and boosters for ages 5 and up, all youth 5 – 18 years old who receive a vaccine or booster dose will get free admission for themselves and an adult; anyone who receives a vaccine will get a \$25 gift card

Monday, April 25:

- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Wednesday, April 27:

- Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, all vaccines and boosters for those 5+; walk-ins welcome

Friday, April 29:

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Saturday, April 30:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations:

- Vaccination levels in the region remain low, and daily case

rates remain high. Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 is not only about protecting yourself – it's also about protecting your family, friends, and community. Vaccination is critically important to consider ahead of large gatherings, which can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

State Resources for Vaccine Records, Locations

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has free online services to find your personal vaccine records and local vaccination locations, including many pharmacies.

Access your vaccine records at <https://myvaxrecords.mass.gov/>, and find local listings at <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>.

City of New Bedford announces second round of FREE at-home COVID-19 test kit distribution

City again partnering with community organizations to target vulnerable clients; Public libraries will also serve as distribution locations.

City health and emergency management officials are coordinating with community organizations to distribute free, at-home COVID-19 test kits this week.

In December 2021, the City successfully distributed nearly 38,000 kits (each containing 2 tests) through community organizations using a similar distribution strategy. The

current plan will distribute up to 20,000 at-home COVID-19 testing kits, with each kit containing one “Floflex” antigen test.

With school vacation week and the Easter holiday approaching, and increased travel anticipated, the City is again focusing on local sub-populations that are the least vaccinated and therefore most at risk for illness, as well as sub-populations that have seen disproportionately high case rates.

Priorities include:

- Families with young children
- The unvaccinated
- Those living in congregate housing settings
- People who identify as Hispanic, multi-racial, or as another minority racial/ethnic group

You must be a New Bedford resident to receive test kits. Supplies are limited and may affect availability. Each person may request up to 5 kits.

Parents with vulnerable children are encouraged to obtain kits even if there is no immediate exposure risk or active case in their household. Likewise, even as overall COVID-19 transmission levels remain modest, small business owners (provided they are residents) may wish to consider obtaining kits to help protect vulnerable employees in the event of a future workplace exposure.

LIBRARIES

The distribution plan includes a limited number of “pop-up” distribution events at public libraries, as follows:

- Downtown / Main Library (613 Pleasant St.); 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (April 12, 13, 14)
- Wilks Branch Library (1911 Acushnet Ave.); 12 p.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday (April 12) and Thursday (April 14); and 9 a.m.

to 5 p.m. Wednesday (April 13)

- Howland-Green Branch (3 Rodney French Blvd.); 12 p.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday (April 12) and Thursday (April 14); and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday (April 13)

BACKGROUND ON TEST KITS

Residents use the tests at home. Test results are available in minutes and samples do not need to go to a laboratory. People do not need a cell phone or computer for any part of the test. The tests are effective for all individuals 2 years of age and up, regardless of vaccination status or whether they have symptoms. There is no mechanism with the at-home tests to report results and test results do not need to be reported to public health authorities.

If you test negative, continue to monitor yourself for indications of infection. If you develop symptoms or existing symptoms worsen, take another home test or seek a PCR test at a testing location:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test>.

If you test positive, you should consider confirming your result with a PCR test at a testing location (see link above), isolate consistent with CDC guidelines, and notify any close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

For more information, visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html/>

Governor Baker Awards Additional \$4.5 Million for COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Efforts

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced an additional \$4.5 million in grants to organizations working in communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is a component of the Massachusetts Vaccine Equity Initiative to increase awareness and access to the COVID-19 vaccine and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. The latest grants are part of the Administration's investments of over \$51 million to promote vaccine access and confidence, primarily in communities of color.

The grants are the result of a major funding award from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to the Commonwealth, building on the state's investment to increase vaccine awareness and acceptance. These funds support community organizations and community health centers to continue the work of reducing barriers to vaccine access and promoting vaccines and boosters for communities and populations most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

"These trusted community-based organizations know their communities best," said Public Health Commissioner Margret Cooke. "They use their knowledge and relationships to expand the efforts of our Vaccine Equity Initiative by helping address the unique health equity needs of the communities and populations they serve – needs that have been exacerbated by COVID-19."

This additional \$4.5 million includes:

\$1.1 million in new grants to 26 community- and faith-based

organizations, including Tribal and Indigenous People-serving organizations, in partnership with Health Resources in Action (HRiA). Along with 50 other community organizations currently funded, these organizations will provide culturally appropriate outreach and education on COVID-19 vaccination and mitigation as well as host and promote vaccine clinics for priority populations most impacted by COVID-19. Funded organizations will engage families and children for pediatric vaccinations and boosters.

\$3.1 million for the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers to support 42 community health centers for critical workforce and equipment needs and outreach, education, and navigation support towards COVID-19 vaccination. This funding is in addition to \$5 million being distributed to community health centers for walk-in vaccination services.

\$300,000 to three community organizations to expand the COVID-19 vaccine equity work in rural communities, in partnership with the New England Rural Health Association. With the addition of these grants, the program now funds vaccine equity work serving 143 rural towns.

Award Recipients:

Community Outreach and Education (HRiA) (\$1.1 million)

Grant size: \$15,000 – \$50,000 per organization

African Cultural Services, Inc.

BRIDGE (Berkshire Resources for the Integration of Diverse Groups through Education)

Centro de Apoyo Familiar (CAF)

Chappaquiddick Tribe of the Wampanoag Indian Nation Corporation

Chinese Culture Connection, Inc.

Coalition for a Better Acre

DEAF, Inc.

Dwelling House of Hope, Inc.

Extreme Kid, Inc.

Haitian Community Partners

Haitian Health Institute
Leaving the Streets Ministries, Inc
Love Your Menses
Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health
(MassCOSH)
Metrowest Worker Center (Casa do Trabalhador/Casa del
Trabajador)
MOCHA
Next Leadership Development Corporation
Nigerian American Multi-Service Association (NAMSA)
People Affecting Community Change (PACC Global)
Pioneer Valley Workers Center
South Asian Workers' Center
Springfield Boys and Girls Club
The Black Literacy and Arts Collaborative Project, Inc.
UHAI for Health Inc.
Women Encouraging Empowerment Inc.
YMCA of Greater Boston

Community Health Centers (\$3.1 million)

Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
Bowdoin Street Health Center
Brockton Neighborhood Health Center
Brookside Community Health Center
Cambridge Health Alliance
Caring Health Center, Inc.
Charles River Community Health Center
Codman Square Health Center
Community Health Center of Cape Cod
Community Health Center of Franklin County
Community Health Connections Family Health Center
Community Health Programs
The Dimock Center
DotHouse Health
Duffy Health Center
East Boston Neighborhood Health Center

Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center (Framingham)
Family Health Center of Worcester
Fenway Community Health Center
Greater Lawrence Family Health Center
Greater New Bedford Community Health Center
Greater Roslindale Medical and Dental Center
Harbor Health Services Incorporated
Harvard Street Neighborhood Health Center
HealthFirst Family Care Center
Hilltown Community Health Center
Holyoke Health Center, Inc.
Island Health Care
Lowell Community Health Center
Lynn Community Health Center
Manet Community Health Center
Mattapan Community Health Center
North End Waterfront Health
North Shore Community Health Center
Outer Cape Health Services
South Boston Community Health Center
South Cove Community Health Center
Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center
Springfield Health Services for the Homeless
SSTAR Family Healthcare Center
Upham's Corner Health Center
Whittier Street Health Center

Rural Vaccine Program (\$300,000)

Hilltown CDC

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Nantucket Board of Health/ Health Imperatives/ Community
Foundation for Nantucket

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. 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; 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. 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.

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.

Upcoming free COVID-19 vaccine clinics, boosters, pediatric vaccines for the City of New Bedford

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer first- and second-dose vaccines, CDC-approved booster shots, and pediatric vaccines and boosters for teens 12-17. Bringing your vaccination card when getting a booster is helpful, but not required. Clinics are provided by Seven Hills Behavioral Health.

Note: Monday, April 4 will be the last "Monday at McCoy" clinic. Future Monday vaccine clinics will be at former Fire Station 11, at 754 Brock Ave. in the South End.

Visit vaxnb.com for updated schedules of local COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations. Upcoming vaccine locations in New Bedford include:

Friday, April 1:

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Saturday, April 2:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Monday, April 4:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Wednesday, April 6:

- Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, all vaccines and boosters for those 5+; walk-ins welcome

Friday, April 8:

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Saturday, April 9:

- Andrea McCoy Recreation Center (181 Hillman St.) – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17
- Buttonwood Park Zoo (425 Hawthorn St.) – 12 p.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for adults and children
Any child age 5 – 18 who gets vaccinated at the clinic will receive free admission to the zoo's Easter EGG-Stravaganza for that day, April 9

Monday, April 11:

- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Wednesday, April 13:

- Community Economic Development Center (1501 Acushnet Ave.) – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, all vaccines and boosters for those 5+; walk-ins welcome

Friday, April 15:

- PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, w/ pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11 years old & boosters for teens 12-17

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations:

Vaccination levels in the region remain low, and daily case rates remain high. Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 is not only about protecting yourself – it's also about protecting your family, friends, and community. Vaccination is critically important to consider ahead of large gatherings, which can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

State Resources for Vaccine Records, Locations

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has free online services to find your personal vaccine records and local vaccination locations, including many pharmacies.

Access your vaccine records at <https://myvaxrecords.mass.gov/>, and find local listings at <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>.

Governor Baker Announces Availability of Second COVID-19 Booster Dose for Residents 50 and Older, Immunocompromised Individuals

Following updated recommendations from the federal government, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced that all

residents aged 50 and older or individuals who are younger with certain medical conditions may now access a second COVID-19 booster. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Tuesday recommended that certain immunocompromised individuals and all individuals over the age of 50 get an additional booster dose of COVID-19 vaccines. The decision follows authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for a second booster dose for these groups four months after receiving a first booster of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. Those eligible include:

- Individuals 50 years of age and older at least 4 months after getting a first booster
- Individuals 18 and older with certain medical conditions may get a second Moderna booster at least 4 months after first booster
- Individuals 12 and older with certain medical conditions may get a second Pfizer booster at least 4 months after the first booster.
- Separately and in addition, per the CDC, individuals 18 and older who received a primary vaccine and booster dose of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine at least 4 months ago may now receive a second booster dose using an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

Residents may access booster doses from more than 1,000 locations, with appointments readily available for booking across the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has capacity to administer over 150,000 boosters weekly across the state.

"Vaccines including boosters are the most effective and widely available tool we have to prevent COVID infection, severe disease, and death," said Dr. Larry Madoff, Medical Director of DPH's Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences. "It is important that everyone stay up to date on their vaccines. If residents have questions about whether they are eligible to get an additional booster dose, DPH encourages you to talk with your doctor."

If you are eligible, here are the steps to find a convenient location for getting a second COVID-19 Booster:

- Visit the Vaxfinder tool at vaxfinder.mass.gov for a full list of hundreds of locations to receive a booster and to book an appointment.
- For individuals who are unable to use Vaxfinder, or have difficulty accessing the internet, the COVID-19 Vaccine Resource Line (Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.) is available for assistance by calling 2-1-1 and following the prompts. This service is available in English and Spanish and has translators available in approximately 100 additional languages.
- Individuals with questions about the booster or their eligibility should contact their healthcare provider.
- Vaccines are widely available across the Commonwealth. Getting vaccinated remains the most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves, their families, and their community. Fully vaccinated residents should receive a COVID-19 booster shot when they are eligible to increase their protection against COVID-19 and its variants.

The COVID-19 booster is safe, effective, and free. Additional information on the COVID-19 booster, including FAQs, can be found at mass.gov/COVID19booster.

Massachusetts leads the nation in vaccine administration, over 80% of the eligible population (5+) is fully vaccinated, and more than half are boosted. According to Bloomberg, the Commonwealth currently ranks 5th in the nation for percent of population with a booster dose.

Seafood workers twice as likely to contract COVID-19

A recent University of New Hampshire study on the direct and indirect effects of the global pandemic on U.S. seafood workers demonstrated that seafood workers – those in processing plants and on fishing vessels – are twice as likely to contract COVID-19 when compared to workers in any other food industry. The study was published in the journal *PeerJ Life & Environment*.

The study demonstrates that one of the largest contributing factors to the higher rates was that social distancing was difficult to maintain in plants and on vessels because of the assembly line nature of production which required them to be within close proximity to one another. This, in spite of the fact that precautions were incorporated: reducing the number of employees on the processing lines and spacing them apart. This measure backfired because, with fewer workers processing and packaging products, it meant longer shifts to meet the demand which increased exposure times.

“We hope this research sets the foundation for future practices in the seafood sector in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, improving the overall workplace and recognizing the importance of collecting systematic social and economic data about workers.”-Easton White, Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences, University of New Hampshire.

Cases of COVID-19 were found in *all* U.S. coastal areas, however, Alaska which is home to 60% of the U.S. commercial fisheries, experienced the largest number of outbreaks with most cases in Dutch Harbor and the Aleutian Islands.

In contrast to Alaska, New Bedford’s preemptive response to COVID-19 was shown to be exemplary in the effectiveness of

reducing coronavirus cases. New Bedford was one of the first to open both testing centers and vaccination sites specifically for seafood workers and this led to limiting the number of cases and outbreaks.

The study suggested examining how differences in seafood distribution accelerated the COVID-19 pandemic and how it changed the seafood value chain overall. Studying the adverse effect the COVID policies had on the physical and mental health of the employees was perhaps the most important of all.

Dartmouth officials visit with Wampanoag Tribe Covid distribution center in Dartmouth

On Saturday, March 26, 2022, several Dartmouth officials visited the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) PPE/Covid Distribution drive being run in Dartmouth for the region's tribal members.

Clyde Andrews and Katie Marden, both members of the Tribe, volunteered and distributed PPE, equipment, home test kits and other cleaning supplies. P

Pictured above is School Committee member Chris Oliver along with Christopher Pereira and Clyde Andrews. School Committee member John Nunes and Select Board member John Haran were also in attendance throughout the day.

Also attached are members of the Defend Dartmouth Ballot

Question Committee who attended the distribution to support the Tribe. Pictured above are Chris Pereira, Mike Mattos, Clyde Andrews, George Marcotte and Shelly Zhang.



Defend Dartmouth photo.



Defend Dartmouth photo.



Defend Dartmouth photo.