

Reopening Massachusetts: Baker initiates transition to second phase on Monday

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced that Phase II of the Commonwealth's reopening plan will begin on June 8th.

Businesses and sectors set to begin opening in Phase II are subject to compliance with all mandatory safety standards.

On May 18, the Administration released a four-phased plan to reopen the economy based on public health data, spending at least three weeks in each phase. Key public health data, such as new cases and hospitalizations, has been closely monitored and seen a significant decline allowing for Phase II to begin on June 8th.

The public health dashboard designating the progress of key COVID-19 data metrics has been updated to reflect the number of COVID-19 patients in Massachusetts hospitals to green, indicating a positive trend.

Since mid-April, the 7-day average for the positive COVID-19 test rate is down 82 percent, the 3-day average of hospitalized patients is down 55 percent, and the number of hospitals in surge is down 76 percent.

A total of 630,000 viral COVID-19 tests have been completed, and testing continues to increase throughout the state.

The following businesses will be eligible to reopen in Step One of Phase II on June 8, with contingencies:

- Retail, with occupancy limits;
- Childcare facilities and day camps, with detailed guidance;
- Restaurants, outdoor table service only;

- Hotels and other lodgings, no events, functions or meetings;
- Warehouses and distribution centers;
- Personal services without close physical contact, such as home cleaning, photography, window washing, career coaching and education tutoring;
- Post-secondary, higher education, vocational-tech and occupation schools for the purpose of completing graduation requirements;
- Youth and adult amateur sports, with detailed guidance;
- Outdoor recreation facilities
- Professional sports practices, no games or public admissions;
- Non-athletic youth instructional classes in arts, education or life skills and in groups of less than 10;
- Driving and flight schools
- Outdoor historical spaces, no functions, gatherings or guided tours;
- Funeral homes, with occupancy limits

The following businesses will be eligible reopen in Step Two of Phase II at a later date to be determined:

- Indoor table service at restaurants
- Close-contact personal services, with restrictions, including:
 - Hair removal and replacement
 - Nail care
 - Skin care
 - Massage therapy
 - Makeup salons and makeup application services
 - Tanning salons
 - Tattoo, piercing and body art services
 - Personal training, with restrictions

Full list and safety protocols available at www.mass.gov/reopening.

The Baker-Polito Administration also released other sector

specific guidance:

Health care providers may also incrementally resume in-person elective, non-urgent procedures and services, including routine office visits, dental visits and vision care subject to compliance with public health and safety standards. All other in-person medical, behavioral health, dental and vision services may also resume on June 8th, except for elective cosmetic procedures and in-person day programs, which will be included in Phase III. Telehealth must continue to be utilized and prioritized to the greatest extent possible, whenever feasible and appropriate.

Limited reopening of visitation will also begin, and all visitation is subject to infection control protocol, social distancing and face coverings. Given the diversity of facilities and programs, there are specific timetables for visitation, and congregate care programs will be reaching out to families with specific details on scheduling visits.

Fairhaven's "Our Lady of Angels Feast" cancels due to Coronavirus concerns

"It is with a sad heart as I send out this post to notify the public that the Our Lady of Angels Feast in Fairhaven which is held on Labor Day weekend will be canceled due to COVID-19.

Our main concern is the well being of our members and patrons, this year would have been our 90th anniversary, we will celebrate the 90th next year and it will be bigger and better.

Till then please stay safe and healthy, can't wait to see you all there in 2021, with Love club President John Barbosa."

Eight more COVID-19 related deaths reported in New Bedford in the past three days

While the COVID-19 infections continue to decrease, the COVID-19 related death numbers aren't decreasing. New Bedford health officials reported three additional COVID-19 related deaths since Thursday, eight in the past three days, bringing the total to 80 in the city.

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 15 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford on Friday, **bringing the total positive cases in the city to 1,953, up from 1,938 on Thursday.**

28 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Fall River for the second consecutive day, according to the Mayor's Office. This brings the total in Fall River to 1,419. Full details **here.**

The Department of Correction (DOC) announced Thursday that it met its goal on Monday of conducting universal COVID-19 testing, with 7,679 tests performed as of Wednesday and many inmates having been tested more than once. Full details **here.**

President Trump set to visit Maine on Friday

Michael P. Norton

State House News Service

As Gov. Baker mulls ways to safely reopen businesses and on the heels of a jobs report showing the national jobless rate falling to 13.3 percent, President Donald Trump is scheduled to visit Maine on Friday.

On Friday afternoon, Trump plans to participate in a roundtable with commercial fishermen in Bangor before visiting Guilford where he plans to tour Puritan Medical Products. He's due back at the White House early Friday evening.

There are reports that the Trump administration is warming to the idea of spending \$1 trillion in another round of economic stimulus as the nation tries to get back on its feet following the blow delivered by COVID-19. With many businesses itching to restart and avoid collapsing, Baker on Saturday plans to detail the timing of the second phase of his planned economic reopening. Massachusetts next week will mark its third full month in a state of emergency.

In a move with potential impacts on environmental policies, Trump signed an executive order Thursday instructing federal agencies to speed infrastructure projects and giving his agencies under his oversight 30 days to submit a list of projects that are being put on a fast track. Trump rarely visits New England and his arrival is expected to draw protesters amidst a growing movement for government and people to confront social injustices and systemic racism.

Massachusetts Department of Correction completes universal testing in prisons

Michael P. Norton
State House News Service

The Department of Correction (DOC) announced Thursday that it met its goal on Monday of conducting universal COVID-19 testing, with 7,679 tests performed as of Wednesday and many inmates having been tested more than once.

So far, according to the DOC, 390 inmates have tested positive, for a positivity rate of 5.07 percent. Of those cases, 339 inmates have recovered and about 50 have an active diagnosis. There have been three or fewer positive cases at 11 of the 16 facilities that DOC oversees, with no positive cases at seven facilities. The testing was conducted by mobile teams consisting of DOC employees and workers at Wellpath, which provides medical services to the department. The Department of Fire Services and Brewster Ambulance Service also helped with testing.

Mobile testing will continue within all facilities on a “strategic basis” and “any inmate who meets criteria for testing is tested, and any inmate requiring a hospital-level of care is hospitalized.” The department confirmed eight COVID-19 deaths to date.

New Bedford officials report two more COVID-19 related deaths on Thursday

New Bedford health officials reported two additional COVID-19 related deaths since Wednesday, five in the past two days, bringing the total to 77.

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 15 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford on Thursday, **bringing the total positive cases in the city to 1,938, up from 1,923 on Wednesday.**

28 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Fall River, according to the Mayor's Office. This brings the total in Fall River to 1,391. Full details **here.**

Gov. Charlie Baker brushed off the idea of imposing a statewide curfew on Monday after violence followed protests against police brutality a day earlier, and criticized President Donald Trump's leadership as "nowhere to be found" amid a time of massive social upheaval. Full details **here.**

Bristol County Sheriff's Office weekly COVID update: 6 BCSO staff members and 7

inmates test positive

Six Bristol County Sheriff's Office staff members and seven county inmates have tested positive for COVID-19 since May 28.

Five of the six staff members to test positive since May 28 are corrections officers while the other is a classification counselor. The six new cases brings the BCSO total to 40 staff members since the beginning of March. Of those 40, 27 have recovered and returned to duty and 12 remain away from the facility recovering, all of whom are expected to be fine and return in the coming weeks. One individual resigned after recovering.

The seven new cases brings the total number of county inmates who have tested positive for COVID to 39, 24 of whom have recovered and returned to general population. Eleven remain in medical isolation being monitored by health care professionals and four were released as their sentences ended.

Over the past few months, the Bristol County Sheriff's Office has instituted many protocols to protect inmates, detainees and staff from the Coronavirus outbreak. Some of those measures include:

- All employees were given masks that must be worn inside the secure perimeter of our facilities. All inmates and detainees have also been given masks to wear for protection.
- All areas of the facility are being cleaned\disinfected every day on every shift.
- All staff members are being screened before entering the buildings; new arriving inmates are being screened before being accepted into custody.
- In-person visitation has been suspended to limit the number of people coming in and out.

Distribution of masks continues with New Bedford Wards 3 and 4

MaskNB, an initiative announced by Mayor Jon Mitchell in partnership with the Southeastern Massachusetts chapter of the American Red Cross and Joseph Abboud Manufacturing Corporation, will continue mask distribution this weekend, June 6 and 7, at New Bedford High School's parking lot.

Distribution began last week, with thousands of masks provided to residents of Ward 1 and Ward 2. The distribution of cloth masks at no cost to City residents continues with Ward 3 and 4 residents this weekend, as the distribution is organized by Ward. The distribution will be done through an organized drive-through system for cars, observing social distancing. Residents are asked to limit their mask requests to those in their household and/or any elderly or vulnerable neighbors (who have been advised against leaving their homes).

On Saturday, June 6, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., residents of Ward 3 may pick up masks at New Bedford High School's parking lot, 230 Hathaway Boulevard. Ward 3 contains many central areas of the city including the neighborhoods around New Bedford High School, the neighborhoods on and around Hathaway Road, most of Sawyer Street and its intersecting roads, and the neighborhoods off Mount Pleasant Street between Austin Street and Nauset Street.

On Sunday, June 7, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., residents of Ward 4 may pick up masks at New Bedford High School's parking lot, 230 Hathaway Boulevard. Ward 4 is located in the center

and south of the center of the city, including the downtown area, most of the streets between Elm and Parker Street, including Kempton Street east of Rockdale Avenue and its intersecting streets, and the neighborhoods to the south of the downtown, along Purchase Street south to Rivet Street. Residents of Ward 5 and Ward 6 may pick up masks the weekend of June 13 and 14.

Any resident who is unsure of the Ward in which they live may visit wheredoivotema.com and enter their address. This website provides polling location, and the first information noted is the Ward in which the resident lives. Residents do not need to be registered voters to use this online tool.

Under the MaskNB distribution plan, interested residents in each of the City's six Wards will have an opportunity to obtain free cloth face masks at New Bedford High School, 230 Hathaway Boulevard, on the following assigned dates and times:

Ward 3: Saturday, June 6 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 4: Sunday, June 7 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 5: Saturday, June 13 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 6: Sunday, June 14 – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Ward 1 and Ward 2 distribution took place last weekend. The dates are listed at www.masknb.com. Additional dates may be announced based on available supplies.

Residents should arrive at the main vehicle entrance of New Bedford High School, located at 230 Hathaway Boulevard, and remain in their vehicles as Red Cross volunteers hand out masks based on their requests. Residents are asked to limit their mask requests to those in their household and/or any elderly or vulnerable neighbors (who have been advised against leaving their homes).

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced the MaskNB initiative on May 14. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend the wearing of cloth face coverings in public where social

distancing is difficult to maintain; cloth face coverings are not a substitute for medical-grade masks, but provide more protection against the spread of viruses than not covering one's face. More information about the use and effectiveness of cloth face coverings to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

Protests, coronavirus leave Massachusetts in “balancing act”

Matt Murphy

State House News Service

Thousands of people congregating night after night to protest police brutality and the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis poses a risk for the spread of COVID-19, Gov. Charlie Baker acknowledged on Wednesday, but the governor said the state has no intention of trying to discourage these types of gatherings.

“Any time there’s big gatherings with close quarters the potential for spread is real,” Baker said, calling it a “balancing act” between public health and First Amendment rights.

“We are still in the midst of a terribly dangerous and wildly contagious virus and this is certainly going to be a risk,” Baker said.

Baker addressed the protests first thing at a State House press conference on Wednesday after demonstrations in Boston and Brockton the night before, which included some clashes between protesters and police. The governor did not have a briefing on Tuesday, making these his first comments since Monday when he addressed the violence and vandalism in Boston over the weekend and President Donald Trump's insistence that governors "dominate" protesters.

On Monday, Baker said people attending the protests were still largely going with people they know and suggested it shouldn't hamper contact tracing efforts too badly.

The governor on Wednesday thanked those who have been demonstrating peacefully, and who wore masks while doing so, and credited members of law enforcement who worked to give people a safe space to make their voices heard.

"The country needs empathy not hostility," Baker said. "The [country] needs to heal, not fracture. And here in the commonwealth we plan to continue to talk, listen and push progress forward."

The governor said he and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito continue to talk with Black and Latinx elected officials, faith and community leaders and law enforcement about ways to "enhance transparency and accountability across the Massachusetts law enforcement system," including the idea of standards of conduct for police and the ability to strip a police officer's certification if those standards are violated.

The protests have sprung up throughout Massachusetts just as the state was appearing to make real progress in its fight against the spread of COVID-19, and it could be a couple of weeks before public health officials understand the full impact of these demonstrations on their ability to control the virus.

By then, Massachusetts could be well into Phase Two of the

governor's reopening strategy, which will include both outdoor and indoor athletic facilities, though sporting activities will be severely limited to start.



“Any time there’s big gatherings with close quarters the potential for spread is real,” Gov. Charlie Baker said Wednesday, calling it a “balancing act” between public health and First Amendment rights. [Photo: Sam Doran/SHNS]

Outdoor fields, courts, pools and boating facilities could reopen as soon as next week for organized youth and adult sports, but Lt Gov. Karyn Polito said contact sports like basketball, baseball and soccer will be limited to no-contact drills and practices when Massachusetts moves into the next phase of its reopening.

Tennis matches, for instance, could resume, but a baseball tournament would still be off limits.

“I know how different time has been for many families that have children in sports used to spending time together on the

sidelines, in the bleachers, cheering our kids on. It's one of the greatest joys," said Polito, who has two teenagers, active in sports. "It's been even tougher for our kids that miss their friends and their teammates and the togetherness they feel as they practice and enjoy their time competing in games and events that are a big part of their lives."

New guidance released Wednesday from the administration on outdoor and indoor athletic activities also said that indoor sports facilities may reopen only for organized and supervised sports activities for youth under 18, and groups must be limited in size to 10 participants and games or scrimmages are still prohibited.

Multiple groups of players will be permitted to practice on a basketball court or field, but should stay 20 feet from the nearest group, according to the rules.

Fitness centers, yoga and spin studios, rock gyms, and other general fitness studios will remain closed in Phase Two, as will locker rooms and weight rooms.

The release of rules for youth and adult recreational sports comes as the Baker administration is preparing different sectors for their opportunity to reopen if and when the state moves into Phase Two.

Baker plans to make the announcement on Saturday whether the state is ready to move to that phase, which could begin as soon as Monday, but could also be pushed back later. The governor did, however, point to encouraging signs in Tuesday's public health report with respect to the positive test rate and hospitalizations.

The percent of tests coming back positive for COVID-19 was about 6 percent on Tuesday, which is down from 27 percent in mid-April, and the 1,657 patients hospitalized with the disease is down by half over the past month.

"These positive trends in the public health data are the primary indicators of how COVID-19 is impacting our communities and will continue to determine how and when we pursue measures associated with our reopening program," Baker said.

The positive test rate was down to 5.1 percent on Wednesday and rolling seven-day average dipped below 6 percent, while hospitalizations were up slightly in the daily report by 27 patients.

Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders also said that for the first time on Wednesday the state will begin reporting the number of people who have recovered from COVID-19, which will give a better glimpse at how many people in Massachusetts might be currently infected with virus.

After not holding a press briefing on Tuesday, Baker was joined on Wednesday by Early Education and Care Commissioner Samantha Aigner-Treworgy to walk through some of the child care reopening protocols that were announced on Monday.

Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy also spoke about the new guidelines retailers will have to follow when they get to expand operations in Phase Two, and Sudders ran through some of the results of auditing done at the state's nursing homes to measure their preparedness to deal with COVID-19.

For the first time in months on Wednesday, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and other long-term care settings were allowed to let in visitors for outdoor, pre-scheduled visits with residents and patients.

And Baker, who has talked frequently about the emotional challenge of not being able to see his father during this pandemic, said he will soon be availing himself of the new guidelines.

"I am going to go see my dad. Soon," he said.

New Bedford officials report three more COVID-19 related deaths since Tuesday

New Bedford health officials reported three additional COVID-19 related deaths since Tuesday bringing the total to 75.

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 40 additional confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Bedford on Wednesday, **bringing the total positive cases in the city to 1,923, up from 1,883 on Tuesday.**

25 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Fall River, according to the Mayor's Office. This brings the total in Fall River to 1,363. Full details **here.**

Gov. Charlie Baker brushed off the idea of imposing a statewide curfew on Monday after violence followed protests against police brutality a day earlier, and criticized President Donald Trump's leadership as "nowhere to be found" amid a time of massive social upheaval. Full details **here.**