

FREE upcoming walk-up COVID-19 vaccine clinics, boosters for New Bedford

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer CDC-approved booster shots, in addition to first- and second-dose vaccines and, at most locations, pediatric vaccines and boosters for teens 12-17. Please bring your vaccination card when getting a booster.

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

Saturday, Feb. 5:

- 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

Sunday, Feb. 6:

- Workers Community Center / Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores (1534 Acushnet Ave.) – 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J & J, boosters, pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17
- Keith Middle School (225 Hathaway Boulevard) – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Monday, Feb. 7:

- 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

Tuesday, Feb. 8:

- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment

required, call 508-992-6553.

Thursday, Feb. 10:

- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.) – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment required, call 508-992-6553
- Hayden McFadden Elementary School (361 Cedar Grove St.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17
- Alfred J. Gomes Elementary School (286 S. 2nd St.) – 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Friday, Feb. 11:

- 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, Feb. 12:

- 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, especially during winter months: 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 during the winter months, when indoor gatherings 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/>.

Upcoming COVID-19 testing sites for New Bedford; how to order 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 scheduled for its regular dates next week, Sunday through Thursday.

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.

For walk-up testing, Seven Hills Behavioral Health offers free services at former Fire Station 11 in the South End on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and at PAACA on Coggeshall St. on Wednesday.

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:

Sunday, Feb. 6:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 7:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 8:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 9:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Seven Hills at PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 10:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 11:

- Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 13:

- Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

COVID-19 Testing Sunday at New Bedford Airport Canceled Due to Blizzard

The COVID-19 testing clinic scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 30, at New Bedford Regional Airport has been canceled due to the blizzard forecast for late Friday through Saturday in the region.

Project Beacon's appointment-based COVID-19 testing at New Bedford Regional Airport—part of the state's Stop the Spread program—could resume its regular schedule Monday, if conditions allow. Everyone with a test appointment for Sunday has been notified and provided with rescheduling assistance, a Project Beacon official said Friday.

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.

The availability of Monday's testing clinic provided by Seven Hills Behavioral Health at former Fire Station 11 in the South End—walk-up, with no appointment necessary—also will depend on weather conditions over the weekend.

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:

Monday, Jan. 31 (if conditions allow):

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 1:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 2:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Seven Hills at PAACA (360 Coggeshall St.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 3:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 4:

Former Fire Station 11 (754 Brock Ave.) – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 6:

Project Beacon at New Bedford Regional Airport (1569 Airport Road) – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

New Bedford COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics Canceled Jan. 29-30 Due to Storm

The blizzard forecast for Friday evening through Saturday in southeastern Massachusetts and much of the East Coast has canceled local COVID-19 vaccine clinics this weekend.

The vaccine clinic provided by Seven Hills Behavioral Health at the Andrea McCoy Recreation Center at 181 Hillman St. has been canceled for Saturday, Jan. 29, and the clinic at the Workers Community Center / Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores, 1534 Acushnet Ave., has been canceled for Sunday, Jan. 30.

Testing could resume at Andrea McCoy on Monday, Jan. 31, if conditions allow. The Workers Community Center clinic has been rescheduled for Sunday, Feb. 6.

Free, walk-up COVID-19 clinics in New Bedford offer CDC-approved booster shots, in addition to first- and second-dose vaccines and, at most locations, pediatric vaccines and boosters for teens 12-17. Please bring your vaccination card when getting a booster.

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

Monday, Jan. 31 (if conditions allow):

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

Tuesday, Feb. 1:

Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.)
– 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment
required, call 508-992-6553

Thursday, Feb. 3:

Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (874 Purchase St.)
– 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, appointment
required, call 508-992-6553

Casimir Pulaski Elementary School (1097 Braley Road.) – 3:30
p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for
children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Friday, Feb. 4:

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, Feb. 5:

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

Sunday, Feb. 6:

Workers Community Center / Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores
(1534 Acushnet Ave.) – 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J
& J, boosters, pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11,
boosters for teens 12-17

Keith Middle School (225 Hathaway Boulevard) – 10 a.m. to 2
p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11,
boosters for teens 12-17

Reminder on the importance of vaccinations, especially during
winter months: 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 during the winter months,

when indoor gatherings 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/>.

New York man arrested for COVID-19 relief fraud scheme; applied for PUA and PPP in Massachusetts

“A New York Man was arrested today on charges arising from a scheme to fraudulently obtain business loans and unemployment pandemic relief funds made available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Ronald Buie, 35, was charged with one count of wire fraud. Buie will make an initial appearance in federal court in the Eastern District of New York this afternoon and will appear in Boston at a later date.

According to the charging documents, Buie engaged in a scheme to defraud the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) by submitting fraudulent applications for loans offered in connection with the CARES Act. It is alleged that Buie applied for SBA loans under various false identities for which he had

also opened bank accounts and email accounts. Buie also allegedly submitted fraudulent documentation to apply for and obtain a fraudulent loan from the SBA Paycheck Protection Program for his company, Platinum Car Service LLC.

Specifically, in support of his loan application, Buie allegedly provided what he purported to be a monthly bank statement for his business checking account showing an ending balance of more than \$198,000, whereas bank records for that particular month show that the actual balance was less than \$3,000. In addition, it is alleged that Buie's scheme also involved the utilization of various false identities to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits.

The charge of wire fraud provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; Frederick J. Regan, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Secret Service, Boston

Field Office; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations; and Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the United States Postal Inspection Service, made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was provided by the U.S. Secret Service, New York Field Office; Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance; and the New York City Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney William F. Abely, Chief of Rollins' Criminal Division, is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law." -Massachusetts Department of Justice.

Boosters Vital as New Bedford Sees More Than 360 COVID-19 Cases per Day, Test Positivity Near 30%

With the city averaging 365 new cases of COVID-19 per day over the past two weeks and the test positivity rate at 29.9 percent, booster shots remain critical, along with vaccines, masks, and social distancing. More than 55 percent of New Bedford residents are fully vaccinated, but only 19.5 percent of residents have received a booster, well below the statewide booster rate of more than 46 percent.

Boosters are critically important for eligible people – those who completed their vaccinations two months ago, for Johnson &

Johnson; five months ago, for Pfizer; and six months ago, for Moderna – as immunity from vaccines can wane. Booster shots can reduce risks of hospitalization and severe illness, and are particularly important given the omicron variant, which may be more likely to evade immune responses.

While Pfizer boosters have been approved for teens 12 and older, younger age groups in New Bedford have the lowest rates of booster shots. Less than 10 percent of residents 12 to 29 years old have received a booster, and just 14 percent of residents 30 to 49 years old. More than 46 percent of residents 75 and older and 47 percent of residents 65 to 74, however, have received the vital support to initial vaccines, according to state data.

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Saturday, Jan. 22:

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

Sunday, Jan. 23:

Workers Community Center / Centro Comunitario de Trabajadores (1534 Acushnet Ave.) – 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J & J, boosters, pediatric vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Monday, Jan. 24:

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, Jan. 26:

Cape Verdean Veterans Memorial Hall (561 Purchase St.), – 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Thursday, Jan. 27:

William Taylor Elementary School (71 Portland St.) – 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Pfizer, Moderna, boosters, vaccines for children 5 – 11, boosters for teens 12-17

Friday, Jan. 28:

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, especially during winter months: 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 during the winter months, when indoor gatherings can lead to super-spreader events, clusters, hospitalizations, and severe illness among people who are unvaccinated.

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FDA Takes Actions to Expand Use of Treatment for Outpatients with Mild-to-Moderate COVID-19

On Friday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration took two actions to expand the use of the antiviral drug Veklury (remdesivir) to certain non-hospitalized adults and pediatric patients for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 disease. This provides another treatment option to reduce the risk of hospitalization in high-risk patients. Previously, the use of Veklury was limited to patients requiring hospitalization.

“On the heels of the FDA’s recent authorization of two oral antiviral drugs, today’s actions bolster the arsenal of therapeutics to treat COVID-19 and respond to the surge of the omicron variant,” said Patrizia Cavazzoni, M.D., director of the FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. “Today’s actions provide adults and pediatric patients, with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk of severe COVID-19, with a treatment option they could receive outside of a traditional inpatient hospital setting, including at skilled nursing facilities, home healthcare settings and outpatient facilities such as infusion centers.”

Veklury is not a substitute for vaccination in individuals for whom COVID-19 vaccination and a booster dose are recommended. The FDA has approved one vaccine and authorized others to prevent COVID-19 and the serious clinical outcomes associated with COVID-19, including hospitalization and death. The FDA urges the public to get vaccinated and receive a booster if eligible. Learn more about FDA-approved or -authorized COVID-19 vaccines.

The FDA has expanded the approved indication for Veklury to include its use in adults and pediatric patients (12 years of age and older who weigh at least 40 kilograms, which is about 88 pounds) with positive results of direct SARS-CoV-2 viral testing, and who are not hospitalized and have mild-to-moderate COVID-19, and are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death.

The agency also revised the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for Veklury to additionally authorize the drug for treatment of pediatric patients weighing 3.5 kilograms to less than 40 kilograms or pediatric patients less than 12 years of age weighing at least 3.5 kilograms, with positive results of direct SARS-CoV-2 viral testing, and who are not hospitalized and have mild-to-moderate COVID-19, and are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death.

Based on today's actions, these high-risk non-hospitalized patients may receive Veklury via intravenous infusion for a total of three days for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 disease.

The approval of Veklury for use in non-hospitalized patients is supported by a randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trial that included 562 non-hospitalized patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 who were at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death. The main outcome measured in the trial was whether a patient was hospitalized for any COVID-19 related reason or died from any reason within 28 days of treatment. Overall, 2 of 279 patients who received Veklury (0.7%) required COVID-19 related hospitalization compared to 15 of 283 patients who received a placebo (5.3%). There were no deaths in either group.

Pediatric patients for whom Veklury is authorized will receive doses adjusted for their body weight in order to achieve comparable exposures to adults and pediatric patients

receiving the approved dose. Given the similar course of COVID-19 disease, the authorization of Veklury in certain pediatric patients is based on extrapolation of efficacy from adequate and well-controlled studies in adults.

Important details about using Veklury to treat COVID-19 for its approved use is available in the prescribing information, which includes dosing instructions, potential side effects and drug interactions. Possible side effects include increased levels of liver enzymes, which may be a sign of liver injury; and allergic reactions, which may include changes in blood pressure and heart rate, low blood oxygen level, fever, shortness of breath, wheezing, swelling (e.g., lips, around eyes, under the skin), rash, nausea, sweating or shivering. Similar safety information about using Veklury to treat COVID-19 in certain non-hospitalized pediatric patients under the EUA is available in the fact sheets for health care providers and parents/caregivers.

The FDA granted approval and reissued the revised EUA to Gilead Sciences Inc.

Massachusetts man dies of COVID while waiting for hospital bed

Days after Thanksgiving, Antonios “Tony” Tsantinis, 68, of East Brookfield announced on his business’s social media page that he would be closing the doors of his restaurant, Athens Pizza, because he and his companion Angela DiUlio had both contracted COVID-19.

As Tsantinis's condition worsened, his daughter Rona Tsantinis-Roy brought him to a Southbridge hospital. However, as the illness progressed the hospital realized that they could not provide the care he needed so they began to call around for an available hospital bed.

After days of trying to find Tsantinis a bed within a 75 miles area, the hospital found one in Connecticut. Sadly, his condition was so dire – he was on a ventilator and his kidneys failed to the point that he needed dialysis – that moving him was not an option.

Shortly after, Antonios "Tony" Tsantinis passed away.

Tsantinis was an anti-vaxxer and therefore was not vaccinated.

The Brimfield Fire Department who considered Tsantinis a friend released a statement after hearing about his passing:

"With heavy hearts, we would like to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of a friend of ours. Antonios Tsantinis- or as most know him "Tony" from Athens Pizza.

He was always a friendly face whether you chatted in town or while stopping in to pick up lunch or dinner. Countless times, Tony and Angela stayed open late to make sure the fire and highway departments had food during long storms- always throwing in extra drinks and chips to make sure we had enough.

A family man and a successful business owner are only two things on a long list of good Tony has done. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this time.

Brimfield lost a good one, Rest In Peace Tony."



Facebook photo.

Southcoast Health is offering walk-in vaccine appointments January 19th & 20th at Vanity Fair in Dartmouth

Southcoast Health will be accepting walk-ins at the Vanity Fair Vaccination Clinic located at 375 Faunce Corner Road in Dartmouth on:

Wednesday, January 19 from 10:30am – 3:30pm

Thursday, January 20 from 11:30am – 6pm.

The clinic is offering first, second, and third dose options, with no appointment needed.

COVID-19 vaccines are free, safe, and effective at helping

protect against severe disease and death from the virus that causes COVID-19, including known variants currently circulating (e.g., omicron variant).

For more information regarding COVID-19 vaccines, boosters and testing [click here:](https://www.southcoast.org/covid-19-vaccination/)
<https://www.southcoast.org/covid-19-vaccination/>

Michigan man arrested for fraud, identity theft that allowed him to receive Massachusetts PUA

A Michigan man was arrested yesterday in Michigan in connection with his alleged involvement in a fraudulent scheme to obtain COVID-19-related unemployment assistance.

Devin Smith, 30, was charged with one count of wire fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft. Smith was released on conditions following an initial appearance in federal court in Michigan yesterday afternoon. He will appear in federal court in Boston at a later date.

In March 2020, in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). The CARES Act provided funding to existing state unemployment insurance programs and created a new temporary federal program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). The PUA program, which in Massachusetts was administered by the Department of Unemployment Assistance, provided unemployment insurance benefits for individuals who

are not eligible for other types of unemployment benefits.

According to the charging document, Smith participated in a scheme to obtain proceeds from fraudulent unemployment and PUA claims submitted in nine different states, including Massachusetts, between March and May 2020. Smith allegedly used stolen identities, including the identities of Massachusetts residents, to submit fraudulent unemployment and PUA claims and to purchase various commercial goods. Additionally, it is alleged that Smith filed multiple fraudulent unemployment and PUA claims in his own name in six different states, including in Massachusetts.

The charge of wire fraud provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release, a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater, and forfeiture. The charge of aggravated identity theft provides for a mandatory sentence of two years in prison to be served consecutively to any other sentence imposed. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations made the announcement today. Valuable assistance in the investigation was provided by the U.S. Postal Service and the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Markham of Rollins' Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit is prosecuting the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate

and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.