

# **New Bedford announces establishment of two regional care centers for COVID-19**

New Bedford, Massachusetts— Mayor Jon Mitchell, Southcoast Health President and CEO Keith Hovan, and representatives of Essex Group Management Corporation today announced two Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Care Centers in New Bedford for those recovering from COVID-19.

This week, the City entered into leases with the owner of two former nursing home facilities at 1123 Rockdale Avenue and 4586 Acushnet Avenue, which will be operated by Essex Group's nonprofit Buttonwood Healthcare division, while Southcoast Health will serve as the medical and clinical lead.

The Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Care Centers will serve as post-hospital recovery centers for patients recovering from COVID-19. Patients admitted to the hospital with COVID-19 may need extended recovery time from the illness and/or may need additional time to be released from quarantine, utilizing one of these care centers. The care centers may also accommodate patients who have been tested and require quarantine, in a separate unit with private rooms at the facilities, until test results are complete.

In these cases, the patient may be transferred to one of these care centers, until they can be safely discharged to their home or transferred to another healthcare setting. The Rockdale Avenue site has 107 beds and the Acushnet Avenue site has 123 beds. Both will be staffed by physicians and advanced practice nurses who are committed to seeing that patients are cared for and treated.

More than three weeks ago, recognizing the need to increase

capacity of the region's health care system to manage a surge of COVID-19 patients, the City began to explore potential sites to serve as recovery centers for patients whose condition requires medical care, but are not serious enough to remain in the hospital. Having identified the Rockdale Avenue and Acushnet Avenue as the most suitable sites for this purpose, the City deployed its Department of Facilities and Fleet Management to bring, with the owner's permission, the facilities back to life. Since then, DFFM exhaustively has cleaned the facilities, completed repairs to the plumbing, heating and electrical systems, re-certified the elevators, removed and replaced furniture and equipment, upgraded kitchens reestablished the security systems, and landscaped their exteriors.

With the work underway, the City began discussions with Southcoast Health, the region's leading healthcare provider, to serve as the medical lead for the facilities. With the assistance of the Massachusetts Senior Care Association, Southcoast Health in turn reached out to Essex Group, which operates two nursing homes in Greater New Bedford, to serve as the facility operator. The Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services agreed to a service funding arrangement similar to those in place at state run COVID-19 facilities in other parts of the state. The City itself has agreed to be the lessor of the properties.

The facilities are slated to be ready to open the week of April 13, pending the state's authorization to exempt this type of facility and those who work in it from civil liability for COVID-19-related care. Yesterday, Governor Baker filed legislation toward this end. The facility will serve Southcoast Health's coverage area throughout Southeastern Massachusetts.

"As the saying goes, the big players step up in the big games. In the midst of the most threatening health crisis of our lifetimes, our city employees, Southcoast Health and Essex

embraced the challenge before them and have worked together to set up facilities that will help save lives. I am grateful to Southcoast Health and Essex Group for their steady and invaluable partnership on this effort, and to the city team's initiative and tireless effort," said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

Southcoast physicians and medical professionals are committed to providing the care necessary for patients with COVID-19 who will be discharged to one of these post-acute care centers in New Bedford. Each facility will be staffed with Southcoast physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, advanced practice providers, and certified nursing assistants.

Southcoast's Dr. Himesh Sheth will serve as medical director for the Rockdale Avenue center, officials said, and the not-for-profit community health system's Infection Prevention team will be available for consultative support and guidance. A Southcoast physician will also serve as medical director at the Acushnet Avenue care center.

"With many of our models indicating a 'when, not if' scenario for a surge in patient volume due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been working closely with Mayors Mitchell and Coogan, the town of Wareham and other municipalities, Essex Group, area businesses, our local legislative delegation, Governor Baker's administration, and the Department of Public Health to establish more capacity in Southeastern Massachusetts," Southcoast President and CEO Keith Hovan said. "Our pledge to the communities we serve is that Southcoast will do everything in our power, including through partnerships like this one, to protect our patients and frontline staff as we combat this public health crisis."

Essex Group, through its nonprofit Buttonwood Healthcare division, is the management company that will operate the two care centers, and ensure compliance with federal and state regulations and adherence to Center for Disease Control and

Medicare guidelines for COVID-19 recovery treatment. An operator of elder services facilities, Essex Group is the owner and operator of Brandon Woods of New Bedford and Brandon Woods of Dartmouth. Both centers will operate as the Southeastern Massachusetts Recovery Centers, Buttonwood Healthcare Facilities.

“To paraphrase Steve Jobs, ‘Great things in a crisis are never done by one person, they are done by a team of people,’” Essex Group Management Corporation CEO Frank Romano said.

The care centers are a collaborative effort among healthcare systems in Southeastern Massachusetts. Hawthorn Medical Associates, an affiliate of the Steward Health Care Network, as well as the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, are among the local healthcare systems supporting the establishment of the centers and have committed to collaborating to support the centers.

Mayor Mitchell declared a state of emergency in New Bedford on March 13 due to the COVID-19 outbreak and has acted to enforce social distancing measures, including the closure of personal care businesses and playgrounds, to protect public health during the state of emergency.

On April 1, Mayor Mitchell and the Board of Health acted to protect residents including seniors in New Bedford by announcing strict measures on wellness checks, quarantining, and isolation requirements for senior living facilities, nursing homes, and group residences. These facilities are subject to regular inspection and are required to implement mandatory, stringent health-based measures for all staff members and residents, and failure to comply can result in a fine of up to \$500 per day.

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# New Bedford reports 102 COVID-19 cases Thursday morning

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 102 positive cases of COVID-19 Thursday morning, up from the **81 cases they reported on Wednesday** and up from 71 on Tuesday. Mayor Mitchell also reported **New Bedford's first two COVID-19 related deaths on Wednesday**.

On April 8, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,588 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 15,202. This is an increase over Tuesday's 1,365 reported cases. 77 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 433. Full details **here**.

A correctional officer and a K9 officer from the Bristol County Sheriff's Office have tested positive for COVID-19. Full details **here**.

The City of New Bedford is slated to receive \$1,624,151 in funding through the CDB20-COVID Recovery Grant Fund and \$805,424 in funding through the ESG20-COVID Recovery Grant, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Full details **here**.

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced an expansion of COVID-19 testing sites for public safety personnel, new Crisis Standards of Care documentation for the Commonwealth's health care facilities, and new guidance to further promote social distancing at grocery stores. Full details **here**.

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# People leaving quarantine in Massachusetts – the under-reported data

While COVID-19 related deaths and positive test numbers dominate the headlines, not much attention is given to those who have recovered or left quarantine. Here's a look at the numbers in Massachusetts and around the world.

As of April 8, the Massachusetts Public Health Department **reported that the state added 1,588 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 15,202.** This is an increase over Tuesday's 1,365 reported cases. 77 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 433. Full details **here.**

Governor Baker has repeatedly stated that the worst is yet to come between 10-20 April, so prepared for a spike in testing, confirmed cases and death. Yesterday, **Mayor Jon Mitchell reported New Bedford's first two COVID-19 related deaths.** Details **here.**

As of April 7, 13,027 individuals in Massachusetts have been quarantined with 5,402 of those completing the monitoring and no longer in quarantine. 7,625 individuals are currently undergoing monitoring/under quarantine. Across America, there have been 432,438 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 14,808 COVID-19 related deaths. 24,125 have recovered. Worldwide, there have been a total of 1,498,833 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 89,733 total deaths and 337,074 recovered.

Testing capacity in Massachusetts has been increasing almost daily. As of April 8, 87,511 people in Massachusetts have been

tested for COVID-19 – 6,167 in the past 24 hours, a sharp rise over the previous day's total of 4,915.

I'm not a doctor or an expert on this disease, so I won't provide an analysis of these numbers. I just think it's important to start reporting the COVID-19 recovery numbers.

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## **New Bedford Public Schools 'Grab n' Go Meals' schedule changes begin April 9**

New Bedford Public Schools free student meals distribution program to adjust schedule:

### **Week of April 6-10, 2020**

New Bedford Public Schools' free Grab n' Go student meal distribution program continues as usual at the eight Grab n' Go locations from Monday, April 6 through Thursday, April 9, 2020. However, there will be no meal distribution on Friday April 10, 2020 (Good Friday). On Thursday, April 9 students will be provided meals to cover breakfast and lunch for Thursday, Friday and Monday.

### **Week of April 13-17, 2020**

Beginning the week of April 13, Grab n' Go meal distribution will be available only on Tuesday and Friday. Tuesday meal distribution: students will be provided meals to cover breakfast and lunch for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Friday meal distribution: students will be provided meals to cover breakfast and lunch for Friday and two additional days.

Grab n' Go meals can be picked up at meal site locations 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for each child (18 years old or younger) during the NBPS school closure due to COVID-19. All meals must be taken and consumed off-site. Grab n' Go locations include: Campbell, Carney, Gomes, Hayden-McFadden and Lincoln Elementary Schools, Keith and Roosevelt Middle Schools, and 52 Walker Street (Brickenwood Housing Development).

New Bedford Public Schools Food Services has distributed nearly 32,000 meals to date.

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## **77 more COVID-19 related deaths reported in Massachusetts, single day high**

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As of 4 pm today, 87511 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 6,167 in the past 24 hours, a sharp rise over the previous day's total of 4,915.



New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported Wednesday



morning that New Bedford had its first two deaths related to COVID-19 and now has 81 positive cases of COVID-19, up from the **71 cases they reported on Tuesday** and up from 65 on Monday. The New Bedford residents that passed away were in their 80s and 90s.

Mayor Mitchell broke the news this morning on Twitter:

“I am saddened to announce the Covid-related deaths of two #Newbedford residents. Our city’s prayers are with their families.”

Fall River has 74 total COVID-19 cases, but daily cases stay low for a fifth straight day. Full details **here**.

A correctional officer and a K9 officer from the Bristol County Sheriff’s Office have tested positive for COVID-19. Full details **here**.

The town of Dartmouth reversed its recently stated policy of not sharing updates on the specifics on COVID-19 cases. Only a few short weeks ago some Massachusetts towns had instituted the policy, but residents quickly condemned it and preferred being informed. Full details **here**.

Brockton has seven times the amount of positive COVID-19 cases as comparably sized cities in Massachusetts like New Bedford and Fall River and 147 more cases than Worcester, which has almost 100,000 more people. Full details **here**.

The Boston Police Department and FBI are warning people of fraudulent emails/phone calls from scammers looking to hijack COVID-19 stimulus checks. Full details **here**.

As of April 6, the total amount of cases in The United States is 399,929 with 12,912 total deaths.

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# Gov. Baker: Testing Site Expansion, New Restrictions For Grocery Stores, Crisis Standards of Care Recommendations

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced an expansion of COVID-19 testing sites for public safety personnel, new Crisis Standards of Care documentation for the Commonwealth's health care facilities, and new guidance to further promote social distancing at grocery stores.

**Testing Sites Expansion:** The Baker-Polito Administration today announced that COVID-19 testing for Massachusetts public safety personnel will be available at a second location beginning tomorrow, doubling the number of free, drive-through tests available for first responders and other emergency management workers. A mobile testing site at the Big E fairgrounds in West Springfield will begin operations tomorrow, and will supplement a site at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough that launched earlier this week. Each site will serve police officers, firefighters, EMS and PSAP personnel, correction officers, mortuary service providers, and state active duty National Guard personnel who perform critical public safety functions.

The mobile testing sites in Foxborough and West Springfield will each perform up to 200 tests per day, seven days per week, with appointments scheduled in advance by agencies and departments through a call center at the Executive Office of

Public Safety and Security. Testing is performed at no charge. The sites reflect a partnership among the Baker-Polito Administration, the Big E, Brewster Ambulance Service, the Department of Correction, the Department of Fire Services, the New England Patriots, the New England Revolution, Wellpath, and Quest Diagnostics.

**Crisis Standards of Care:** The Administration today released Crisis Standards of Care guidelines for the Commonwealth's health care facilities. Upon the request of leaders in the health care system, the Department of Public Health (DPH) convened a Crisis Standards of Care Advisory Committee that included medical experts and ethicists from across the Commonwealth, representing both large academic medical centers and community hospitals. Their recommendations helped inform ethical, equitable and transparent guidelines for providing acute care during a crisis.

The guidelines, which are not mandatory, are designed to:

- Help health care institutions and providers make consistent decisions about the use and allocation of scarce medical resources;
- Ensure that critical resources are conserved and distributed efficiently, equitably and ethically across the health care system;
- Promote transparent decision-making and public trust in the fairness and equity of the system;
- Protect those who might otherwise face barriers to accessing care; and
- Assure patients and their families that they will receive fair access to care under the circumstances regardless of where they live in the Commonwealth.

Click **here** to read the Crisis Standards of Care document.

**Grocery Store Guidance:** Yesterday, the Department of Public Health released further guidance to promote social distancing

at grocery stores. The new guidance requires that each grocery store limit occupancy to 40% of its maximum permitted occupancy level (except stores with a maximum occupancy of less than 25 people). It also sets out procedures by which staff should monitor occupancy levels. The guidance builds on a previous March 23 order for grocery stores, which set out policies for ensuring access to handwashing facilities and protecting employees in higher-risk populations, among other requirements.

Order-grocery-stores-40-percent-4.7.2020

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## **Two Bristol County Sheriff staffers have tested positive for COVID-19**

A correctional officer and a K9 officer from the Bristol County Sheriff's Office have tested positive for COVID-19.

"Both are feeling well," Bristol County Sheriff Thomas M. Hodgson said. "They have some minor symptoms but both said, overall, that they're feeling okay. That's very encouraging."

The correctional officer's last shift was March 31. He didn't feel well in the days following, received a COVID-19 test, and informed the BCSO of the positive result this week. He will be out of work until tests are negative and he is cleared by a doctor.

He works in a specialized housing unit inside the men's facility. His unit was empty on his last day and had one inmate in the days prior. The inmate has shown no symptoms of

## Coronavirus.

The K9 officer didn't feel well in the days after his last shift on March 28, received a test and notified the BCSO of the positive result this week. He has no inmate contact and extremely limited contact with staff and the community as his primary responsibility on third shift is securing the outside perimeter of the Dartmouth correctional complex.

His K9 partner is showing no symptoms. Although the CDC has not received any reports of pets/companion animals becoming sick in the United States, the K9 officer is taking extra precautions and following CDC guidelines by limiting contact with his four-legged partner.

These security staffers are the second and third staff members of the BCSO to have tested positive for COVID-19. A nurse from Correctional Psychiatric Services, the BCSO's contracted medical vendor, previously tested positive for the virus, has recovered, and is cleared to return to work this week.

Over the past month, 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. Inmates and detainees will also be given masks; we anticipate our orders to be fulfilled by the end of the week.
- 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.

"I couldn't be more proud of our staff. Everyone on our team

has been extremely self-disciplined about the protocols and procedures in place to prevent the spread of this disease. Their dedication and commitment to our professional standards and operational disciplines is testament to the 100% score they earned on our last two national accreditations audits," Sheriff Hodgson said. "The inmates, as well, have been very focused on hygiene and doing their part to flatten the curve. We're all in this together."

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## New Bedford reports first deaths related to COVID-19, positive test count now at 81

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported Wednesday morning that New Bedford had its first two deaths related to COVID-19 and now has 81 positive cases of COVID-19, up from the **71 cases they reported on Tuesday** and up from 65 on Monday. The New Bedford residents that passed away were in their 80s and 90s.

Mayor Mitchell broke the news this morning on Twitter:

"I am saddened to announce the Covid-related deaths of two #Newbedford residents. Our city's prayers are with their families."

On April 7, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,365 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 15,202. This is a slight increase over Monday's 1,337 reported cases. 96 new deaths were reported in the past three days bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 356. Full details **here**.

As of 4 pm Tuesday, 81,344 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19 – 4,915 in the past 24 hours.

**Brockton has seven times the amount of positive COVID-19 cases** as comparably sized cities in Massachusetts like New Bedford and Fall River and 147 more cases than Worcester, which has almost 100,000 more people. Full details **here**.

The City of New Bedford is slated to receive \$1,624,151 in funding through the CDB20-COVID Recovery Grant Fund and \$805,424 in funding through the ESG20-COVID Recovery Grant, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Full details **here**.

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## **Acushnet Fire & EMS receives protective equipment including N95 masks**

“On Wednesday, April 8, 2020:

A very big THANK YOU to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for delivering two pallets of Personal Protective Equipment to our department.

Also, how can we ever thank the Patriots and Governor Baker for making the arrangements for us, in Acushnet, to get N95 masks from China!

Thank you Mr. Kraft, it almost makes the pain of losing TB12 go away (not really).”



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## Town of Dartmouth confirms 31 cases of Covid-19

The town of Dartmouth reversed its recently stated policy of not sharing updates on the specifics on COVID-19 cases. Only a few short weeks ago some Massachusetts towns had instituted the policy, but residents quickly condemned it and preferred being informed.



As of April 7th, there are 31 confirmed cases of the virus according to Director of Public Health Chris Michaud and those cases are not centered in a so-called “hot spot,” but spread evenly throughout the town. Considering the nature of the virus whereby an individual may be infected yet show no symptoms, the number is likely to be higher – a number that will be made more accurate as testing becomes more prevalent.

Those who have tested positive are placed in self-quarantine limiting their movement within that household to one room if they live with others, or to have food and supplies delivered if they live alone. In addition, anyone who has had close-contact with an infected person is asked to self-quarantine for 2 weeks.