

# Massachusetts Restricts Visitors to Nursing Home, Rest Homes to Reduce Risk of Coronavirus

The Baker-Polito Administration released policies restricting visitors to nursing homes and rest homes in order to protect older adults at higher risk for Coronavirus (COVID-19) and other respiratory illness. Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, Department of Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel and their teams reviewed the guidance with long term care facility operators via teleconference today.

This action follows Governor Charlie Baker's Tuesday declaration of a State of Emergency in Massachusetts that was ratified by the Public Health Council earlier today granting the Commissioner of Public Health with the authority to implement the Governor's State of Emergency.

With this authority, the Commissioner of Public Health issued an order requiring all facilities – nursing and rest homes – to actively screen all visitors and to take measures to restrict visitors under certain circumstances.

"Everyone has a role to play to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus outbreak in Massachusetts, and it's particularly important that we take precautions to keep older adults and those with health conditions safe," said Governor Charlie Baker. "This new guidance for long-term care facilities is critical to protecting older adults from COVID-19 and we appreciate the public's willingness to observe these important rules for the foreseeable future."

"Today's actions are being taken to protect older adults that are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus and other

respiratory diseases, as we have seen as its spread across the world, including the United States,” said Secretary Marylou Sudders. “Massachusetts, as we all know has an aging population – with 20% of residents being over 60 – and so we needed to act to protect our older residents, especially those in long term care facilities.”

“Our goal at DPH is to protect the health and well-being of all Massachusetts residents, especially those at highest risk for COVID-19,” said Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. “We will continue to update our guidance as this outbreak evolves.”

This guidance outlines how these facilities should protect older adult residents, who are at higher risk for Coronavirus. The guidance includes the following restrictions:

- Banning visitors who show signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection (fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat)
- Visitors will be prohibited if in the last 14 days they had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, are under investigation for COVID-19 or has been sick
- Visitors will be prohibited if they have travelled internationally in the last 14 days or are residing in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring
- Visitors will not be allowed to visit long term care facilities if they currently feel sick or exhibit symptoms

In addition to specific recommendations for long term care facilities, the Administration updated its guidance to the general public, specifically urging older adults and those with health issues to avoid large crowds and events. Individuals who live in households with vulnerable people, like elderly parents, should also consider avoiding crowds to mitigate risk. This guidance is posted on the Department of Public Health’s website, [www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus](http://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

The public is reminded of steps to take to limit the spread of COVID-19:

- Cover your mouth – when you cough or sneeze use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands
- Wash your hands – with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based sanitizing gel
- Stay home if you are sick – and avoid close contact with others

The Administration will continue to update the public on further developments and individuals are encouraged to consult both the Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites for the most up to date information.

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# **Massachusetts Coronavirus Quarantine Numbers Pass 1,000, Most Have Completed Monitoring**

By Chris Lisinski  
State House News Service

More than 1,000 Massachusetts residents have been subjected to quarantine since the start of a coronavirus outbreak in the state, about 60 percent of whom have completed monitoring.

The latest numbers from the state released Wednesday showed 445 individuals are under quarantine or undergoing monitoring for the COVID-19 illness, while another 638 finished that

process and are no longer in quarantine.

Since last week, the last time public health officials released quarantine numbers, the total number of Bay Staters who are in or have completed quarantine increased about 300. Over that same span, the amount of confirmed COVID-19 cases ballooned from just one to 92.

A daily update on cases is expected around 4 p.m. Wednesday.

Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency on Tuesday and imposed limits on state employee travel as the state began shifting its approach to focus on mitigation. The governor encouraged employers to let employees work remotely, if possible.

Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel said the state is “at a critical point in this outbreak,” particularly because some of the seven cases in Berkshire County could not be traced back to international travel or to an isolated and known source of transmission.

On Wednesday morning, Bharel received new authority to take prompt actions as necessary during the state’s response to the virus.

Following a vote from the Public Health Council, Bharel will have the sole authority to order isolation or quarantine for patients in coronavirus cases, which under statute normally requires action from her in conjunction with the council. Local boards of health can also issue similar orders.

The council also voted unanimously Wednesday to give Bharel broader authority to take prompt action in response to any unforeseen developments as part of the public health emergency.

“Our goal is to prevent the spread in our communities and reduce the number of people infected,” Bharel said.

The emergency declaration, she said, “prepares us for the potential of what’s to come.”

All but one of the state’s 92 COVID-19 cases are presumptive positive, meaning they have not yet been confirmed by the CDC. Public health officials said 70 cases trace back to a late February executive meeting that Biogen held in Boston.

Council members raised concerns at the meeting about the impact on health care workers and on municipalities. Dr. Edward Bernstein, a professor of emergency medicine at Boston University, asked about plans to limit exposure for hospital workers and other providers as well as patients.

Bharel replied that the state would offer frequent communication across the health care system, and she said the state received confirmation Tuesday that it will receive additional personal protective equipment from a national stockpile to supplement “dwindling supplies.”

“In Berkshire County, we’re working with them so their health care workers and their patients can be prioritized to be tested there,” Bharel said, noting that Centers for Disease Control guidelines currently allow the tests only for patients displaying symptoms.

Responding to a question from Upton Town Manager Derek Brindisi about municipal access to protective equipment and hand sanitizer, Bharel said materials the state will receive from the national stockpile are ‘for all individuals who need it appropriately.’

The state expanded its testing capacity from 50 patients per day to 200 and recently received another 2,000 testing kits, each of which can handle multiple patients. However, only the State Public Health Laboratory can conduct tests, and other hospitals or commercial laboratories cannot do so until they get approval from federal authorities.

Bharel said it will be “very helpful” for other labs to gain that ability as council members noted the importance of further increasing testing capacity.

“It doesn’t seem that 2,000 tests is going to meet the exponential curve we’re seeing in other states,” Bernstein said.

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# **With Emergency Declaration, Massachusetts Adopts New Coronavirus Strategy**

By Matt Murphy and Colin A. Young  
State House News Service

With the number of cases of coronavirus more than doubling from the day before, Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency Tuesday and imposed broad restrictions on travel for many state employees as Massachusetts moved into a new phase of its response to the global viral outbreak.

Baker had been in Utah on vacation since Friday night, but opted to return to Massachusetts a couple days early as the situation on the ground worsened and the number of coronavirus cases climbed to 92, up from 41 just a day before.

Seventy of those cases, public officials said, were linked to a leadership meeting of Biogen employees in Boston in late February, but additional cases, including a handful in the Berkshires, had no known origin and are being treated as the first evidence of “community spread.”



Massachusetts Public Health statistics as of 10 March.

Baker's declaration of a state of emergency puts Massachusetts in the company of neighboring states like Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island, where those state governors have already taken a similar step.

The escalation of the state's response came as a wide array of private institutions began limiting large gatherings and canceling conferences and non-essential travel, and the **city of Boston canceled its upcoming St. Patrick's Day parade** and the political breakfast on Sunday.

"There's no question that the efforts to mitigate the spread of this virus will be disruptive," Baker said, later adding, "I want to be clear that state government will continue to operate uninterrupted."

Baker said the declaration would give his administration more "flexibility" to respond to the outbreak, including ordering the cancellation of large events or accessing buildings to store protective equipment for first responders.

Under his order, executive branch employees will be restricted from traveling out of state for work, and the administration is encouraging employees to postpone personal international travel. He also said state workers should, if possible, work from home, and asked private employers to follow suit whenever possible. The restrictions will be revisited in 30 days, or sooner if the situation allows, Baker said.

"We are at a critical point in this outbreak. We're making specific recommendations that will have a big impact on limiting the spread of disease in our communities. These measures are based on the evidence and facts that we know about this disease and in consultation with the CDC," said Department of Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel. "We will need everybody's cooperation and assistance. We understand that these actions may have a significant impact on

the lives of our residents.”

Baker said he was advising older residents and those with underlying health issues to avoid large crowds, including concert venues, conferences and sporting events, though he said he was not prepared to ask schools or professional leagues to cancel their events. He said there was still time for the Boston Athletic Association to make a call on the marathon in April.

“We think large gatherings are probably not a great idea,” Baker said.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders said there were 51 new presumptive positives cases to report Tuesday. About three-quarters of the total cases – 70 of the 92 – have connections to the Biogen conference in Boston last month which has been linked to dozens of infections, Sudders said, and four were directly related to international travel. The remaining 18 cases are “under investigation because they’re newly reported,” she said.

Fifty-two of the patients are men and 40 are women. Six of the patients are hospitalized.

Middlesex County has the greatest number of presumptive cases, 41, followed by 22 in Norfolk County, 20 in Suffolk County, seven in Berkshire County, and one each in Essex and Worcester counties.

The seven cases in Berkshire County seem to be most concerning to state public health officials because they cannot link all of those cases to recent international travel or to isolated and known chains of transmission.

“Here in Massachusetts, person to person transmission of the virus in the community is beginning to occur among individuals without identifiable risk factors,” Bharel said. “As community transmission of COVID-19 becomes more common, the public



health approach shifts to one of mitigation and that is reducing the impact.”

At one point during Tuesday’s press conference, Baker referred to “the Berkshire issue” as one of the reasons, along with the increase to 92 total cases, that he “would have to say the risk is increased.” Previously, the governor and other state officials had said the coronavirus risk in Massachusetts was “low.”

Bharel said DPH is assisting local officials in the Berkshires by facilitating the surveillance and testing of health care workers and patients and is in contact multiple times a day with the local authorities. DPH has also dispatched a public health expert to be on the ground in the Berkshires to assist.

The public health commissioner also announced Tuesday that the state’s request last week for personal protective gear from the stash maintained by the Strategic National Stockpile had been granted.

She said DPH specifically asked for stores of face masks, gowns, gloves and eye protection from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the gear is expected to arrive “shortly.” Some of it will be immediately sent to Berkshire County.

Health care providers currently have enough equipment, but the stockpile delivery will be needed to meet expected demand, Bharel said. She said the lab was running 24 hours a day and had “adequate supplies and adequate staffing” to meet demand at this time. The current turnaround time for tests is 24 to 48 hours, and the state just received another 2,000 testing kits.

The commissioner also said Massachusetts received a key approval to automate part of the coronavirus testing protocol that will increase the State Laboratory’s capacity to test patients from 50 per day to 200. Bharel said the state has

tested roughly 400 people since it began testing a little more than two weeks ago.

Sudders said DPH on Wednesday also will update the guidance it issued to nursing homes on Feb. 27 and will then hold a call with nursing and rest home operators to discuss the details before it is implemented statewide.

“Specifically, nursing homes will be directed to actively screen and restrict access to visitors to ensure the safety and health of residents and staff. No visitor access for anyone who displays signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat, or in the last 14 days has had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or is an individual who is under active investigation for COVID-19,” the secretary said.

She added, “We will also be asking rest home operators and nursing homes to confirm that their employees are not sick, they’ve not had travel, they’ve not had close proximity to sick persons, to a sick person with under investigation for COVID-19 for 14 days.”

People who have traveled outside the United States in the last 14 days or who live “in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring” will also be barred from visiting nursing homes, Sudders said. Exceptions will be made for people in end-of-life or hospice care, she said.

To give local school districts the flexibility to make decisions about temporary coronavirus-related closures, Baker said the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is going to give school systems “relief from attendance and school year requirements.”

He said no school will be required to stay in session for the school year beyond its scheduled 185th day of classes and that DESE will calculate chronic absenteeism at schools – part of

the state's usual accountability measures – as of Monday, March 2 so as to not count absences for the remainder of the year against a school.

Baker thanked the Legislature for its commitment to pass a \$15 million coronavirus aid bill next week, and said he anticipated that a large portion of the money would be directed into communities for first responders. A Senate official said the funding bill will be flexible for the administration and DPH to use as it sees fit.

Harvard University and Amherst College were among a number of higher education institutions that said Tuesday they were canceling class for the rest of the semester and transitioning to online learning for students to finish their course work.

But when asked if the University of Massachusetts or other state universities and community colleges should take similar precautions, Baker said that was the subject of ongoing discussions on the campuses.

“That’s obviously very disruptive,” Baker said.

Some of what the administration was recommending was already being adopted in the private sector.

The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce announced within about 15 minutes of the governor’s press conference Tuesday that “effective immediately through Friday, May 1, 2020, in-person Chamber programs and events will be rescheduled, include a virtual option, or be only virtual.”

Massachusetts High Technology Council President Chris Anderson said he has spent the past several days seeking guidance from member companies about what they’re doing to protect the health and safety of employees.

Anderson said, in an email, that consistent with the input he received the council will postpone all events expected to

attract 25 or more attendees through April, including its March 26 Women in Leadership Initiative Roundtable and the council's inaugural MATTERS Growth and Competitiveness Conference on April 7.

The Massachusetts Democratic Party said that based on the afternoon updates from public health officials it was temporarily postponing party caucuses, which have been taking place on weekends to elect delegates to the Democratic Party Convention in Lowell in May and have been an early battleground for the Ed Markey and Joseph Kennedy III Senate campaigns.

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## **Mayor Marty Walsh Discusses St. Patrick's Day Parade Cancellation, Sports Events**

By Colin A. Young, State House News Service

Boston Mayor Martin Walsh defended his decision to cancel Sunday's St. Patrick's Day parade in Boston because of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak and said the city's progress in containing the virus will determine whether the Boston Marathon is run next month.

Walsh scrapped the parade just after the state announced that the number of people in Massachusetts who have tested positive for the coronavirus-caused COVID-19 had climbed to 41, including at least nine in Boston.

"The best way of trying to prevent the spread of it is by not having large groups of people together, particularly that

there's no way to kind of watch what's going on there," Walsh said Tuesday morning on WEEI's Greg Hill Show. "So we have a parade and you have 1.1 million people coming into a neighborhood that it's very easy, potentially, to spread the virus and it's pretty dangerous."

The city's goal, the mayor said, is to contain the virus and to keep it from spreading outside of known links, like contact with other patients. Walsh said all of Boston's cases except one are tied to the Biogen executive conference held in Boston last month at which dozens of people became infected. The other positive test came from a young man who had recently returned from China.

"So there's some containment there and we don't want to go beyond that because if we do, we're in a whole different category," Walsh said. "We will be talking about canceling schools, we'll be talking about canceling a lot more than the parade on Sunday."

The big event coming up on Boston's calendar is the Boston Marathon, planned for Monday, April 20. Asked whether canceling the marathon is inevitable, Walsh said he's been talking with race organizers and "it's a day-at-a-time situation."

"I'm not saying we're there yet, I think we have many conversations to happen. It's about can we do a good enough job as a society to self-contain this where we're not at a situation where it's kind of out of our control," he said.

Though Walsh highlighted the importance of containing the virus, he also told WEEI that he expects the virus to continue its spread.

"I'm expecting that number to grow as we move forward here and this is something that's going to spread wide potentially," Walsh said of the number of positive cases in Massachusetts. At another point in the 20-minute interview, he said, "at some

point, that number of 41 is going to be bigger and we're going to know somebody that has coronavirus and when it hits your house it's going to be a lot more different conversation."

And if the virus does continue to spread and the marathon is thrown into question, Walsh said he and race organizers at the Boston Athletic Association will consider the cultural, philanthropic and economic impacts of the annual event.

"The economic impact to Boston is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, so everything has to be taken into account," he said. "The conversation is, if the situation came where the marathon had to be postponed or canceled, do we postpone it? Do we move it to a new day? There are a lot of conversations."

The BAA said Monday that its leadership "continues to meet and work closely with city and state officials to ensure a safe and successful Boston Marathon ... and as local and national developments come to light have been planning under the guidance of health and municipal agencies."

Asked about the possibility that the Boston Red Sox could hold their home opener on Thursday, April 2 without fans in the Fenway Park grandstands, or the Boston Bruins or Boston Celtics could begin a playoff run without having fans in the crowd to cheer them on, Walsh said those decisions would be made by the leagues.

"There might come a point where our teams are playing with no fans in the auditorium," he said. "I'm hoping that never comes, that seems to be the worst-case scenario. I don't think we're at that point yet."

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# The 2020 New Bedford Half Marathon Has Been Cancelled Due to Safety Concerns

In a Facebook posting this afternoon on the City of New Bedford official page it states the following:

## 2020 New Bedford Half Marathon CANCELLED

The City of New Bedford and the New Bedford Half Marathon Committee together are announcing that the 2020 New Bedford Half Marathon, scheduled for Sunday, March 15, has been cancelled to ensure the health and safety of residents and runners.

The risk level in Greater New Bedford remains low and there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the area, but the unique nature of the event poses a risk that is higher than other public gatherings. The race attracts as many as 3,000 runners, including many from places where COVID-19 cases have been confirmed. At the race's starting line, runners are massed tightly in a corral in close contact for an extended period, raising the risk of disease transmission. There is similar risk to the thousands of spectators along the route and the City's emergency personnel. Under the circumstances, canceling the race is the prudent course.

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell said, "This decision is not made lightly. The New Bedford Half Marathon is one of the oldest and most popular half marathons in the country. While no other public events in New Bedford have been cancelled, decisions regarding future public events in the city will be based on the overall risk level and the nature of the event. I wish to thank all of the volunteers who have worked hard to organize the race and I ask for their understanding, along with those local businesses that benefit from the race, that

this decision is made to protect the public.”

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# **Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade Cancelled Amid Coronavirus Spread**

Colin A. Young, State House News Service

Boston's St. Patrick's Day parade has been canceled “out of an abundance of caution to ensure that we are doing what is needed to keep the residents of Boston safe and healthy” during the ongoing global outbreak of a coronavirus, Boston Mayor Martin Walsh announced late Monday afternoon.

There are 41 coronavirus cases in Massachusetts, including at least nine in Boston, the state said Monday. Walsh's office said the decision to cancel the parade, which was scheduled to step off Sunday at 1 p.m. and wend its way through South Boston, was made in consultation with other elected officials and parade organizers.

“While the risk in Boston remains low, this situation is changing very quickly and we are closely monitoring any local cases,” Walsh said in a statement. “Our top priority is preventing any new cases, to the best of our ability, and we are paying close attention to guidance from public health officials.”

The mayor's announcement came about three hours after the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council said that the parade “is still currently on” and that organizers “will rely on the determination of public health officials as to whether outdoor



public gatherings in the City of Boston should be curtailed.”

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## **15 New Presumptive Positive Cases of Coronavirus Identified by Massachusetts State Public Health**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced 15 new presumptive positive cases of COVID-19, bringing the total number of confirmed or presumptive positive cases in Massachusetts to 28. All 15 cases had a direct connection to the Biogen employee conference in late February. The presumptive positive cases include five from Suffolk County ranging in age from 30s to 60s; five from Middlesex County ranging in age from 40s to 60s; four cases from Norfolk County ranging in age from 40s to 60s; and a female whose age and county of residence are unknown at the time of this release. Among today's presumptive positive cases were eight men and seven women. With today's release, 23 of the presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 identified in Massachusetts are associated with the Biogen employee meeting held in late February. All of today's presumptive positive cases are isolating at home.

Yesterday, DPH announced five new presumptive positive cases, three of which had a direct connection to Biogen's employee conference, one with recent international travel, and a fifth case for whom there is no current known linkage to the Biogen conference or foreign travel.

The risk of COVID-19 to the general public in Massachusetts

remains low at this time.

The State Public Health Lab's result is considered "presumptive positive" and the specimens will now be sent to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmation.

The Department of Public Health is providing daily updates on the number of confirmed and presumptive positive cases at [mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-cases-quarantine-and-monitoring](https://mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-cases-quarantine-and-monitoring). Case-specific information will be updated on the site Monday, March 9.

As of Wednesday, March 4, 719 people have been subject to self-quarantine in Massachusetts because of COVID-19. Of those, 470 people have completed monitoring and are no longer quarantined, while 249 are currently quarantined. This information is updated online each Wednesday.

For more information on COVID-19 visit [mass.gov/2019coronavirus](https://mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

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## **Five New Positive Coronavirus Cases Identified by Massachusetts State Public Health**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health today announced five new presumptive positive cases of COVID-19, bringing the total number of confirmed or presumptive positive cases in Massachusetts to 13. The cases include four people from

Middlesex County: one woman in her 40s, one woman in her 50s, one man in his 40s and another man in his 60s. The five cases also include one man from Berkshire County in his 60s.

Of these five cases, three had a direct connection to the Biogen employee conference last week, one had recent international travel that included northern Italy, and the fifth case is still under investigation.

The State Public Health Lab's result is considered "presumptive positive" and the specimens will now be sent to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmation.

The risk of COVID-19 to the general public in Massachusetts remains low at this time.

The Department of Public Health is providing daily updates on the number of confirmed and presumptive positive cases at [mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-cases-quarantine-and-monitoring](https://mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-cases-quarantine-and-monitoring). Case-specific information will be updated on the site Monday, March 7th.

As of Wednesday, March 4th, 719 people have been subject to self-quarantine in Massachusetts because of COVID-19. Of those, 470 people have completed monitoring and are no longer quarantined, while 249 are currently quarantined. This information is updated online each Wednesday.

For more information on COVID-19 visit [mass.gov/2019coronavirus](https://mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

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# There are now eight confirmed coronavirus cases in Massachusetts

By Colin A. Young and Chris Lisinski  
State House News Service

There are now eight people in Massachusetts who have tested positive for coronavirus-caused COVID-19, including three new cases in Boston, Gov. Charlie Baker and Boston Mayor Martin Walsh announced Friday afternoon.

The five new positive tests announced Friday more than doubled the previous number of positive tests in Massachusetts. All five people – three who live in Boston and two who live in Norfolk County – attended a Biogen leadership meeting at the Boston Marriott Long Wharf last week, city and state officials said.

“We are fortunate that Massachusetts is home to world-renowned hospitals and leading health care experts that are planning and preparing our communities and providing us with guidance. The general public in Massachusetts remains at low risk, but we are planning and preparing for the potential for more cases to develop here,” Baker said Friday. “I think we all know that this is stressful for people. But health experts have advised that a virus like this is not deadly for the vast majority of people who may get it.”

Baker said the risk to the general public “remains low,” but state and city leaders said they are preparing for the number of cases to continue to grow in the coming days and weeks.

The four cases in Boston include the one federally-confirmed case involving a UMass Boston student who returned from China in late January and has been in isolation since, and three of

the five people who attended last week's Biogen meeting and have tested positive. There are three cases in Norfolk County, including the other two people who attended the Biogen meeting, and the eighth case is a woman in her 60s who lives in Middlesex County.

Local, state and federal officials are cooperating to make information available to residents and coordinate their responses.

"As you can see, this truly is an all hands on deck approach. We're working together, there is no space between any of us on this issue because there's such still such an unknown," Walsh said, flanked by public health and public safety personnel from the city and state levels.

Marty Martinez, the city's chief of health and human services, said two women and one man who live in Boston tested positive for the virus. All three patients are in their 40s, he said, and are isolated in their homes. Two have symptoms and one does not, Martinez said, and the city is working with the hotel to ensure it has been appropriately cleaned.

"We currently as we speak today and standing here are tracing who they had been in direct contact with over the last 14 days," he said.

On Thursday, public health officials in Tennessee announced that a man who tested positive for the coronavirus-caused COVID-19 respiratory illness there had recently traveled to and from Boston. Officials Friday said that man also attended the leadership meeting at Biogen.

Though the three Boston residents and two Norfolk County residents – one in their 40s and one in their 50s – from the Biogen meetings are thought to have become infected with coronavirus while in the city, Martinez said it is important to note that these cases do not meet the criteria for community transmission.

"The source of this transmission is known, and it's connected to a confirmed case of the virus and close contact with that patient," he said. "As a reminder, a close contact [is] someone who's had direct face to face contact within six feet of someone for up to 15 minutes. They've had to have an interaction with the presumptive case within 14 days."

Baker said health experts advise the virus "is not deadly for the vast majority of people who may get it," but decision-makers are still planning for the chance that cases could increase and for the larger risks it may pose to the elderly or those with weakened immune systems.

Officials emphasized the importance of individual-level caution to help prevent further spread of the illness. They repeated what's become a common refrain: everyone should wash hands for at least 20 seconds, cough and sneezing into their elbows, and remain home when sick.

"Every person has a responsibility to play a part in containing coronavirus and other germs by following some simple steps you've already heard before," Baker said.

Walsh stressed the importance of good, accurate information to keep residents from panicking during the outbreak.

"It goes back to getting the accurate information out to people and not causing panic," he said.

But at the same press conference, state Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders publicly announced information that the Baker administration later said was inaccurate.

Sudders initially said the three cases in Norfolk County were in two people who attended the Biogen meeting and "a male in his 40s who returned from an organized school trip in northern Italy." She repeated the information at least once later in the press conference.

But on Monday, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health announced that the presumptive positive case in Norfolk County involved a woman in her 20s who recently traveled to Italy with a school group. Asked about the discrepancy during Friday's press conference, Sudders said she did not have the ages of patients with her and said she would follow up with the News Service.

A Baker spokesman later clarified that the three Norfolk County cases involve two people who attended the Biogen meeting and a woman in her 20s who recently traveled to Italy with a school group.

At another point during the press conference, when Sudders correctly said there were three cases in Norfolk County, the governor leaned towards her and said, "two," only to have the secretary rebuff him with the correct number.

Baker is expected to leave Massachusetts on Friday for a weeklong vacation with his family in Utah, where he owns a time-share near Park City. Baker's office said the governor will be briefed daily on the coronavirus situation while in Utah and will remain in contact with federal officials.

State health workers have the capacity to conduct roughly 40 to 50 tests for COVID-19 every day, and officials have asked the CDC for an increased number of test kits.

The Massachusetts state laboratory, which can process results within 24 hours based on volume, is currently the only location for testing. However, Public Health Commissioner Dr. Monica Bharel said federal authorities will allow other labs to perform the tests "shortly" and are working to permit commercially available tests.

"If an individual feels they need to be seen because of possible COVID-19, they should call ahead because then the health care system, whether it's a clinic or a hospital, can follow the procedures that are well outlined and well known by

the health care system in order to prepare for their arrival," Bharel said.

While the U.S. State Department has recommended canceling international school trips, Massachusetts officials said Friday that they do not have any plans to shutter popular and crowded local events such as the Boston Marathon or the city's St. Patrick's Day parade.

Walsh said it is important for venues and event organizers to follow clear protocols on cleaning and offering hand sanitizer, but he cautioned against making "rash judgment decisions." Unlike other areas that have canceled marathons, he said, Boston is "not there yet."

"If I'm told by the medical people here that there is a problem having the St. Patrick's Day parade or there is a problem in other parades, then we will take the appropriate action," Walsh said. "But until the medical professionals come to us and say 'we need to shut everything down,' we're going to continue just to pass information out to people on what they need to do to take precautions."

Coronavirus arrived on the American radar with the new year, having emerged first in China in December. By January, it had sickened hundreds and killed more than a dozen people in China as cases began popping up in other countries.

At the end of January, passengers aboard a Cathay Pacific flight from China were screened for possible coronavirus upon arrival at Boston Logan Airport. On Feb. 1, state public health officials announced the first case of coronavirus in Massachusetts: a UMass Boston student in his 20s who had recently traveled to the coronavirus epicenter of Wuhan, China.

That man has been in self-isolation at his off-campus Boston home since late January and continues to recover, officials said this week.



A second case – this one technically a “presumed” positive case not yet confirmed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control – that involved a woman in her 20s from Norfolk County who recently traveled to Italy with a school group was announced Monday.

On Thursday evening, DPH announced the state’s third positive test, this time in a woman in her 60s who lives in Middlesex County and who recently had traveled to northern Italy. That positive test has also not been confirmed by the CDC.

Both women are recovering at their homes, the state said.

On Thursday, MIT ordered that organizers “must postpone, cancel or ‘virtualize’” all on-campus events expected to draw 150 people or more between now and May 15. House Speaker Robert DeLeo’s office did not respond when asked whether the Massachusetts House, which currently includes 157 members, is developing any kind of contingency plan in the event that the coronavirus outbreak becomes more serious.

“Public health experts leading the national response expect the disease to spread in the coming days and weeks. While we cannot predict where or when, you should not be surprised to see the number of positive diagnoses rise significantly,” Congressman Joseph Kennedy III wrote in an update this week.

Beginning Sunday, thousands of researchers who specialize in viruses and the spread of infections will descend on Boston for a conference organized by the International Antiviral Society. The Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections at the Hynes Convention Center is planning a special session on Monday at which top public health officials from the United States and China will present the latest information on the origins, spread and status of this latest coronavirus.

Dr. Zunyou Wu, the chief epidemiologist of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, is expected to deliver a

15-minute update via video chat from China, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, will give a recorded update on the coronavirus outbreak. CDC epidemiologist Dr. John Brooks will also make a presentation.

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## **Second Presumptive Positive Case of COVID-19 Identified by Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Thursday announced its second presumptive positive case of COVID-19 since testing started Friday, February 28, at the State Public Health Laboratory. The woman is in her 60s and lives in Middlesex County. Her recent European travel included northern Italy. She was symptomatic, did not require hospitalization, and is recovering at home.

The State Public Health Lab's result is considered presumptive positive and the specimens will now be sent to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmation. This case brings the total number of COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts to three – one confirmed and two presumptive positive – since the outbreak started in the US in January. The risk to the public from COVID-19 remains low in Massachusetts.

“We appreciate this patient's cooperation,” said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. “While the risk to Massachusetts remains low, residents should make sure they and

their families are well-informed about COVID-19 and heed the CDC's updated international travel health alert."

Since January, Massachusetts has tested 25 residents, including the first confirmed case and the first presumptive positive case.

Going forward, the Department of Public Health will be updating confirmed and presumptive positive cases on a daily basis at [mass.gov/2019coronavirus](https://mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

As of yesterday, 719 people have been subject to self-quarantine in Massachusetts because of COVID-19. Of those, 470 people have completed monitoring and are no longer quarantined, while 249 are currently quarantined. This information is updated on the DPH website each Wednesday.

Additionally, DPH was notified by the Tennessee Department of Health that its first presumptive positive COVID-19 case was a man who traveled on a nonstop, round-trip flight between Boston Logan Airport and the Nashville International Airport, and was asymptomatic while traveling. DPH is working with Tennessee health officials and the Boston Public Health Commission to identify his close contacts.

The CDC has updated its Travel Health Alert for all United States residents, instructing travelers returning from countries with a Level 3 alert (currently China, South Korea, Iran, and Italy) to stay home and monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the US. This guidance also instructs travelers from countries with a Level 2 alert (currently Japan) to monitor their health and limit interactions with others for 14 days after returning to the US. The guidance advises against any non-essential travel to Level 3 countries.

Coronaviruses are respiratory viruses and are generally spread through respiratory secretions (droplets from coughs and sneezes) of an infected person to another person. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath, and, in

severe cases, pneumonia (fluid in the lungs). Information is still limited about how this novel coronavirus spreads. More information on COVID-19 is available at [mass.gov/2019coronavirus](https://mass.gov/2019coronavirus).

According to the CDC, as of today, there have been 99 US cases of COVID-19 confirmed. Globally, more than 93,000 cases have been confirmed. There have been a total of 10 deaths in the US.

Although the risk of the novel coronavirus to Massachusetts residents remains low, and the risk of the flu is high, people are advised to take many of the same steps they do to help prevent colds and the flu, including:

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes and face.
- Clean things that are frequently touched (like doorknobs and countertops) with household cleaning spray or wipes.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- Stay home when feeling sick.
- Stay informed.
- Get a flu shot.

Clinicians who have patients they think may have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must contact DPH via the 24/7 EPI line (617-983-6800).

The State Lab has an adequate supply of test kits from the CDC for testing. The anticipated turnaround of test results from the State Lab is 24 hours, depending on testing volume.

Individuals who are in voluntary self-quarantine continue to be monitored by their local boards of health.

People who have recently traveled from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19 and who have symptoms

of the disease (fever, cough, shortness of breath) should reach out to their healthcare provider and call ahead before going to a healthcare facility.

For more information on COVID-19 visit [mass.gov/2019coronavirus](https://mass.gov/2019coronavirus).