

Massachusetts COVID-19 related cases top 41,000, state approaches 2,000 deaths

Massachusetts Coronavirus Update

On April 21, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,556 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 41,199. This is a slight decrease from Monday's 1,566 reported cases. 152 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday, up from 103, bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 1,961. As of 4 pm today, 175,372 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19.



The Baker-Polito Administration today announced new actions to support the ongoing COVID-19 response, including extending the closure of all public and private schools through the end of the school year, and the closure of all non-emergency child care programs until June 29, 2020. The Administration also announced further support for students and families impacted by COVID-19. Full details [here](#).

A fifth Bristol County staff member to test positive for COVID-19. Full details [here](#).

Massachusetts workers would receive 80 extra hours, or 10 days, of job-protected paid sick time to use during the COVID-19 crisis, under a bill recently filed by Rep. Paul Donato and Sen. Jason Lewis. Full details [here](#).

New Bedford Coronavirus Update

Mayor Jon Mitchell's office reported 90 additional confirmed

COVID-19 cases in New Bedford Tuesday morning, bringing the total positive cases in the city to 278, **up from 188 on Monday**. Yesterday, Mayor Mitchell reported that the City of New Bedford's COVID-19 count was more than 33% higher than the Massachusetts Department of Health count for New Bedford. Full statement **here**.

New Bedford added one more COVID-19 related death since Monday bringing the total to 10. No specific details (age, sex of the patient, etc) is available.

New Bedford's 2020 Memorial Day parade, scheduled for Monday, May 25, has been canceled due to social distancing measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Full details **here**.

New Bedford's Annual Cape Verdean Recognition Parade has been canceled. This year's parade would have been the 48th year. Full details **here**.

Fall River Coronavirus Update

Fall River today reported 5 more confirmed positive cases of COVID-19. According to Mayor Coogan, the Fall River has seen 189 total positive cases. Full details **here**.

Fifth Bristol County Sheriff's staff member tests positive for COVID-19

"He's feeling fine," Bristol County Sheriff Thomas M. Hodgson said Tuesday. "It's encouraging he's feeling well and we hope he makes a full, quick recovery."

The corrections officer works third shift at the House of Corrections on the Dartmouth complex. He was last at the facility on Monday night, April 13, when he worked alone in a control room. He was off Tuesday and Wednesday, April 14 and 15. He didn't feel well on Wednesday, reported to a COVID-19 testing site on Thursday, April 16, and received a positive test result on Friday, April 17.

He is the fifth Bristol County staff member to test positive for COVID-19. A nurse who tested positive last month has recovered and returned to duty, as has a K9 Officer who tested positive a few weeks ago. A corrections officer who tested positive earlier this month is returning to duty today, and a mental health professional that also tested positive is feeling well and expected to return soon. No one incarcerated in a Bristol County corrections facility has tested positive for the virus as seven symptomatic individuals have all tested negative.

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

"The precautions we've taken are working, and the staff has been amazing," Sheriff Hodgson said. "Our essential workers leave their families every day and come to work. From the

security staff to food services, health care, maintenance ... everyone has been amazing during these extremely challenging times. Massachusetts has been hit very hard by the Coronavirus and the next few weeks are expected to be pretty rough, so I hope everyone stays safe, practices social distancing, and follows strict sanitation recommendations.”

Baker announces extension of school and non-emergency child care program closure

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced new actions to support the ongoing COVID-19 response, including extending the closure of all public and private schools through the end of the school year, and the closure of all non-emergency child care programs until June 29, 2020. The Administration also announced further support for students and families impacted by COVID-19.

Schools and Non-Emergency Child Care Programs: Governor Charlie Baker issued an emergency order extending the closure of all public and private schools through the end of the school year, and the closure of all non-emergency child care programs until June 29, 2020 in an effort to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

- This order expands the March 25 order suspending normal educational operations at schools and non-emergency child care programs. The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) established a process to approve Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs to serve families of first responders, medical personnel and essential workers.

- Emergency Child Care programs approved by EEC will continue operating. Currently there are 523 emergency child care programs statewide serving families of essential workers. Weekly attendance averages about 2,500 children in these programs across the Commonwealth.

- EEC will continue to pay subsidies to child care providers based on their pre-COVID-19 enrollment, in order to support the workforce.

- The order does not apply to residential special education schools.

Read the Orders here: [K-12 School Order Link](#) | [Child Care Program Link](#)

Child Care Program Resources: The Department of Early Education and Care is reviewing its regulations and funding programs to develop new approaches to incrementally restore child care capacity for family child care and center-based programs in the coming months.

To support families of essential workers and families with children who have special needs, EEC and Care.com have partnered to assist currently unemployed child care workers and provide skilled in-home care. Care.com is offering both eligible families and child care workers free 90-day premium memberships, accessible [here](#).

Complementing the existing partnership between WGBH and DESE, EEC is launching further collaboration with WGBH to provide resources and activities for parents with young children.

Remote Learning Resources: The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will issue updated guidelines for schools to support remote learning efforts through the duration of the school year, including expanded STEM learning, and will prepare recommendations to strengthen summer learning opportunities for students.

DESE has launched a Remote Learning Essentials initiative, focused on addressing access to tools, Internet connectivity, and educator training necessary to enhance remote learning during school closures.

The department is conducting a survey of school districts to identify barriers that inhibit effective remote learning, including challenges around inequitable access to technology.

An advisory group of administrators, educators, parents, students and business leaders will engage external partners to mobilize resources for schools, including philanthropic gifts and in-kind contributions.

DESE will also solicit input from national and local education vendors regarding the potential to create a statewide online education platform for districts to opt into and customize.

STEM Learning: In partnership with EEC, DHE, the STEM Advisory Council and Regional STEM Networks, DESE has established online STEM education resources to provide continued support for remote learning opportunities. This includes virtual STEM learning opportunities for both students and teachers, and is accessible [here](#).

No-Interest Student Loan Program: The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) is deferring scheduled repayments for its No-Interest Loan Program for a duration of four months to support relief efforts during the COVID-19 public health emergency. These deferments will help approximately 12,000 students that participate in the \$5 million program annually funded through the repayment of loans.

All no-interest loan accounts currently in repayment will automatically be placed in a deferment from April 2020 through July 2020. This deferment will not count toward the program's permissible 36 months of available deferment.

If a payment has already been made for April, that payment

will be applied to the outstanding balance and not refunded. While accounts are in deferment, borrowers who wish to continue monthly payments may do so, without incurring late fees until July 31, 2020.

Accounts currently 120 days past due will not be placed into collections until August 2020, and regular credit bureau reporting will resume at the end of August.

Eviction and Foreclosure Protections: Yesterday, Governor Baker signed legislation into law to protect homeowners and tenants from eviction and foreclosure. An Act providing for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID-19 emergency ensures housing stability for residents and families, and can be read in its entirety [here](#).

Governor Baker: Massachusetts schools won't reopen this academic year

Chris Lisinski
State House News Service

Massachusetts school buildings will remain closed to students for the rest of this school year, Gov. Charlie Baker announced Tuesday, a dramatic step aimed at preventing a rebound in COVID-19 transmission once the state emerges from the worst of the outbreak.

Baker also ordered non-emergency child care programs to remain closed until June 29. K-12 schools had been closed until May 4 under Baker's most recent executive order, and Tuesday's

announcement extends the physical shutdown through the end of the academic year. Remote learning will continue this spring, he said. During a Tuesday press conference, Baker warned that COVID-19 is “an insidious and at times invisible virus.”

“It’s the right thing to do considering the facts on the ground associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. At this point in time, there is no authoritative guidance or advisory with respect to how to operate schools safely and how to get students to and from schools safely,” he said. “We believe students therefore cannot safely return to school and avoid the risk of transmitting the virus to others.”

The state is in the midst of the coronavirus surge, with confirmed cases likely to surpass 40,000 in the administration’s Tuesday afternoon daily updated. More than 1,800 residents have already died as a result of the highly infectious virus, which public health experts warn can be spread even by those who are showing no symptoms. On April 10, Baker signed a law allowing Education Commissioner Jeff Riley to vacate MCAS testing for the year and instructing the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to modify or waive graduation requirements. Several other governors have shuttered schools in their states into the summer, including New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu.

New Bedford COVID-19 cases corrected to 278 from 188, deaths now at 10

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total positive cases in the city to 278, **up from 188 on Monday**. Yesterday, Mayor Mitchell reported that the City of New Bedford's COVID-19 count was more than 33% higher than the Massachusetts Department of Health count for New Bedford. Full statement **here**.

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New Bedford's 2020 Memorial Day parade, scheduled for Monday, May 25, has been canceled due to social distancing measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Full details **here**.

Fall River added 5 more confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 on Monday. According to Mayor Coogan, the City of Fall River has seen 184 total positive cases. Full details **here**.

On April 20, the Massachusetts Public Health Department reported that the state added 1,566 more positive cases of COVID-19 bringing to total to 39,643. This is a decrease from Sunday's 1,705 reported cases. 103 new COVID-19 related deaths were reported since yesterday, down from 146, bringing the total deaths in Massachusetts to 1,809. As of 4 pm today, 169,398 people in Massachusetts have been tested for COVID-19. Full details **here**.

Governor Charlie Baker signed a housing security bill on Monday to put a pause on evictions and foreclosures until after the coronavirus pandemic abates, finalizing an effort that took weeks for the Legislature to negotiate. Full details **here**.

OPINION: Based on the data, isn't it time to start opening up Massachusetts again?

Yesterday, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health released its most detailed COVID-19 report yet. While it's a lot of data to consume and analyze, it's hard to argue that Massachusetts needs to continue to hibernate its population.

The first data that caught my attention is that the average age of confirmed COVID-19 deaths is 81 years old. Out of the 1,809 deaths attributed to COVID-19, 1,144 were people over 80 years old, or 63%. In fact, 95% of all deaths are people 60 and older. Only 21 people under the age of 50 have died, or 1.1% of the total deaths. This virus is killing the elderly and rarely people 50 and under.



Second, 97.5% of the people that died had underlying health issues.



This data reaffirms what I learned in March as Italy COVID-19 deaths were peaking and 99% of those dying had preexisting conditions and nearly 50% of those that died had three or more preexisting conditions. The average death was also in the 80s.

Finally, nearly a third of random participants in a Massachusetts study tested positive for antibodies linked with coronavirus, without even knowing they had COVID-19.

The Mass. General study took samples from 200 residents on the street in Chelsea, MA. Participants remained anonymous

and provided a drop of blood to researchers, who were able to produce a result in ten minutes with a rapid test.

Sixty-four of the participants tested positive – a “sobering” result, according to Thomas Ambrosino, Chelsea’s city manager.

“We’ve long thought that the reported numbers are vastly under-counting what the actual infection is,” Ambrosino told the Boston Globe. “Those reported numbers are based on positive COVID-19 tests, and we’re all aware that a very, very small percentage of people in Chelsea and everywhere are getting COVID-19 tests.”

This means a very large percentage of the population has COVID-19 and doesn’t even know it because they don’t get sick or the symptoms are so mild they don’t notice it. Elderly are already dying in large numbers while we have our state locked down, suggesting that the problem is likely with the nursing homes and a lockdown isn’t going to

I’m not suggesting we open up Massachusetts like it was pre-coronavirus. What I’m saying is it’s time to let the least vulnerable population go back to work and perform everyday activities with new precautions in place (no concerts, major sports events, etc.) while protecting the most vulnerable population. Continue to lock down the nursing homes, ramp up testing and of course the social distancing and washing hands that have been so impactful. The experts need to tell us the best way to open back up and I’m sure it will be a phased approach, but the conversation needs to start today and the actions need to come sooner than later or the economic damage could be devastating.

RI has a good plan to start reopening:



REOPEN RI

Six Key Indicators for Reopening:

1. Has the rate of spread continued to decrease?
2. Do we have the capacity to quickly identify community spread on an ongoing basis before a major outbreak occurs?
3. Do we have necessary supports in place for vulnerable populations, and for anyone in quarantine?
4. Does our healthcare system have the capacity and the PPE to handle future surges?
5. Do businesses, schools, child care sites, faith organizations and recreational spaces have plans for long-term social distancing?
6. Are we prepared to reimpose measures, or reclose certain sectors of the economy, if it becomes necessary?

Acushnet Fire Chief updates town on resident transported to the hospital for Covid-19 related medical issues

“VERY IMPORTANT UPDATE: Tuesday, April 21, 2020

I am very pleased to let Acushnet know that the resident we transported to the hospital last week for Covid-19 related medical issues has been released and is home resting comfortably!

“I visited with them today (from a distance) and expressed the happiness of the entire community. The resident was overwhelmed to learn of the support and concern expressed on their behalf. The fear seen last week in their eyes was

replaced with joy.

“We are hopeful that this positive outcome will be repeated many, many more times.”

Acushnet Fire Chief Kevin A. Gallagher.”



New Bedford's 2020 Memorial Day parade cancelled, virtual memorials planned

New Bedford's 2020 Memorial Day parade, scheduled for Monday, May 25, has been cancelled due to social distancing measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The parade is New Bedford's annual tribute to those lost in service to their country, and the City will hold virtual services to honor them this year.

Several events will be live-streamed on New Bedford Guide's Facebook page.

- Monday, May 25 at 10:00 a.m. – Fishermen's Memorial Service
- Monday, May 25 at 12 Noon – City Memorial Service & Wreath Laying Ceremony

Other events hosted by local veterans' groups that are able to continue as planned, while no longer open to the general public.

New bill would provide extra 10 days of sick leave in Massachusetts

Katie Lannan

State House News Service

Massachusetts workers would receive 80 extra hours, or 10 days, of job-protected paid sick time to use during the COVID-19 crisis, under a bill recently filed by Rep. Paul Donato and Sen. Jason Lewis.

According to the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition, the emergency paid sick time would be available to workers not covered under the sick time provisions of the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act – those working for a private employer with more than 500 employees, and those working at health care or residential facilities that have the option to exempt themselves from the federal law. The leave would be available for workers diagnosed with COVID-19, experiencing symptoms of the disease and awaiting a diagnosis, or those who are quarantined or reasonably believe their health is at risk, as well as to care for a family member or roommate with COVID-19.

“In hospitals, grocery stores, and nursing homes, essential workers are doing heroic work fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, but many of our essential workers lack the ability to stay home with pay if they are sick,” Donato said in a statement. “We need to do everything we can to protect Massachusetts workers on the front lines of the pandemic, including passing this legislation to fill in the gaps in the federal response. No worker should feel the need to come to work sick and risk infecting others.”

The bill (HD 5039) was filed on Friday in the House.

Massachusetts COVID-19 related deaths drop 29% from Sunday

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Governor Charlie Baker signed a housing security bill on Monday to put a pause on evictions and foreclosures until after the coronavirus pandemic abates, finalizing an effort that took weeks for the Legislature to negotiate. Full details

here.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Sunday that his state has already identified 400 ventilators that it could send to Massachusetts. Full details **here.**

New Bedford Coronavirus Update

Today, Mayor Jon Mitchell reported that the City of New Bedford's COVID-19 count was more than 33% higher than the Massachusetts Department of Health count for New Bedford. As of today, the **State reported 188 cases**, but Mayor Mithcell reports the City's Health Department counted "more than 250 cases." Here's Mayor Mitchell's statement **here.**

New Bedford's Annual Cape Verdean Recognition Parade has been canceled. This year's parade would have been the 48th year. Full details **here.**

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