

No one under 20 years old has died from COVID-19 in Massachusetts

No one under 20 years old has died from COVID-19 in Massachusetts. Say it with me again, no one under 20 years old has died from COVID-19 in Massachusetts. This needs repeating because there is a panic in Massachusetts that if you send your child to school this year it is a death sentence for your child. It's simply not true.

While **Massachusetts has the third-highest death rate from COVID-19 per 100,000 deaths in the nation**, very few people under 40 years old are dying from it. **According to the CDC, suicide is the second cause of death for people 10-24 years of old**, nearly twice the rate of people 25-44 years old or six times the rate of 45-64. WebMD has a good article on **'Rethinking Youth Suicide Prevention During COVID'** that all parents should read.

As of August 9th, 2020, the **Massachusetts Department of Public Health has reported 8,514 COVID-19 related deaths**, none of them under 20 years old. 52 people under the age of 40 have died from COVID-19. On the flip side, 97.2% of the COVID-19 related deaths in Massachusetts were people 60 and older with the average age of death being 82. 98.2% of people dying were people with preexisting health conditions. Based on the data, there is no question that we need to take extraordinary steps to protect the most vulnerable starting with learning from New York by keeping COVID-19 infected people out of assisted living facilities.

"COVID-19 related" is an important term because health officials count deaths as COVID-19 related as long as the deceased test positive for COVID-19. If a patient was in

hospice care for cancer and test positive for COVID-19 at the time of death, it is COVID-19 related – even if they died of cancer.

Dr. Ngozi Ezike, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, explained how COVID deaths are classified:

I've heard Massachusetts and federal health officials make the same claim. Massachusetts numbers are also totaled by confirmed and probable deaths – meaning a positive test result isn't even needed to be counted, just that it was probable.

Based on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health data, the elderly population with preexisting health conditions are most at risk from COVID-19, not people under 20. The primary risk for people under 20 is getting infected and then infecting someone more vulnerable to COVID-19. As mentioned, suicide is more of a direct threat to our youth than COVID-19.

Our elected leadership's strategy should be to protect the most vulnerable while allowing the least vulnerable to go back to work and to a "new normal" way of life in a responsible way. This means continue to social distance, wear a mask, wash your hands as much as possible, get tested when possible or when feeling sick, quarantine when sick with contact tracing/notification and be extremely cautious around friends and family members that are most vulnerable to COVID-19. Unfortunately in most cases, that also means isolation of the most vulnerable from the rest of the population until herd immunity or mass immunization is achieved.

Yes, Massachusetts is second highest on the list of deaths per 100,000, but that doesn't mean it's time to panic when it comes to our youth. Locking them away for a year could cause more harm than good. No one under 20 years old has died from COVID-19 in Massachusetts. Say it with me again, no one under 20 years old has died from COVID-19 in Massachusetts.