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BERKSHIRE COUNTY BOARDS OF HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Pittsfield, MA March 12, 2020 4:00pm

Update on COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and Local Boards of Health (LBOH)

Please note: This is a rapidly evolving situation. Risk of the Coronavirus to Massachusetts residents remains low, however, the risk is rising. Infection numbers are likely to change. BCBOHA will continue to provide updates and coordinate public messaging on the situation on a regular basis.

Situation Report:

Recently, a new strain of coronavirus—2019 Novel (new) Coronavirus (COVID-19)—was detected in Wuhan, China. This novel coronavirus causes a respiratory (lung) infection. This new virus is related to, but different from, other coronaviruses that cause the common cold and diseases such as SARS and MERS. Common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, shortness of breath and in severe cases, pneumonia (fluid in the lungs). Cases range from very mild to severe.

As of March 11, there have been 6 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts and 89 presumptive positive cases, for a total of 95. Seven of those cases are in Berkshire County. There have been 938 reported cases in the United States, with 38 states and the District of Columbia reporting cases, and 29 deaths. The States with the highest number of cases include Washington state, California, New York and Massachusetts. The CDC has confirmed that there is community spread of COVID-19 in several states across the U.S. Over 1,000 individuals have been subjected to quarantine in Massachusetts to date.

Updated daily information on Massachusetts' case reports can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-cases-quarantine-and-monitoring>.

Updated daily information (Monday-Friday) on US cases can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency in Massachusetts which gives the state more flexibility in how it responds to the COVID-19 outbreak. As part of his order, he announced restrictions for Executive Branch employees including out of state travel, canceling conferences and discretionary meetings, reminding employees who are ill not to come into work and encouraging high-risk employees to discuss alternative work arrangements with their supervisors. He further recommended that employers and other large organizations to follow the state example and limit or eliminate non-essential travel, limit or eliminate large events where possible, and explore telework where appropriate for their organization. He also urged older adults and those with health issues to avoid large crowds and large events.

BCBOHA plans to send out weekly Board of Health memos, such as this one, each week within 24 hours of the weekly conference call between the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Local Boards of Health. The BCBOHA has also held an initial convening of a COVID-19

Working Group made up of Health Agents, Public Health Nurses, Health Directors, Members and BCBOHA Executive Committee Members from around the County.

Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):

The CDC is recommending personal preparedness and protective measures, including Personal Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs). NPIs are measures taken to help prevent the spread of diseases that do not include medications. Currently, there are no medications or vaccinations available to prevent COVID-19, however, everyone should practice these respiratory illness prevention protocols:

- diligent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- stay home from school, work and other people when you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever or a cough
- avoid close contact (within 6 feet) of people who are sick
- <https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/personal/index.html>

Isolation and Quarantine (I&Q):

The DPH provided updated forms on March 11, 2020 adapted for COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine, which will be available on the BCBOHA website. BCBOHA will also be posting the PowerPoint from their in-person Isolation and Quarantine training on March 10th on the BCBOHA website. Please make sure that your Board is familiar with isolation and quarantine, as you may be called on to issue orders over the next few weeks. In most cases, your public health nurse, acting on behalf of your board of health will issue verbal isolation and quarantine orders, and will then report that to the board of health. There may be times when a written order in the form of a letter will be necessary, and in rare occasions a formal order or even court action may become necessary. It is important that you are familiar with the regulations prior to needing them. Please remember to respect the privacy of your residents, and conduct isolation and quarantine business in a closed executive session. If you missed the BCBOHA training, and would like to do an online training, you may use the following link to access the Local Public Health Institute Training:

Isolation & Quarantine On Your Time Training:

<http://sites.bu.edu/masslocalinstitute/2015/12/11/isolation-and-quarantine/>

MAVEN and Case Identification:

Posting of cases should be happening in a more timely manner going forward as the DPH is automating the flow between laboratory testing of COVID-19 test kits and posting to MAVEN. Please have your Public Health Nurse or Board check your MAVEN twice a day during this period, including on weekends. If your community does have a case, DPH will also call your Public Health Nurse or Board directly. Please ensure that DPH has your correct contact information, that your public health nurse has a cell phone number for at least one staff or member of your board of health and that you have the cell phone number of your public health nurse. If you are a community not currently on MAVEN, please contact BCBOHA to initiate that process.

Guidelines for Public Events and Food Service:

The DPH is not currently recommending that all public events be cancelled, although they are recommending that organizers consider the particular event, the venue and the risk level of the

participants. For events that happen as scheduled, it is recommended that organizers use protective measures such as additional sanitation seating participants further away from each other and reminding participants not to attend if they are experiencing a cough, fever or shortness of breath. DPH is also recommending that food service also be considered for greater precautions, including limiting buffets and limiting the sharing of food and serving utensils.

For Local Schools and School Closings:

The DPH is recommending that local schools consult with their local BOH and local officials prior to considering closure of schools or cancellation of events due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19. If your Board of Health is not already in touch with your local schools, you may want to make that contact.

Calls to your BOH:

If your BOH receives a call from someone experiencing respiratory symptoms or if a provider in your area receives a call from someone experiencing symptoms, please can call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) 24/7 Epidemiology line at (617) 983-6800 for assistance and the latest recommendations for managing a Person Under Investigation (PUI). Individuals experiencing symptoms of a respiratory illness can also call the new Berkshire Health Systems Hotline at 855-262-5465 between the hours of 7am and 7pm, 7 days/week.

Questions from the General Public and Worried-Well:

The DPH is increasing the capacity of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and United Way 211 call and information service for community members who are not sick to obtain information about COVID-19 over the next few days.

PPE Supplies from Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) and Emergency Federal Funding:

The DPH has not yet provided guidance or a process for the release of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies, such as masks, gowns and goggles, from the SNS or distributions of local emergency funds passed by Congress last week. BCBOHA Staff have inquired specifically on these issues and requested an urgent response as these are immediate needs for Berkshire County.

Selected BCBOHA Activities related to COVID-19:

- Initial coordination with Berkshire Medical Center and public health nurses/boards of health on identification of cases, quarantine and isolation and discharge planning.
- Coordination of public health nurses and boards of health in affected municipalities.
- Conference call with DPH related to information sharing and other matters
- Developed a schedule for weekly release of communication memos to the Berkshire County BOH
- Developed standard forms for press releases for local media
- Established Berkshire Public Health COVID-19 Working group
- Hosted a situational awareness session on March 10, 2020 for local BOH members, staff, first responders, and other local officials with updates from MEMA, the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC), PH Nursing, and BMC, followed by a training on isolation and quarantine

- Press interviews by Allison Egan and Laura Kittross, including WAMC, CBS Boston, the Berkshire Eagle, and Commonwealth Magazine.
- Informational session for community-based organizations and social service providers on March 12, 2020.

Please only use reputable sources for information gathering. Further information can be found at the following links. We recommend that you do not make multiple copies of fact sheets for your BOH office at this time as they are changing on a daily basis.

With Questions, Please Contact Allison Egan at 413-442-1521 Ext. 36 or by email at aegan@berkshireplanning.org.

MDPH Information on COVID-19: <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

HMCC Resources: <https://region1hmcc.org/>

CDC General Information Page on COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

CDC Communication Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/index.html>

MDPH Printable Fact Sheets: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/information-on-the-outbreak-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19#-printable-fact-sheets->

CDC Response Page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html#cdc-response>

CDC Cases in the US: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

CDC Guidance for Medical Professionals: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>

CDC Information on Travel: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

CDC Information for Businesses & Travelers: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fguidance-business-response.html