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BERKSHIRE COUNTY BOARDS OF HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Pittsfield, MA May 7, 2020

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

Please note: This is a rapidly evolving situation. Cases continue to rise very slowly in Berkshire County. The rate of increase is almost flat and hospitalizations have fallen significantly. Elsewhere in Massachusetts cases are also flattening although at different rates in various parts of the state. Hospital cases across the state have been flat for a couple of weeks, and are starting to fall slowly. The numbers of those being tested has also fallen, and the percentage of those testing positive has been below 20% for most of the past week. All non-essential personnel should continue staying at home except for essential needs. BCBOHA will continue to provide updates and coordinate public messaging on the situation on a regular basis. Please share this information with your other municipal officials, boards and departments.

Latest News:

CARES Act Funding

Approximately 4.7 billion dollars is expected in Massachusetts this week as part of the Federal CARES Act funding. This funding will be distributed to municipalities through local aid channels, and is meant for all COVID- related expenses, including overtime costs associated with police, fire and EMS as well as other municipal costs related to COVID, including schools, public works and public health. Money will be distributed by formula to each municipality and a high-level spending plan will be required. The person who is the point of contact for local aid will receive communication expected sometime this week regarding this funding. Boards of Health that have costs are encouraged to proactively reach out to their chief elected official or town administrator/town manager.

Updated and New Guidance on Essential and Non-essential Businesses

State officials continue to update the FAQ on what businesses are considered essential and non-essential, as well as periodically issuing new guidance. In general, no employees or customers may enter the premises of a non-essential business to conduct non-essential business. This includes curbside pickup. Several clarifications were recently issued:

Fulfillment of on-line or phone orders:

On May 1, 2020 the state clarified that non-essential businesses may bring in a small number of employees in order to fulfill online or phone orders. The parameters under which businesses may do this are spelled out in FAQ found [HERE](#) and is also attached here. Manufacturing of non-essential items is NOT permitted; this guidance pertains only to the packaging and shipping/delivery of remote orders.

Car Dealerships

Car sales may occur in a very limited manner. The dealership must remain closed and only remote orders (by phone or online) may be fulfilled. **Test drives are not allowed.** To the extent possible all document exchange should occur electronically; where documents must be processed in-person social distancing protocols must be followed. Dealership garages or repair shops may continue to operate as an essential business.

Campgrounds

In general RV parks, trailer parks and campgrounds may not open for rental or transient businesses. If residents are living in the campground or RV park on a permanent basis, that section of the campground may be open. This includes seasonal residents, who normally spend the winter months in other locations and who own their RV or trailer and leave it permanently at the campground. No common areas including pools, recreational areas or communal bathrooms may open, and electric, septage and running water must be available.

Golf Courses, Beaches and Boating

At this time the guidance is evolving on golf courses, beaches and boating. Please check the DPH website for the latest guidance. As of May 6, golf courses are considered non-essential and may not operate even if club houses and other inside areas are closed and payment is non-contact, but this may be evolving. Beaches may open if they are not so crowded that social distancing cannot be maintained. Boating is allowed as transportation and boat ramps may remain open at the discretion of the municipality. Recreational boating for hire is not permitted. More guidance can be found [HERE](#) and is also attached here.

The FAQ page on essential and non-essential businesses is updated regularly. In addition, questions may be submitted to covid19.biz@ma.gov as well as to DPH. Employees who feel they are working under unsafe conditions or who believe they are non-essential but are being told to come to work should contact the Division of Labor Standards at safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov.

Enforcement of Essential Business Orders

Although the orders are issued by DPH, as a practical matter the primary enforcers of essential business orders are the local boards of health and their agents. If necessary, local health officials can call on state or local law enforcement to help enforce the order (please contact BCBOHA for sample guidance/policies on this if needed). Upon receipt of a complaint, local boards of health should contact the business in question and attempt to educate them on the appropriate standards. Boards of Health may issue cease and desist orders and may be able to issue fines of up to \$300 (depending on enabling bylaws in your municipality) or refer the matter for criminal prosecution. If the local BOH needs assistance interpreting or enforcing the order contact covid19.biz@mass.gov for assistance.

Masks and Face Coverings Order

Effective May 6, 2020, any person over the age of 2 years, in any place open to the public in Massachusetts, whether indoors or outdoors, and who is not able or does not otherwise maintain a distance of six feet from all others, shall be required to cover their mouth and nose with a mask or cloth face covering. Those who are unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition are exempted and are not required to show proof of their medical condition. The order pertains to all customers and workers in essential businesses and other organizations open to the public, including grocery stores, pharmacies and other retail stores, as well as in taxis, mass transit and other transportation, including in waiting areas or transit stops. Businesses may exclude customers or workers who refuse to follow this order. People are discouraged from wearing medical grade masks as those should be reserved for medical personnel and first responders. Additional information and resources may be found [HERE](#). Joint guidance issued by the MA Office of the Attorney General and the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association on the order is attached and may be shared with your first responders and other municipal officials.

Reopening Advisory Board

On April 28, 2020 the Baker Administration extended the essential services emergency order, the Stay at Home Advisory and all other guidance, including limitations on gatherings of 10 or more people until

May 18th. Governor Baker also announced the formation of the Reopening Advisory Board, which is charged with advising the administration on strategies to reopen the economy in phases based on health and safety metrics. Comments from the public are welcome and can be submitted [HERE](#). A report will be produced by May 18th that will include DPH workplace safety standards, industry frameworks and customer protocols and guidelines, including enforcement mechanisms and coordination with municipal leaders. The Administration emphasizes that while the report will be completed by May 18th, public health data and guidance from health care experts will dictate the timeline of the re-opening process.

Legal Questions

The Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) has been contracted to provide legal guidance to local boards of health on COVID-related matters. Documents and FAQ can be found on the MAHB website [HERE](#). These answers are meant for educational purposes only and do not constitute individual legal advice. Boards of Health should also consult their town counsel for specific legal advice. MAHB also has available answers to health-related questions and best practices [HERE](#).

Student Volunteers

Graduate public health students and alumni are available for assistance to local Boards of Health on topics related to COVID. Students can assist with translation, social media and other outreach, and conducting research for BOH, among other topics. Please contact us if you have interest and we will connect you to the appropriate person.

Update on the Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC)

The Baker Administration is partnering with Partners in Health to develop a state-wide strategy to address the increasing need for assisting municipalities with contact tracing of COVID-19 cases and contacts. The move from an “opt-in” system for Boards of Health to an “opt-out” system was supposed to occur on May 1st but was postponed due to technical issues until midnight on May 6th. As of May 6th, all new COVID cases not affirmatively claimed in MAVEN by the local board of health or its public health nurse will be referred to the CTC the following day for contact tracing and case investigation. Complex cases, such as those in congregate care settings, will automatically remain with the local board of health, as will all cases claimed by the public health nurse in MAVEN.

Testing in Congregate Care Settings

Due to the high number of cases in congregate care settings, especially nursing homes, but including group homes and assisted living, many congregate care sites are undergoing global testing of staff and residents. In Berkshire County, some of this testing is done through Berkshire Health Systems, in conjunction with County Ambulance, and in this case results are provided to the local board of health through their public health nurse as soon as they are available. Other facilities have chosen to have the testing done through other providers. In these cases the local board of health is encouraged to be in touch with facilities in their municipality and to proactively ask for results as soon as they come in as there may otherwise be a significant delay in obtaining results through MAVEN.

Other Updates

Farmers Market Orders

The DPH Commissioner has released a set of 17 orders for the operation of farmers markets across the Commonwealth. The orders provide guidance related to numbers of customers within the market at one time, social distancing protocols, signage, enforcement, cleaning and disinfecting procedures, bagging of produce, and more. In addition, market managers, staff, and vendors MUST use face coverings or masks and disposable gloves at all times during market operations. The order can be found [HERE](#).

Limiting Access to Senior High-Rise and Mid-Rise Developments

The Department of Housing and Community Development has released guidance on restricting access to senior housing to help minimize the spread of COVID-19. If municipalities enact restrictions the housing authority is encouraged to work with their local BOH. More guidance can be found [HERE](#).

Extension of School and Non-Emergency Childcare Facility Closures

The Baker Administration announced on April 21, 2020 that the closure of all public and private schools in the Commonwealth will be extended through the end of the school year; also, closure of all non-emergency childcare programs is extended until June 29, 2020. Emergency Child Care programs approved by the Department of Early Education and Care (ECC) will continue operating. In addition, ECC and Care.com have partnered to assist currently unemployed childcare workers and families to provide skilled in-home care.

Grocery Store Guidance

Further guidance on the operation of grocery stores was provided by the Department of Public Health and Baker Administration on April 7, 2020 to reduce the exposure of shoppers and employees to COVID-19. The full order can be found [HERE](#).

Data Reporting from DPH

The DPH COVID-19 webpage now provides case data broken down by city/town updated every Wednesday. To maintain privacy of patients, case data are only available for municipalities with ≥ 5 cases per 50,000 residents. Please note that these are the case reports according to DPH records; occasionally this may differ from municipal reports due to confusion on addresses (particularly where towns share a common zip code) or where someone is incorrectly reported in a municipality in which they do not live. In addition, DPH is now providing patient census by hospital daily. Access reports [HERE](#). See the table below for Berkshire County community-level data (updated May 6, 2020).

Adams	32	New Ashford	0
Alford	0	New Marlborough	<5
Becket	11	North Adams	43
Cheshire	<5	Otis	<5
Clarksburg	7	Peru	<5
Dalton	7	Pittsfield	138
Egremont	5	Richmond	5
Florida	<5	Sandisfield	<5
Great Barrington	49	Savoy	<5
Hancock	<5	Sheffield	13
Hinsdale	<5	Stockbridge	11
Lanesboro	6	Tyringham	<5
Lee	16	Washington	<5
Lenox	12	West Stockbridge	<5
Monterey	0	Williamstown	80
Mount Washington	0	Windsor	0

DPH COVID-19 Dashboard

In addition to reporting city/town specific data, the Department of Public Health has begun posting new tables, graphs, and other data points related to COVID-19, found [HERE](#). The Dashboard features data such as daily confirmed cases, testing, hospitalizations, deaths, data broken down by age group, PPE distribution, and data related to nursing homes. The dashboard will be updated daily.

Non-COVID Emergency and Urgent Medical Care

Local reports, as well as reports from other parts of the county and around the world, suggest that people with emergent medical conditions not related to COVID-19, including heart attacks, strokes, appendicitis, diabetes complications, gall bladder inflammation and other conditions are not seeking medical assistance in a timely manner. Members of the public should be encouraged to seek emergency and urgent medical care if needed from their providers and local hospitals. Protocols to protect the safety of non-COVID patients are in place, and members of your community should be encouraged to seek care when it is needed.

Updated Quarantine and Isolation Notices in 10 Languages

DPH has updated Quarantine and Isolation resources. They can be found [HERE](#).

Berkshire County Volunteer Opportunities

The Berkshire United Way (BUW) has implemented an online volunteer reception center, as well as a virtual donation center for monetary donations. Individuals in your communities who are interested in volunteering for the COVID-19 response, but aren't sure where to start, can be directed to the BUW's volunteer sign up form, found here: <https://www.berkshireunitedway.org/volunteer-advocate>.

Volunteers Available! The Berkshire Medical Reserve Corps is Here to Help You.

If your community or Board is in need of volunteer assistance related to COVID-19, please contact the Medical Reserve Corps. Volunteer Coordinator, Carmela Lanza-Weil at carmela.lanza.weil@gmail.com. You can also fill out and submit the [Volunteer Request Form](#). Volunteers are background checked and trained and may be available for things such as:

- Deliveries of food or prescriptions, and other items
- School lunch programs
- Hot lines or calling centers
- Distribution of masks, supplies, and other items
- Any BOH special projects

Weekly Conference Calls for Local Boards of Health

DPH continues to hold weekly calls with local boards of health across the Commonwealth on Tuesdays at 3:00 PM. These calls have DPH staff from a variety of departments available for answering questions including Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Environmental Health. The number for this call is 888-390-5007 and the participant code is 6137873.

The Governor's Command Center also holds a weekly call for the LBOH every Friday at 9:00 AM. Boards of Health are asked to only have one person dial in as phone lines are limited. Dial in information is: 888-390-5007 with Passcode 4847016.

In addition, DPH has been holding a weekly call related to MAVEN on Tuesdays at 11:30.

Dr. Dan Doyle from Berkshire Medical Center and the Dalton BOH is also holding weekly conference calls with the LBOH of Berkshire County, especially the medical personnel who are also on Boards of Health and chairs and other representatives. This call is cancelled for May 8, 2020.

Information for Local Boards of Health

MDPH has created a page for COVID-19 information specific to Local Boards of Health [HERE](#), which includes emergency directives, resources for public communication, and frequently asked questions.

Emergency Sheltering in Berkshire County

MEMA has contracted with the Hilton Garden Inn on South Street in Pittsfield to provide non-congregate housing for COVID positive homeless individuals, or those who can otherwise not safely isolate at home while recuperating (and meet income guidelines). Additional sites are located across the state. In addition, the former St. Joe's school has been retrofitted as a shelter for homeless individuals and is now operational. It is being operated by Service Net with medical assistance from Community Health Programs (CHP) and also contains locations suitable for quarantined individuals.

Hotel/Motel and Short-Term Rental Guidance

The Department of Public Health released new guidance on March 31, 2020 regarding the operation of hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts, and other short-term residential rentals. The guidance states that hotels, motels, and short-term rentals may only be used for efforts related to fighting COVID-19, such as housing front line health care workers or individuals, or for Massachusetts residents who have been otherwise displaced from their residences. All other rentals are banned. Guidance can be found [HERE](#).

Public Health Advisory

On March 24, 2020 the MA Department of Public Health issued a public health advisory strongly urging those who are 70 years and older and those with underlying health conditions to stay-at-home with the exception of essential trips for food, medicine, and focused time for exercise and fresh air. Those not providing essential services are also strongly advised to stay at home at this time to help protect those who are providing essential services. The DPH also urges keeping at least six feet between individuals who do not live in the same household at all times. Grocery stores and pharmacies must provide at least one hour per day for shoppers 60 years of age and older. Additionally, these establishments must include strategies to reduce COVID-19 exposure to their employees, including access to handwashing facilities, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes, and procedures to ensure both employees and customers remain at least six feet apart at all times. Employees who are sick should not report to work and if they do come to work they must be sent home. The full advisory can be found [HERE](#).

Traveler Quarantine

The Federal Government has recommended that all those leaving New York for other locations self-quarantine for 14 days as a precaution. Berkshire municipalities with large numbers of second-home owners should be aware and pay attention to short term rentals and hotels. This guidance is displayed as posters at service plazas along I-90 eastbound, distributed as flyers at major transportation hubs and on posted on highway message boards. Visitors are instructed not to travel to Massachusetts if they are displaying symptoms. Health care workers, public health workers, public safety workers, transportation workers and designated essential workers are exempt from this requirement.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, gowns, eye shields and gloves remain in short supply throughout the Commonwealth and the country.

For providers and responders looking for PPE, currently, PPE requests for health and public health are going through the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalitions (HMCC) while those for public safety and first responders are being directed through MEMA.

Emergency Public Health Funding

The Baker-Polito Administration made money available to local municipalities to address public health costs incurred in responding to the COVID outbreak in early April. Funds flowed directly to the 14 largest cities in the state (only Springfield in Western Mass) and through the 15 existing health districts known to DPH, including the Berkshire Public Health Alliance and Tri-Town Health in Berkshire County. Municipalities that do not fit into either category will be aligned with a regional entity across the state, including several regional planning agencies, MHOA and MAHB. In Berkshire County, if your town is not part of either district, you are aligned with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. If you have financial needs that fit with the guidance, please contact us as soon as possible. Money is still available. Allowable expenses include: Surveillance and case identification (including, but not limited to, public health epidemiological investigation activities such as contact follow-up), monitoring of travelers, Public Health Nurses, data management, isolation and quarantine (including, but not limited to, housing; wrap-around services; security; environmental control, clean-up and waste management; and behavioral health services), surge public health staffing, risk communications support, public health coordination with healthcare systems. Non-applicable funding areas include City/town municipal activities (law enforcement etc.) and food and other sundries.

Routine and other Board of Health Inspections

Information on BOH inspections and other functions can be found [HERE](#).

Housing Inspections

Given the State of Emergency, the LBOH has discretion to delay non-emergency inspections. Inspections should resume as normal at the termination of the State of Emergency.

Food Inspections

A LBOH has discretion to decrease the frequency of food inspections under the retail food code. (105 CMR 590.008(H); FC 8-401.10.) During the declared State of Emergency, LBOH are not required to submit a risk-based facility inspection plan for approval.

The EPA has provided a list of registered sanitizers labeled for use against the novel coronavirus [HERE](#). Additional guidance on inspecting food establishments is available. Note that when food establishments closed due to COVID reopen, pre-opening inspections are not required (at the discretion of the local BOH).

Swimming Pools & Adult Tobacco Establishments

Swimming pools and adult tobacco establishments are considered non-essential services and must be closed.

Berkshire County Emergency Operations:

The Northern Berkshire Operations Center, the Southern Berkshire REPC, and the Central Berkshire COVID-19 Coordinating Center are activated and working jointly to address needs across the County.

North Berkshire Operations Center

Operations Hotline: 413-662-3614 (8-5 weekdays, leave msg after hours).

Email: nbcovid@gmail.com

Central Berkshire Covid-19 Coordinating Center

Phone: (413) 770-7663 (weekdays, not yet taking calls from the public or the media).

Email: cbcovidOC@gmail.com

Southern Berkshire Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC)

The Southern Berkshire REPC is stood up and participating in information sharing with the Central County Coordinating Center and the North Berkshire Operations Center. The SBREPC is not taking inquiries from the public or media. The SBREPC can be reached at sbrepc@gmail.com.

COVID-19 Response Command Center

On March 14, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the creation of a new COVID-19 Response Command Center. Secretary Marylou Sudders is leading the cross-secretariat response to the outbreak. The Command Center is the Commonwealth's single point of strategic decision making and coordination for the Administration's comprehensive COVID-19 response.

COVID-19 Testing in Berkshire County:

The drive-through testing facility at Berkshire Medical Center is currently operational. All testing requires a physician order. Symptomatic individuals may call the BMC hotline at 855-BMC-LINK, OR 855-262-5465. After hotline screening, those qualified will be referred for a telemedicine appointment with a physician, and if appropriate, given an order and a time for testing.

Questions from the General Public and Worried-Well

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and United Way 211 call and information service is now operating 24/7 and is answering calls for community members who are not sick but would like to receive information related to COVID-19. Residents across the state can also sign up for the new text notification system including updates, news and prevention information by texting COVIDMA to 888-777. Also encourage your residents to sign up for your municipalities outgoing-911 alert system (such as Code Red, Reverse911, or similar).

For those needing emotional support during these stressful times:

- o Call 2-1-1 and choose the "CALL2TALK" option.
- o Call or text Samaritans 24/7 helpline at 877-870-4673.
- o The Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990, is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster, including disease outbreaks like COVID-19. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the US and territories.

The Town of Great Barrington has also made available a mental health and wellness toolkit available on their website [HERE](#) (PDF).

Communication resources for the public available from the MA DPH include:

DPH Flyer/Infographic on reducing stress & coping with fear of COVID-19: Click [HERE](#).

DMH resources on maintaining Emotional Health & Well-Being: Click [HERE](#).

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/maintaining-emotional-health-well-being-during-the-covid-19-outbreak>

New Social Distancing infographics: Click here for [YOUTH](#) & [GENERAL](#).

Social Distancing messages are now on billboards and will soon be available on public transit (including the BRTA).

New video on Social Distancing specifically targeted specifically at youth can be seen [HERE](#).

COVID-2019 infographic for posting in all public places: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/stop-the-spread-of-germsrespiratory-diseases-like-flu-and-covid-19/download>

A short video for social media, waiting rooms, and other locations: Click [HERE](#).

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 May 6, there have been 72,025 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, of which 461 are in Berkshire County. Although Berkshire County has a high number of cases per capita, for the past couple of weeks, the number of cases has been rising more slowly than in other parts of the state. There are signs that the number of cases is flattening throughout the state at this time, although it is still too early to say if the peak has passed. The number of people tested in Massachusetts has increased to approximately 339,639. There have been 4,420 deaths in Massachusetts of which 36 have been in Berkshire County. In Massachusetts, a significant majority of deaths have been in individuals over the age of 80, and almost all (98%) have had underlying health conditions that put them at increased risk. There have been 1,193,813 reported cases in the United States as of May 6, and 70,802 deaths. Although data is largely missing, it appears that there are significant racial and ethnic disparities in COVID cases and deaths.

Updated daily information on Massachusetts' case reports can be found [HERE](#).

Updated daily information (Monday-Friday) on US cases can be found [HERE](#).

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
- if you are over the age of 60 or have underlying health conditions you should stay home as much as possible.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/personal/index.html>

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.

MDPH Information on COVID-19: <https://www.mass.gov/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