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BERKSHIRE COUNTY BOARDS OF HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Pittsfield, MA April 16, 2020

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

Please note: This is a rapidly evolving situation. Cases continue to rise in Berkshire County, and all non-essential personnel should be staying at home except for essential services. 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:

Advisory Regarding Face Coverings and Cloth Masks

The Baker Administration released guidance for the public regarding the use of face coverings and cloth masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 on April 10, 2020. Face coverings are defined to include anything that covers a person's nose and mouth, including dust masks, scarves, and bandanas, and people are advised to use these coverings in situations where it is difficult to maintain a social distance of six feet from others such as at the grocery store or pharmacy. People are also advised specifically to not use healthcare worker masks such as N-95s that should be preserved for use by healthcare workers. Additional guidance, including how a face covering should fit and how to safely put on and remove the covering from one's face can be found in the advisory, linked here:

<https://www.mass.gov/news/advisory-regarding-face-coverings-and-cloth-masks>

Partners in Health Community Tracing Initiative (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. Currently, a pilot roll-out of this initiative is being conducted in 9 communities in Massachusetts, including the City of Lowell. Additional communities will be brought on over the next few weeks depending on need, with plans to cover the entire state by the beginning of May. Current plans are to allow local Public Health Nurses until 6:00 PM each evening to claim cases; unclaimed cases will then automatically go to the CTC for follow-up. This initiative continues to undergo refinement and BCBOHA will share information as it becomes available.

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. New guidelines place a stricter maximum on store occupancy at any point in time, limiting store occupancy to 40% of its maximum permitted occupancy level on record with the municipality. This occupancy includes shoppers and employees of the store. The full order can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-grocery-stores-40-percent/download>

Updates regarding enforcement and guidelines are expected from the State DPH. In the meantime, BCBOHA will be looking to the LBOH for standard guidelines and tips to share across the county.

Campgrounds / RV Parks

The state has clarified that RV Parks which house people year-round are considered essential and may stay open. People who live there year-round may continue living there. However, campgrounds/RV parks, etc., that are only open seasonally are not considered essential and may not open. This includes

situations where people rent the space year-round and leave a vehicle there in the off-season. These are not considered second-homes and the sites may not be opened for the season until the order on essential businesses is rescinded. BCBOHA released updated guidance to LBOHs on April 10, 2020 and plans to release a BOH Job Aid in the near future via the BCBOHA list-serv.

Essential and Non-essential Services:

The state has a continuously updated list of specific questions regarding what services are or are not considered essential: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-essential-services-faqs#general-questions---essential-services-related->

Expansion of Resources for Health Care Providers and Long-Term Care Facilities

The Baker Administration announced on April 7, 2020 a new financial package to support health care providers through the MassHealth Program. In addition, a new resource aimed at supporting older adults living in long-term care facilities and their families was announced and includes a Nursing Home Mobile Testing Program and a Nursing Home Family Resource Line. More information on these new resources and announcements can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-increased-resources-for-health-care-providers-expanded>

New MA COVID-19 Relief Fund

Governor Baker announced on April 6, 2020 the launch of a MA COVID-19 Relief Fund to support frontline workers and vulnerable populations across the state, including Massachusetts residents and immigrants facing homelessness, food insecurity, and loss of critical services as a result of the COVID-19 public health crisis. For more information, see: <https://www.easternbank.com/macovid19relieffund>

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 here: <https://wmmrc.org/info-for-emdslboh/>. The MRC volunteers are ready and eager to assist you. 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

Hand Sanitizer Availability

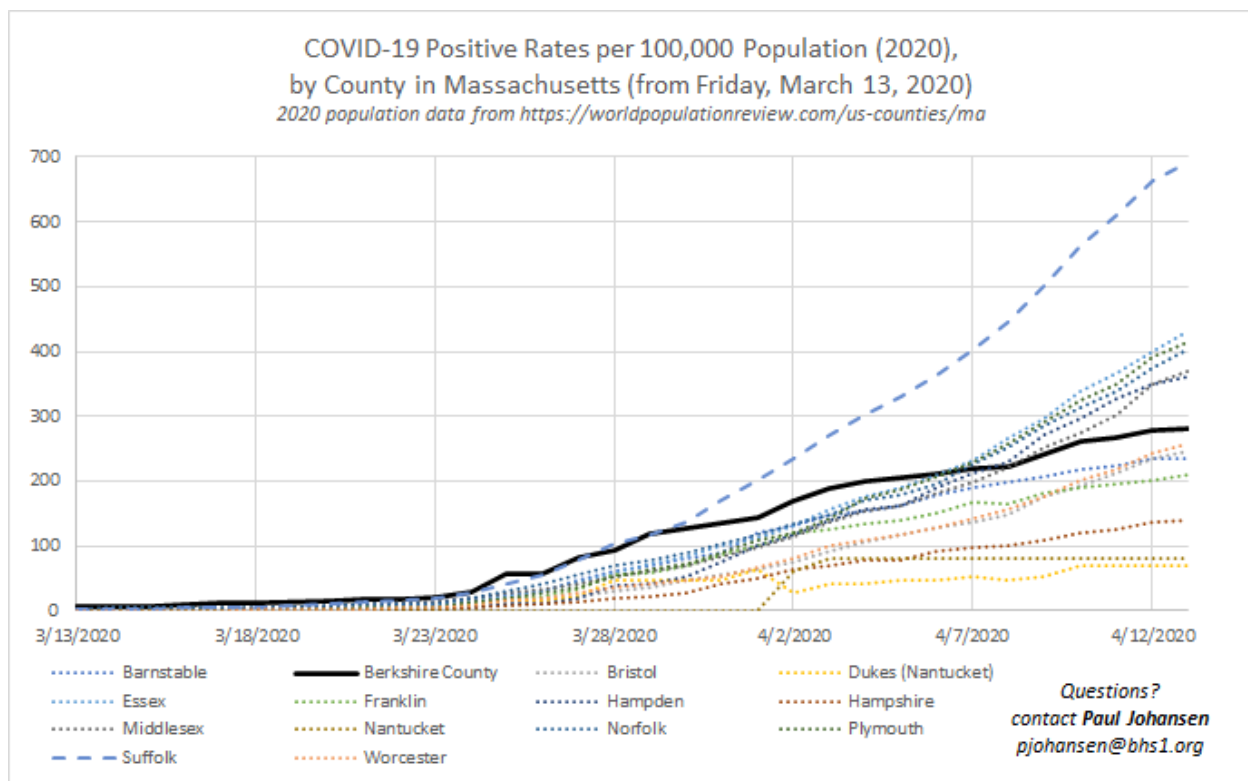
The Central Berkshire COVID-19 Coordinating Center has a limited supply of hand sanitizer available. You can contact the CBC19CC Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm at 413-770-7663 for more information. Please note that your municipality will be asked to verify your identify and to fill out an order form prior to you accessing the supplies.

New Data Reporting from DPH

The DPH Covid-19 webpage is now providing case data broken down by city/town updated every Wednesday. This change in publicly displaying case data by city/town reflects requests made by individuals across the Commonwealth as well as the increase in testing and data available to the state. Case data will only be available by municipality if there are five or more cases in order to maintain privacy of patients. In addition, DPH is now providing patient census by hospital daily. Access reports at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-cases-quarantine-and-monitoring>.

Massachusetts County-Wide Data from Berkshire Medical Center

Berkshire Medical Center Biostatistician Paul Johansen has compiled daily and weekly state-wide and county-level data. The graph below shows positive COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population. While the Berkshires have a higher per capita prevalence of the disease relative to other counties in the state, the graph shows that there is an apparent levelling off of cases in the Berkshires compared to some other counties, including Suffolk, Essex, and Middlesex Counties. We will continue to share this data and these graphs provided by Biostatistician Paul Johansen weekly. In addition to the graphs, BMC has begun providing frequently updated hospital census data to Public Health and First Responder partners, including numbers of inpatients, patients in the ICU, ventilators in use and available ventilators, and number of COVID-19 positive patients on ventilators, among other statistics.



Updated Guidance for Discontinuation of Home Isolation

Revised guidance for discontinuation of home isolation was released on April 2, 2020. Currently, there are two approaches for discontinuing home isolation. The non-test-based approach states that individuals with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions: at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms; **and**, at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. The second approach is a test-based strategy for individuals with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed

to care for themselves at home. These individuals may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions: resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms **and** negative results for COVID-19 from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected \geq 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens). Note that those who were asymptomatic upon testing positive should isolate for at least 7 days following the positive test.

Weekly Conference Calls for Local Boards of Health and the State

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 that the public health nurses have been participating in.

Information for Local Boards of Health

MDPH has created a page for COVID-19 information specific to Local Boards of Health at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-information-for-local-boards-of-health> which includes emergency directives, resources for public communication, and frequently asked questions. DPH also holds weekly conference calls for Local Boards of Health on Tuesdays at 3:00 PM. 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.

Emergency Sheltering in Berkshire County

MEMA has recently contracted with the Hilton Garden Inn on South Street in Pittsfield to provide non-congregate housing for COVID positive homeless individuals who do not need hospitalization. Limited medical care is provided by Community Health Programs (CHP). Additional sites are opening across the state. In addition, the former St. Joe's school has been retrofitted as a shelter for homeless individuals, with space available for those in quarantine, operated by Service Net.

Updates from Last Week (with additional updates as needed):

Hotel/Motel and Short-Term Rental Guidance

In addition to the updated essential businesses list, 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: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-31-2020-hotel-motel-guidance>. **BRPC/BCBOHA was able to cross-match physical locations with owner names & addresses, which were provided to all municipalities. At your request we will mail letters on your letterhead or without letterhead to the rental owners in your municipality. Please contact us if you have not already to let us know if you would like us to mail the lodgings in your community.**

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:

<https://www.mass.gov/news/dph-public-health-advisory-stay-at-home-advisory-for-individuals-over-70-and-for-those-with>.

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 will be 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. On March 29, the Baker-Polito Administration announced an online portal where individuals and companies can donate or sell personal protective equipment (PPE) and volunteer to support the COVID-19 outbreak in Massachusetts. This portal allows companies and organizations to sell or donate protective equipment that is in short supply and is expected to bolster current efforts to leverage traditional and emergency supply chain channels. The program also provides an entry point for local manufacturers to get more information on adapting their businesses to produce more equipment in Massachusetts.

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.

Guidance on Prioritization of PPE: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/guidance-for-prioritization-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-in-massachusetts/download>

PPE Request Process Chart: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ma-covid-19-ppe-request-process-chart/download>

Funding Update

The Baker-Polito Administration has made money available to local municipalities to address public health costs incurred in responding to this outbreak. Funds will flow 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 will be aligned with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Money has begun to go out to municipalities that have expressed need. If you have received an Agreement, as soon as that signed agreement is returned the check will be sent. If you have not yet received an Agreement, and have financial needs that fit with the guidance, please contact us as soon as possible. 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.

In addition, significant federal funding is expected in Massachusetts by April 24, 2020. This funding will include funding for municipal operations, including first responders, among other eligible expenses. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

Routine and other Board of Health Inspections

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 Food Protection Program will provide technical assistance to review any emergency inspection plans for LBOH, upon request.

All food contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils used for the preparation, packaging, or handling of food products must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before each use. Additionally, food establishments are strongly urged to frequently clean non-food contact surfaces, such as doorknobs, tabletops, chairs and menus. The EPA has a list of registered sanitizers labeled for use against the novel coronavirus which can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>. Additional guidance on inspecting food establishments has been sent out under separate cover.

Swimming Pools & Adult Tobacco Establishments

Swimming pools, adult tobacco establishments are not considered essential services and must be closed.

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.

Berkshire County Emergency Operations:

The Northern Berkshire Operations Center, the Southern Berkshire REPC, and the Central Berkshire COVID-19 Coordinating Center are activated, and jointly working together 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.

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 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 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 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. Encourage your residents to sign up for your municipalities outgoing-911 alert system (such as code red 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.

Public Messaging

On March 24, 2020 the Berkshire Eagle published an open letter from the Mayors of North Adams and Pittsfield, Berkshire Health Systems and BCBOHA for the 32 local boards of health urging all residents to stay at home as much as possible to slow the spread of COVID-19. This letter is available for posting on municipal websites or to be used in any other messaging, either in whole or part. Thank you to Dr. Dan Doyle for taking a suggestion on the Friday conference call and turning this letter into a reality. Please let us know if you would like a copy.

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

New DPH Flyer/Infographic on reducing stress & coping with fear of COVID-19:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/coping-with-stress-and-fear-from-covid-19/download>

DMH resources on maintaining Emotional Health & Well-Being: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/maintaining-emotional-health-well-being-during-the-covid-19-outbreak>

New Social Distancing (youth and general) infographic: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/how-young-people-can-prevent-covid-19-with-social-distancing/download>
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/help-prevent-covid-19-with-social-distancing/download>

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:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DwOdh_wNi4&feature=youtu.be

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: <https://youtu.be/HhUpkGxyjS4>

Local Schools and School Closings:

The Governor has ordered all schools closed until May 4, 2020. Many schools started on-line learning this week. Food for those who ordinarily receive free or reduced school breakfast or lunch is available in many municipalities. Child-care facilities, unless they are serving essential workers, are also closed.

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 April 15, there have been 29,918 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, of which 370 are in Berkshire County. The number of people tested in Massachusetts has increased to approximately 132,023. There have been 1,108 deaths in Massachusetts, including 151 reported on April 15. Cases in Massachusetts are predicted to peak sometime between April 17 and April 20. There have been 605,390 reported cases in the United States as of April 15, and 24,582 deaths. New York continues to have the highest number of cases. Almost all countries across the globe have seen at least one case.

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>.

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 stay home if possible.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/personal/index.html>

With questions, Please Contact Allison Egan by email at aegan@berkshireplanning.org.

Please only use reputable sources for information gathering. Further information can be found at the following links.

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 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