

# Thursday, September 24, 2020

## COVID-19 Command Center

### Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

## Situation Update

The Command Center Situation Report is published weekly on Thursdays.



Governor Baker and Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley at the COVID-19 Response Update on Thursday, September 24, 2020. ([Watch the Update](#))

### In This Week's Report:

- Latest Data: Public Health Update
- Week in Review: Key State Actions
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  - Grants Awarded to Assist Local Economic Recovery Efforts
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  - Free Testing in 18 Communities is Extended through October
  - CEIT: Collaborating with Hard-Hit COVID-19 Communities
  - DPH, Emergency Management, and Disaster Recovery Updates
  - Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes Weekly Update

### Helpful Links:

- [Stop COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Travel Order](#)
- [Returning to School Safely](#)
- [Mass.gov/findfoodhelp](#)
- [Stop the Spread](#)
- [Reopening Massachusetts](#)
- [Mass.Gov/covid19](#)
- [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Unemployment & COVID-19](#)
- [Dept. Of Transitional Assistance Online Portal](#)
- [Emergency Childcare Site](#)
- [COVID-19 Cost Eligibility and Tracking Guidance](#)



## Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts **current as of 9/24**

126,863 Total Confirmed Cases ([click here for more information](#))

9,150 Deaths among confirmed cases

2,144,369 individuals tested for the virus to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.

United States **Last Updated 9/24**

Case numbers are updated regularly at noon. Saturday/Sunday reports are preliminary and have not been confirmed with state/territorial health departments.

### Total Cases Reported to CDC:

6,916,292 Total Cases

201,411 Deaths

55 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Marianas, and US V.I.)

### Social Distancing Basics:

- ✓ Stay Home
- ✓ Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and loved ones.

If you go out for essential needs:

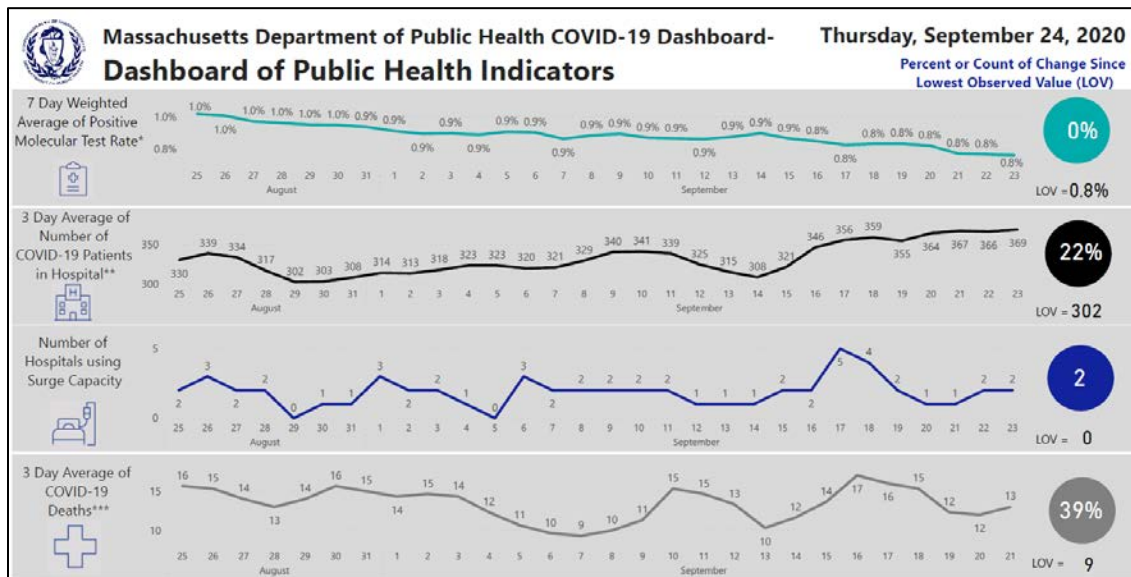
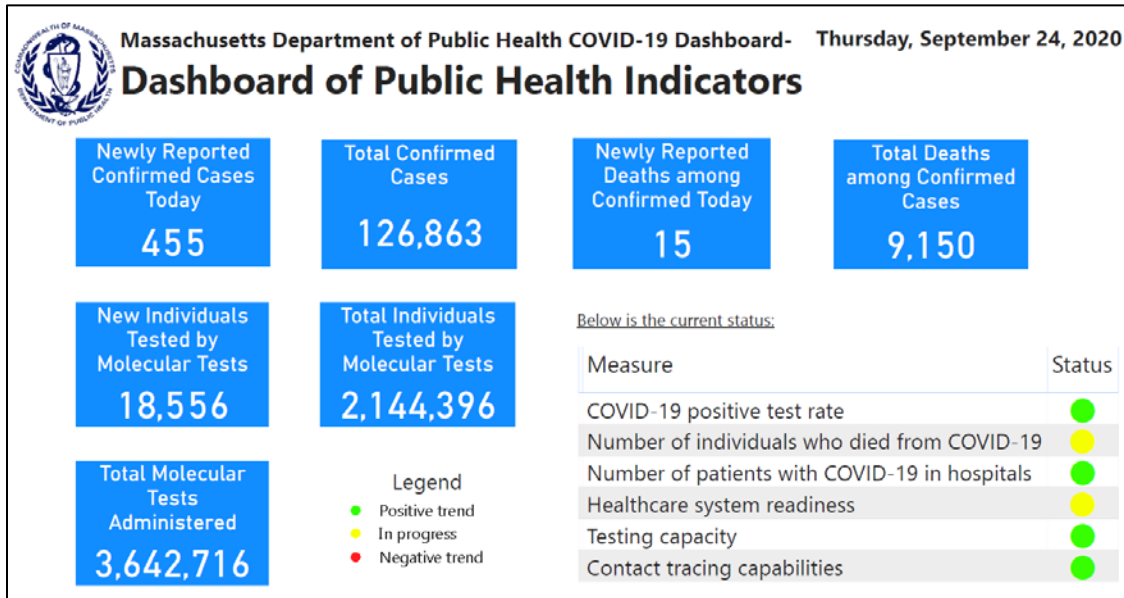
- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Wear a face covering or mask if physical distancing is not possible.

## Latest Data: COVID-19 Public Health Update

### Testing Update:

Today, over than **18,000** new individuals tested by molecular (viral) tests were reported in Massachusetts with **455** newly reported confirmed positive cases. The total molecular tests administered to date is nearly **3.6 million**.

**Hospitalizations & Capacity Update:** As of today, **375** people are hospitalized, with **75** reported to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Key indicators from today's Daily Dashboard are below.



### New Weekly Public Health Data Report Released

Yesterday, the Command Center released the comprehensive [COVID-19 Weekly Public Health Report](#), including community-specific COVID-19 case and testing data. The report also includes risk categories for each city and town based on the average daily incident rate over the past 14 days. Communities in the high-risk category will

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receive additional support from the Commonwealth through a cross-agency COVID Enforcement and Intervention Team (CEIT).

DPH has also posted an archive of previously released city and town data dating back to April on the COVID-19 reporting page. The Weekly Public Health Report includes also includes data on recoveries, along with detailed case and death data related to long term care facilities. The report also includes information on nursing facility staff baseline testing, infection control audits, and more. You can also find information related to contact tracing by local boards of health, and the Community Tracing Collaborative. All the data reports, and raw data files, are available by visiting the [COVID-19 Response Reporting page](#).

### *Week in Review: State Actions*

#### **New Grant Program to Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19 in Communities of Color**

The Baker-Polito Administration announced yesterday a new grant program to help prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in communities of color. Open to applicants until October 14, the \$650,000 grant program is available to faith-based organizations and community groups serving Black, Latinx and other people of color in cities and towns hardest hit by COVID-19. (Press release [here](#)).

COVID-19 data indicate that infection and death rates are disproportionately high among Black and Latinx populations, and other communities of color. Due to under-investment and historical lack of opportunity, communities of color suffer the long-term health consequences of systemic racism and experience disproportionate impacts related to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Community Grant Program is designed to support community-based and faith-based organizations in raising awareness around best practices families and individuals can take to be safe and stop the spread. This includes messaging about ensuring physical distancing, mask wearing and other risk-reduction practices. The program is administered by Health Resources in Action (HRIA), in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Grants are expected to be in the range of \$10,000 to \$50,000 per organization for a funding period of November 2020 through February 2021.

Eligible groups include Massachusetts-based community and faith-based organizations serving people of color. Groups need to have a particular emphasis on support for populations who have mental health and substance use disorders, are experiencing homelessness and housing instability, have disabilities and/or have limited English proficiency for eligibility. A full list of emphasis areas and eligible cities and towns can be found at [www.HRiA.org/MACOVIDCommunityGrants](http://www.HRiA.org/MACOVIDCommunityGrants).

HRIA is a non-profit public health organization with a mission to help people live healthier lives and create healthy communities through prevention, health promotion, policy and research.

Funding recipients will coordinate with the COVID-19 Enforcement and Intervention Team (CEIT), a component of the Commonwealth's Command Center, to develop training materials, share best practices and create messaging. CEIT launched on September 3, 2020 and works collaboratively with communities across the Commonwealth with persistently high COVID-19 incidence rates as part of a coordinated effort to stop the spread.



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### **Grants Awarded to Assist Local Economic Recovery Efforts**

MassDevelopment has awarded \$86,415 for 10 projects through the Commonwealth Places COVID-19 Response Round: Resurgent Places, a program made available specifically to assist local economic recovery efforts as community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to serve residents and visitors. Projects receiving awards include the creation of outdoor dining spaces, sidewalk retail venues, and partitions to support social distancing. Governor Charlie Baker, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, and MassDevelopment President and CEO Lauren Liss joined Lowell City Manager Eileen Donoghue, Do-it-Yourself Lowell Co-Founder Christopher Aurora Erickson, and African Community Center of Lowell Founder & Executive Director Gordon Halm to announce the grants on Wednesday at Mill City BBQ & Brew in Lowell.



The grants were awarded to projects in **Amherst, Chicopee, Fitchburg, Framingham, Lowell, Lynn, North Brookfield, Roxbury, Stockbridge, and Worcester**. For more information on the projects awarded grants, [see MassDevelopment's news release](#).

### **New Indoor Visitation Guidance for Nursing Homes, Rest Homes and Assisted Living Residences**

New guidance was announced today that allows safe indoor visitation to resume in nursing homes and rest homes, and further expands indoor visitation options in assisted living residences (ALRs) starting Friday, September 25. The guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) balances the important role visitation plays in supporting resident emotional health and quality of life, while ensuring necessary infection control measures are in place.



Today's announcement builds on [previous guidance](#) to further support residents and their loved ones who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. In March, the Commonwealth acted quickly to take precautions in restricting visitation at nursing homes, rest homes, and ALRs to protect resident safety and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. As the Commonwealth proceeded with a phased reopening, visitation restrictions were updated in [June](#) to allow for outdoor visitation with guidance on how these visits could safely occur.

Nursing homes and rest homes may resume in-person visits so long as appropriate infection control and safety measures are in place, including:

- Indoor visits should occur within a designated visitation space that is close to the entrance of the facility and allows for social distancing
- The visitor must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and have their temperature checked
- Residents, staff, and visitors must wear a mask or face covering for the duration of the visit
- The visitor must remain at least 6 feet away from the resident for the majority of the visit
- If desired by both parties, there may be physical contact between the resident and visitor so long as precautionary measures are followed such as hand sanitation before and after contact
- A schedule is implemented for frequent disinfection of the designated visitation space

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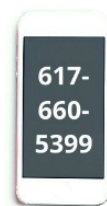
- The unit, floor, or care area where the resident lives must not have any COVID-19 cases in residents or staff in the past 14 days and the facility is not experiencing a staffing shortage that requires a contingency staffing plan

ALRs were previously able to resume indoor, in-unit visitation, and may now also resume indoor visitation in a designated shared space such as a waiting room near the entrance of the residence. ALRs are subject to the same appropriate infection control and safety measures described above, except for the requirement that there are no COVID-19 cases in the past 14 days.

[View the full DPH long-term care visitation guidance](#)

[View the full EOEALR visitation guidance](#)

<b>COVID-19 Cases in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities (as of 9/24)</b>	
Residents/Healthcare Workers of LTC Facilities	<b>24,811</b>
LTC Facilities Reporting at Least One Case of COVID-19	<b>383</b>
Deaths Reported in LTC Facilities	<b>6,011</b>



**NURSING HOME  
FAMILY RESOURCE LINE  
617-660-5399**



**Federal Approval for September Pandemic EBT**

The Administration announced that it received federal approval to issue additional Pandemic EBT, or P-EBT, benefits in September to promote increased food security for families who participate in the United States Department of Agriculture’s National School Lunch Program (NSLP). These funds will help cover the cost of missed school meals from the month of September due to delayed school opening or remote learning, for over 470,000 students and their families. Benefits will start being available (being distributed) September 30, 2020 for an estimated total amount of over \$40 million of federal dollars. (Press release [here](#)).



The Families First Coronavirus Response Act gave states the ability to request special waivers from the Secretary of USDA to establish a new federal program, P-EBT. The Massachusetts program was [first launched](#) in April 2020 to help more than 522,000 students buy healthy food while schools were closed from March through June due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This brought more than \$207 million in federal dollars into the Commonwealth, supporting families across the state and local retailers.

“Thanks to close coordination at the state and local level, Massachusetts was one of the first states approved for P-EBT and continues to be a leader on addressing food security and maximizing federally funded food assistance programs that support many of our vulnerable populations, including children,” said COVID-19 Command Center Director and Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders. “Every individual, family and community

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in the Commonwealth should have access to healthy food. These P-EBT benefits will continue to help hundreds of thousands of families.”

“P-EBT proved to be a highly effective tool for helping families across the state directly access food early on in the state’s response to the pandemic,” said Department of Transitional Assistance Commissioner Amy Kershaw. “Securing these additional federal funds will provide much needed assistance for our families in feeding their students as they navigate this complicated transition back to school.”

“We want to give students all the support we can as they return to learning this fall,” said Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley. “We know that COVID-19 continues to impact families, and these P-EBT funds will supplement the grab-and-go meals that schools and community organizations are offering.”

P-EBT is administered by DTA and DESE. Eligible students who receive DTA benefits will receive their P-EBT benefits on their existing EBT card. Eligible students who do not receive DTA benefits but were mailed a P-EBT card in the past, will receive their P-EBT benefits on their existing P-EBT card. Families who lost their P-EBT card can request a new one at [DTAConnect.com/pebt](https://www.DTAConnect.com/pebt) starting October 1. Newly eligible students will receive a P-EBT card in the mail in October. Many families eligible for P-EBT are also eligible for on-going food assistance benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and are encourage to check eligibility and apply at [www.DTAConnect.com](https://www.DTAConnect.com).

Eligible students will receive \$5.86 a day based on the number of days their school building has been closed due to delayed start and the days they are learning remotely for at least five days in a row in the month. Families can check their P-EBT balance by calling the number on the back of the card. P-EBT benefits can be used anywhere SNAP benefits are accepted, including [online from Walmart and Amazon](#). Learn more about P-EBT at [MApebt.org](https://MApebt.org).

P-EBT benefits supplement the free grab and go meal sites that are still available this fall. They do not replace them. Kids and teens can get free meals at hundreds of locations throughout the state, no registration or ID required. Meals will be available as late as December 31, 2020. Locations are continuously added and updated—if you do not see a location near you, please check back regularly. Find a [location near you](#).

P-EBT builds upon the work of the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center’s Food Security Task Force to ensure that food insecurity and food supply needs are addressed during the COVID-19 public health emergency and into the long-term, including:

- Setting up more than 1,500 grab and go meal sites at schools across the Commonwealth
- Issuing emergency SNAP benefits to more than 240,000 households to bring all SNAP recipients to their maximum benefit amount, bringing more than \$210 million of federal dollars into the state
- Launching the [SNAP Online Purchasing Program](#) to allow SNAP recipients to use their benefits to buy groceries online from Walmart and Amazon, with over \$9 million in transactions to date
- Establishing a \$36 million [Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program](#)
- Investing \$5 million in the [Healthy Incentives Program](#) to bring on new retailers

DTA assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency. DTA serves one in eight residents of the Commonwealth with direct economic assistance and food assistance, as well as workforce training opportunities. DTA administers three core programs: [SNAP](#); Transitional Aid for Families with Dependent Children ([TAFDC](#)); and

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Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children ([EAEDC](https://www.mass.gov/DTA/COVID-19)). Learn more: <https://www.mass.gov/DTA/COVID-19>.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is committed to preparing all students for success after high school. The Department's work includes licensing educators, distributing state and federal education money, helping districts implement learning standards, overseeing statewide standardized tests, monitoring schools and districts, and convening districts and individuals to share best practices. In addition, we collect data to inform state and local decisions. Learn more: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>.

## **Free COVID-19 Testing in 18 Communities is Extended through October**

The state's "Stop the Spread" initiative has extended free COVID-19 testing through October 31. The testing is available in 18 high priority communities across the Commonwealth: Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Framingham, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lynn, Marlborough, Methuen, New Bedford, Randolph, Revere, Salem, Saugus, Springfield, Winthrop, and Worcester.



The Stop the Spread initiative is a data-driven targeted effort to reduce the prevalence of COVID-19 in communities that are above the state average in total cases and positive test rates. All residents of these 18 communities, including asymptomatic individuals, are urged to get tested at one of these locations. These testing resources are open to all residents of the Commonwealth.

Residents can visit the initiative's website at [mass.gov/stophespread](https://mass.gov/stophespread) to find testing locations and additional information. Residents are reminded that if they test positive for COVID-19, please answer the call when they are contacted by the Community Tracing Collaborative or their local board of health. Also, any individual who needs a safe place to isolate can call (617) 367-5150 to access an isolation and recovery site at no cost.

## **Collaborating with Hard-Hit Communities to Stop the Spread of COVID-19**

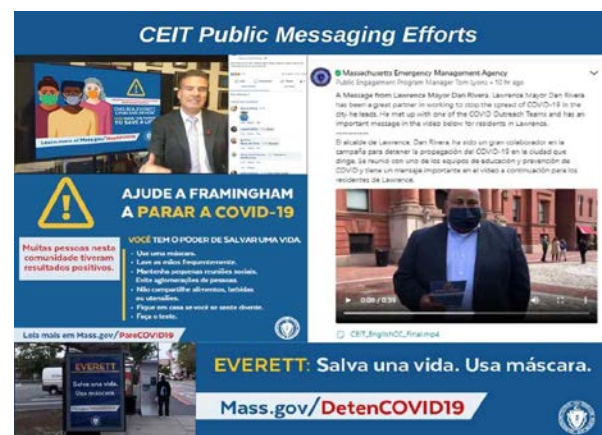
The Administration's COVID-19 Enforcement and Intervention Team (CEIT) continues to assist the communities hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Announced a little over a month ago](#), CEIT is a cross-agency team that collaborates with partners at the local level on enforcement and outreach efforts to stop the spread of the virus in areas with case rates that are persistently above the state average. In addition to helping with enforcement activities, the CEIT launched a multi-lingual, community-specific, public messaging campaign in six communities including **Chelsea, Everett, Framingham, Lawrence, Lynn, and Revere**. The campaign includes a mix of paid and earned media, and Outreach Teams dispatched to provide education and public health resources. It also includes assistance for local leaders to communicate their messages in other innovative ways, including telephone town halls, and using local public alert systems to provide residents regular updates.

For more information on CEIT, and resources for municipalities visit [Mass.gov/StopCovid](https://Mass.gov/StopCovid).



"I have to give kudos to the state, including the Governor, the Department of Public Health, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Secretary of Public Safety. They've been excellent. They have calls with hard-hit communities once or twice a week, asking what we need."

**CHIEF BRIAN KYES**  
Chelsea Police Department, in remarks to the Police Executive Research Forum 9/23



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## *Important Updates*

### Department of Public Health Updates:

- Holliston and Marlborough were added to the list of communities in Massachusetts at higher risk for COVID-19 based on the average daily cases per 100,000 residents; other communities currently on the higher risk list are Chelsea, Everett, Framingham, Lawrence, Lynn, Nantucket, New Bedford, Revere, Saugus, Tyngsborough, Winthrop, Worcester, and Wrentham.
- Issued [updated guidance for hospitals and clinics](#) utilizing alternate space for permitted COVID-19 screening, specimen collection, or care to expand use of that space for the administration of vaccinations provided they comply with all state and federal requirements as well as vaccine storage and handling requirements.
- DPH has launched its COVID-19 Community Impact Survey. Please take the survey and share the link: [www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey](http://www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey).
- MA211 received 3,139 COVID-19 calls from Wednesday 9/16 through Wednesday 9/23 for a new total of 119,768

### Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Updates:

#### **Mass Care**

- 1 state contracted quarantine/isolation hotel in the city of Everett continues to receive client placements.
  - Currently 17 residents are housed in this hotel (change of -1 since last Thursday)
  - Isolation support will continue in support of the “Stop the Spread” testing initiative.
- A total of 132,744 meals have been distributed to date through state contracted hotel sites and distributions of food boxes and meal bags.

#### **Logistics (including Personal Protective Equipment and Supplies)**

- 28 orders prepared for pickup or delivery from 9/18-9/24
- 189,000 Cloth Face Masks were transferred to DESE today, 9/24, to support mask distribution to schools. Additional transfers will be planned in coming weeks.
- 15,000 KN-95, and 3,806 bottles of hand sanitizer are scheduled to be delivered to the CEIT community outreach team tomorrow, 9/25
- 1,500 sanitizer stands were delivered to Everett this week, in support of the CEIT community outreach team.
- DPH coordinated 12 deliveries to health care entities on Tuesday 9/22 (7 PPE/6 testing supplies – 1 facility requested both), and 20 deliveries have been scheduled for Friday 9/25 (8 PPE/12 testing supplies).

#### **Disaster Recovery**

On March 27, the President [declared](#) a Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts related to the COVID-19 pandemic response. Through this declaration, federal aid will be made available to cities and towns, state agencies, and certain non-profits in all Massachusetts counties to help pay for emergency protective measures (response costs) related to the COVID-19 pandemic. MEMA’s Recovery Unit has developed a [webpage](#) with information and guidance on, but not limited to, disaster declaration, eligibility criteria, and the application process. Highlights from the Disaster Recovery process include the following:

- Total FEMA RPA Applicants: 606 (+16)
- Total # Obligated Projects: 30 / +\$ (+0 / +\$)



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- Total # of Payments Disbursed: 20 / \$ 6,863,174.69 (+7 / +\$ 5,769,914.87)
- Total # of Partial Payments Disbursed: 1 / \$170,759.77 (+0 / +\$)
- Online Applicant Technical Assistant Requests: 450 (+5)
- Continuing to provide technical assistance to project applicants.
- FEMA formally extended the Public Assistance Emergency Work completion deadline for COVID-19 declared events. The deadline has been extended until further notice. FEMA will make notification prior to the establishment of a deadline for the completion of emergency work.
- On September 23, 2020. MEMA requested an additional 30-Day Extension from FEMA for the Emergency Feeding Program. Awaiting response from FEMA.
- A \$5.6 million payment was made to Baystate Medical Center. This payment is a reimbursement for the applicant's emergency medical service activities in response to COVID-19.

### **Holyoke Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 9/22/20)**

- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke resumed outdoor visitation on Saturday, September 19, and is again offering visits Tuesday through Saturday with 20 slots each day for veterans to visit with their loved ones. 21 visits have occurred since visitation resumed, and in total there have been 756 outdoor visits with veterans from families and loved ones.
  - The [outdoor visitation plan](#) remains contingent on the continued stability of infection control and public health metrics.
  - Outdoor visitation is in addition to continued video visits for regular family communication through video chat, and the Family Hotline is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff. Outdoor visits and video visits can be scheduled by calling the Family Line at 413-552-4764 Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Families can also request updates via email at [CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov](mailto:CommunicationsMailbox-HLY@Mass.gov).
  - Please note the Soldiers' Home can only share medical information about a resident with the authorized health care proxy on file.
- Daily symptom checking and routine staff surveillance are important tools to protect staff, residents and visitors and will remain in place until such time there is a medical breakthrough or a safe and effective vaccine for COVID 19. Staff who are not feeling well are instructed not to come to work and to contact their health care provider. If staff show any signs of COVID-symptoms, they are required to self-quarantine at home, per CDC guidance for health care workers.
- The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke continues to build its permanent leadership and staff to best position the facility for the future. This week, the Home welcomed **Colonel Michael Lazo** as its new permanent Chief Operating Officer.
  - The Soldiers' Home leadership is committed to ensuring the safety of the Veteran residents and restoring the Home to its rightful place that treats them with dignity, honor, and respect. The Soldiers' Home leadership is moving into the Transition & Rebuilding Phase that is focused on rebuilding staff leadership and team and positioning the facility to move forward safely.
- The Holyoke Soldiers' Home has been intently focused on following infection control procedures and maintaining best practices for the safety of veteran residents and staff, and to support the recovery of veterans as the health status of many stabilizes. All veteran residents' health is being monitored and retesting is being conducted for veterans both on- and off-site as clinically appropriate.
  - The Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following [the latest CDC guidance](#), which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus. The CDC recommends making medical decisions regarding when to end isolation and determine that the patient has recovered based on symptoms and time elapsed.

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- Since the start of the pandemic, more than 80 residents had been determined clinically recovered, which means that they at one point tested positive for COVID-19 but are now considered clinically recovered as defined by federal CDC guidance.
- The Home continues to adhere to infection control protocols throughout the Home and continues the cohorting of veterans with the same status.
- The Baker-Polito Administration is in the midst of the expedited capital project to reimagine the future of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, led by architecture firm Payette. The project team is actively gathering input from a broad community of stakeholders as part of the Rapid Planning Phase, in addition to working on the needs assessment, the clinical options, and the facility's infrastructure. This work will inform the development of the implementation plan to meet the April 15, 2021 federal Veterans' Affairs' State Home Construction Grant application deadline.
  - Last week, the team launched a website for the project, [www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject](http://www.mass.gov/HolyokeSHProject), and an online survey to gather input: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WCX32P2>
- In June, the Baker-Polito Administration released the independent report ordered by Governor Baker to investigate the COVID-19 outbreak at Holyoke Soldiers' Home, and announced a series of reforms to strengthen its governance and oversight of the Home, improving staffing processes, providing quality care for our Veterans, and planning for significant capital improvements.
- **The status as of September 22 is as follows:**
  - The status of all residents:
    - 0 positive and not clinically recovered
    - 59 veterans are negative
    - 0 residents have a pending test
    - 79 residents have been determined clinically recovered
    - 1 resident has refused testing
  - Resident locations:
    - 114 veterans are onsite
    - 25 veterans are offsite
      - 24 veterans are at a dedicated skilled nursing unit at Holyoke Medical Center
      - 1 veteran is receiving acute care offsite
  - Since March 1, there have been 76 veteran deaths of veterans who tested positive
  - From the most recent round of staff surveillance testing
    - 0 tested positive
    - All others who previously tested positive are clinically recovered

### **Chelsea Soldiers' Home Weekly Update (current as of 9/22/20)**

- On Thursday, September 17, a non-clinical staff member of the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea tested positive for COVID-19 after a round of surveillance testing. While the staff member does not provide direct care to veteran residents, out of an abundance of caution and per infection control protocol, the Home is immediately taking necessary precautions including deep cleaning, cancelling visitation for two weeks, and will continue to perform weekly surveillance testing.
  - This staff member does not provide direct care to residents. The Soldiers' Home is following CMS, CDC and DPH guidance in identifying potential close contacts.
  - The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea currently conducts bi-weekly staff surveillance testing. In accordance with [the recent CMS Interim Rule](#), the Soldiers' Home is now conducting weekly testing until the facility is 14 days without positive test results. These tests are provided at no cost to employees.
- Additionally, a veteran resident of the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea who was clinically recovered from COVID-19 again experienced COVID-like symptoms, was proactively transferred to a hospital for

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treatment on Friday, September 18, again tested positive. The resident is being treated for issues not related to COVID-19 at an acute care facility offsite. The resident has tested negative since the positive test and we are awaiting results of a second consecutive negative test.

- All residents residing on the same floor as the positive resident have undergone testing on September 18th. All test results came back negative.
  - Clinical staff will continue to monitor any changes in residents.
  - All staff who worked directly with the veteran who tested positive have been identified and are being tested. The Soldiers' Home is following CMS, CDC and DPH guidance in identifying potential close contacts.
- Visitation has been temporarily suspended for two weeks per infection control protocol to protect the health and safety of veteran residents and loved ones, as the outdoor visitation plan is contingent on the continued stability of infection control and public health metrics.
  - Video visits between veteran residents and their loved ones are continuing, and the Family Line is available for ad hoc updates with support from social work and clinical staff.
  - Families can also request updates on their loved ones by contacting the Home at [CSH@mass.gov](mailto:CSH@mass.gov) and through phone and video conversations. Medical information can only be shared with an authorized health care proxy.
- The Soldiers' Home's medical team is making all clinical decisions following the latest CDC guidance, which continues to evolve as the medical community learns more about this new virus. The CDC recommends making medical decisions regarding when to end isolation and determine that the patient has recovered based on symptoms and time elapsed.
  - Since the start of the pandemic, more than 40 residents had been determined clinically recovered, which means that they at one point tested positive for COVID-19 but are now considered clinically recovered as defined by federal CDC guidance.
  - Individuals are determined recovered according to CDC guidance, and may test positive even after being clinically recovered. This is a known consequence of the PCR test, which is extremely positive to picking up virus or viral remnants even weeks after recovery.
- The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea monitors the PPE supply, and continues to receive shipments of PPE. The Incident Command team at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home continues to enforce staff use of personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as source PPE to ensure that residents and staff have access to critical safety equipment. The team continues to coordinate closely with the VA Health Care System.
- **The status as of September 22 is as follows:**
  - Residents
    - 1 veteran resident is positive
    - 146 veteran residents are negative
    - 42 residents have recovered, meaning they previously tested positive and are now clinically recovered
    - 0 residents have pending tests
    - Since March 1, there have been 31 deaths of veterans who tested positive
  - Following the most recent round of staff surveillance testing:
    - 1 employee is positive
    - All other employees who previously tested positive have been determined clinically recovered

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### *Resources*

#### **MassSupport**

MassSupport is the Massachusetts Crisis Counseling Program funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and managed in partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health and Riverside Trauma Center, a program of Riverside Community Care. MassSupport provides:

- Free and confidential counseling for stress and other emotional reactions to the Pandemic in multiple languages
- Referral to services
- Free mental health screenings on MassSupport website: [www.MassSupport.org](http://www.MassSupport.org)

MassSupport can help you:

- Take stock of needs
- Identify solutions
- Enhance or develop coping strategies
- Feel heard
- Understand and manage your reactions
- Be less stressed
- Get reliable, fact-based information

Contact MassSupport by phone at **888-215-4920** or by email at [MassSupport@riversidecc.org](mailto:MassSupport@riversidecc.org)

#### **Red Cross Virtual Family Assistance Center**

In order to provide support to families and communities who have suffered loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Red Cross has developed a Virtual Family Assistance Center (VFAC), staffed by a team of specially trained mental health, spiritual care, and health services volunteers who are:

- Connecting with families over the phone to offer condolences, emotional and spiritual support, and access to available resources
- Providing support for virtual memorial services for families, including connecting with local faith-based community partners
- Hosting online classes to foster resilience and facilitate coping skills
- Assisting families with access to national, state or local resources such as grief counseling, legal resources, funeral information, financial information services, or veterans' assistance
- Additional state- and local-specific resources are available.

**People can visit:** <https://www.redcross.org/virtual-family-assistance-center/ma-family-assistance-center.html>

to access this resource with special virtual programs, information, referrals and services to support families in need. People without internet access can **call toll-free 833-492-0094** for help. All Family Assistance Center support will be provided virtually and is completely confidential and free.

#### **COVID-19 Public Resources Map**

MEMA, together with MA VOAD and other partners, has developed a [COVID-19 Public Resources Map](#) showing the location of resources available to the public, such as food banks, houses of worship, and Project Bread site locations. Please note that this map is not inclusive of all resources and is only as accurate as the information that has been provided to MEMA.

COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER  
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**Massachusetts COVID-19 Response Dashboard**

MEMA has developed and maintains a public-facing COVID-19 ArcGIS Online dashboard, available [here](#). This dashboard is continuously updated and captures information about current COVID 19 case counts, cases by age, cases by county, hospital status, hospital bed status, death tolls, and deaths by age. Users should refresh the dashboard daily as enhancements are continuously being added.

*Stay Informed*

- Get information from trusted sources. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid19> for the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results. Call 2-1-1 with questions. Text the keyword **COVIDMA** to **888-777** to receive notifications to your phone. To receive these notifications in Spanish, text **COVIDMAESP** to **888-777**
- Take care of your emotional health:
- Call 2-1-1 and choose the “CALL2TALK” option.
- Samaritans is continuing operations 24/7, as always. During this unprecedented time, it can feel overwhelming to receive constant messages about COVID-19. Call or text their 24/7 helpline any time at 877-870-4673.
- 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 United States and its territories.

*Communications Resources*

**Infographics**

- [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
- Social distancing: for [youth](#) for [general audience](#)
- [Coping](#) with stress or fear
- What to do [if you are sick](#)
- 10 tips for at-home [quarantine or self-monitoring](#)

**Short videos:**

Overview of COVID-19 Testing	Importance of COVID-19 Testing	<a href="#">How to Safely Cover Your Face Outside of Home</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">English</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Spanish</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Portuguese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Simplified Chinese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Traditional Chinese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Vietnamese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Haitian Creole</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">English</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Spanish</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Portuguese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Simplified Chinese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Traditional Chinese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Vietnamese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Haitian Creole</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Spanish</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Portuguese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Simplified Chinese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Traditional Chinese</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Haitian Creole</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Vietnamese</a></li> </ul>

- [10 Tips for at home quarantine or self-monitoring](#)
- [Stop the Spread of Germs like Seasonal Flu and COVID-19 \(:30\)](#)
- [Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing \(:30\)](#)

## COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMAND CENTER WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

- [How Young People Can Help Prevent COVID-19 with Social Distancing \(:30\)](#)
- [Coping with Stress and Fear from COVID-19 \(:30\)](#)
- [Stay Home - Save Lives \(:06\)](#)

### **Spanish Radio Spots (available on request):**

- “Prevent the Spread of Germs,” “Social Distancing and Stay Home,” and “Stay Safe. Save Lives.”

## *How to Help Out*

- [Donate](#) to the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund.
- Volunteer opportunities for health professionals: [Please click here.](#)
- Health care facilities can learn more about [requesting personal protective equipment here.](#)

### **The Need for Blood Donations Continues, and Recovered COVID-19 Donors Can Help Save Lives**

In coordination with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Red Cross is seeking people who are fully recovered from the new coronavirus to sign up to donate plasma to help current COVID-19 patients. People who have fully recovered from COVID-19 have antibodies in their plasma that can attack the virus. This convalescent plasma is being evaluated as treatment for patients with serious or immediately life-threatening COVID-19 infections, or those judged by a healthcare provider to be at high risk of progression to severe or life-threatening condition. Interested individuals can visit [RedCrossBlood.org/plasma4covid](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org/plasma4covid) to learn more. The Red Cross follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and volunteer donors are the only source of blood for those in need. To make an appointment to donate, please visit [www.RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org)