Tuesday March 17, 2020
COVID-19 Response Command Center
Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Situation Update

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charlie Baker declared a State of Emergency to support the Commonwealth's response to coronavirus. On March 14, the Baker-Polito Administration announced the creation of a new COVID-19 Response Command Center. Governor Baker has asked Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders to lead this cross-secretariat response to the outbreak of COVID-19 to complement the work that has been underway for weeks across state government to keep residents safe and healthy.

The Command Center, under the leadership of Secretary Sudders and reporting to Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, will be the Commonwealth's single point of strategic decision making and coordination for the Administration's comprehensive COVID-19 response.

In support of the Command Center, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Framingham has activated to Level 2 (Partial Activation). In addition, MEMA's Regional EOCs in Tewksbury, New Bedford, and Agawam have also been partially activated to support local communities. Representatives from the following agencies and organizations were present in the SEOC today: American Red Cross, Dept. of Environmental Protection, Dept. of Fire Services, FEMA, InfraGard, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, MA National Guard, MA Office on Disability, MA State Police, MassDOT/MBTA, and Salvation Army.

Important protective measures to be aware of:

- Gatherings of over 25 people are prohibited until April 6th.
- On-premises consumption of food and drink at bars and restaurants is prohibited until April 6th.
- Elementary and Secondary Schools are closed until April 6th.
- Colleges and universities, both public and private, are urged to reduce the need for students to be on campus.
- Employers are encouraged to support alternative work arrangements, including allowing employees to work from home.
- Some government offices are closed, you should check the website or call ahead, to confirm hours of operation.
- MBTA trains and buses are running a reduced service schedule.

Situation in Numbers

Massachusetts current as of 3/17

218 Total Cases

1,367 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory

384 additional tests performed by commercial laboratories

United States current as of 3/17

Total Cases Reported to CDC*:

** Includes Confirmed & Presumptive Positive*

4,226 Total Cases (+739)
229 Travel-Related (+24)
245 Close Contact (+31)
3,752 Under Investigation (+684)

75 Deaths (+7)

53 Jurisdictions Reporting Cases (49 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, and US V.I.)

Social Distancing Basics:

If you go out:

- ✓ Avoid crowds
- ✓ Stay 6 feet away from others
- ✓ Don't shake hands or hug
- ✓ Call/Facetime/online chat with friends and loved ones.

State Actions Today

At a 1 pm news conference today, Governor Baker, Secretary Sudders and Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. Monica Bharel, provided an update of the current situation and announced the following: (See News Release)

Emergency Funds to Support Local Boards of Public Health:

- Immediate distribution of an initial $5 million in emergency funding to local health authorities. This funding is part of a $15 million aid package allotted by the Legislature last week, and more of that funding will be disbursed soon.
- A majority of the funding will go directly to cities and towns to help with their response to this public health emergency.

Emergency Orders to Support Health System Surge Capacity Staffing:

- The Governor has signed two emergency orders, along with an additional order issued by the Commissioner of Public Health, to expedite the onboarding of more licensed health care professionals.
- These orders will make it easier for licensed health care staff who are credentialed to work at one facility, to practice at another licensed facility in the state. This includes registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and respiratory technicians.
- The orders issued today will also allow for out-of-state, licensed, physicians in good standing to practice in Massachusetts, and enable retired physicians in good standing to reactivate their license.
- In order to support the crucial role of EMS providers, the order allows EMS services the flexibility to adjust minimum ambulance staffing to ensure availability and capacity of emergency medical services.
- These orders will also facilitate the use of telehealth across state lines, building off the emergency actions taken on Sunday for all commercial health insurers to allow providers to deliver services via telehealth.

Small Business Administration Declaration:

- The Governor formally requested that the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) issue a "declaration of economic injury" for the Commonwealth.
- This declaration would make it possible for low-interest loans to be made available through the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program to business owners affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Testing Capacity is Expanding:

- As of Tuesday morning, 3/17, the State Public Health Laboratory has conducted 1,367 tests.
- With new clinical changes from CDC, the State Lab has the capacity to test for 400 patients per day, up from 200 patients a day.
- National testing laboratories continue to ramp up their testing; as of yesterday morning, the State Lab received reports from Quest Diagnostics and LabCorp that they completed an additional 384 tests.

State Legislators Briefed:

- More than 100 State Legislators received a briefing from the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response lead Secretary, Marylou Sudders.

Disaster/Emergency Recovery Actions:

Small Business Recovery Loan Fund:
Governor Baker has announced a $10 million Small Business Recovery Loan Fund, administered by Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC), to provide emergency capital up to $75,000 to Massachusetts-based businesses impacted by COVID-19 with under 50 full- and part-time employees, including nonprofits. Click here for more information.

FEMA Public Assistance

- FEMA has declared a national emergency authorizing states to request Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) in the form of resources or expertise.
- FEMA will also reimburse eligible state, local, and private non-profit COVID-19 response costs up to $5 million statewide that are not covered by HHS, CDC, etc.
- FEMA may request the $5 Million cap be increased and are waiting on further guidance; however, the focus now is on providing Direct Federal Assistance.
- MEMA has begun creating a virtual applicant briefing and will issue updated guidance once FEMA has provided additional information.

Stay Informed

Key Public Health Messages for All Residents:

- Protect yourself by following public health advice about keeping your hands clean, and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Protect others who are most at risk of COVID-19 by keeping your distance from people (at least 6 feet away from others), especially those who are older, and people living with chronic health conditions.
- If you are outside, avoid crowds.
- Don't shake hands or hug.
- Stay connected to friends and loved ones by phone or through other technology.
- Get information from trusted sources. Visit https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus for the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results.

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

A short video for social media, waiting rooms, and other locations: https://youtu.be/HhUpkGxyjS4

Social media – follow and retweet DPH on Twitter @MassDPH, updated several times per day.

Massachusetts 2-1-1 - Massachusetts residents are urged to use 2-1-1 for information, resources, and referrals regarding COVID-19. Operators are staffing this hotline 24/7 and translators are available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cellphone, or use the live chat option on the Mass 2-1-1 website. As of 9:00 AM today, Mass 2-1-1 has answered a total of **4,502** coronavirus-related calls since last Friday. There are 17 staff now answering calls, including staff from United Way and 7 staff members from DPH.