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BERKSHIRE COUNTY BOARDS OF HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Pittsfield, MA March 25, 2020

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

Please note: This is a rapidly evolving situation. BCBOHA will continue to provide updates and coordinate public messaging on the situation on a regular basis.

Latest News:

Closing of Non-Essential Businesses

On March 23, 2020, Governor Baker ordered all businesses not conducting essential COVID-19 business to close their physical premises to workers and the public until April 7, 2020. Restaurants and bars that sell food and beverages to the public are designated as essential services, but are limited to take-out and delivery services, and must maintain social distancing protocols set forth in DPH guidance that require all people to be at least six feet apart. No on premises consumption of food or drink shall be allowed. Although churches, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship are not deemed essential services, they may stay open if the limitations on gatherings are followed. Non-essential businesses that can continue work through remote means are encouraged to do so, as long as workers, customers and the public are not permitted to enter or appear at a bricks and mortar location. A list of COVID-19 essential services can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-essential-services/download>.

Limitations on Gatherings

The March 24 order also limited gatherings to no more than 10 people. This order applies to all gatherings, without limitation, whether community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, sporting, concerts, conferences, conventions, parades, festivals, fairs, weddings, funerals, or any other event that brings together more than 10 people either indoors or out. The limitation does not apply to any business providing essential COVID-19 services. It also does not apply to gatherings in unenclosed outdoor spaces such as parking lots, parks or athletic fields. Recreational and sports activities that bring people into close physical contact are banned regardless of the number of people or where they are conducted.

The March 24 order can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-23-2020-essential-services-and-revised-gatherings-order/download>

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. We are seeking guidance from the state on whether short term rentals are an essential business like hotels.

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. The COVID-19 Command Center at the state, MEMA and other agencies are exploring all avenues to attain PPE for medical providers, Emergency Medical Services and other first responders and public health. DPH continues to distribute supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile and to seek donations of PPE from dental offices, vocational schools, construction and other businesses. 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 essentially immediately 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 should begin going out to municipalities with immediate need in the next few days. 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

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 and adult tobacco establishments are not considered to be 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.

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. DPH has also agreed to hold weekly conference calls with the Berkshire COVID-19 Working Group on Friday mornings for Berkshire specific questions. 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.

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.** Also encourage your residents to sign up for your municipalities outgoing-911 alert system (such as code red or similar).

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.

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:

On March 15, 2020 Governor Charlie Baker announced a three-week suspension of school operations at public and private elementary and secondary (K-12) schools in the commonwealth beginning Tuesday, March 17th and going through April 6. On March 25, that order was extended to close the schools through May 4, 2020. Food for those who ordinarily receive free or reduced school breakfast or lunch is available in many municipalities.

Childcare Operations:

On March 18, Governor Baker issued an Executive Order requiring all early education centers and family childcare providers to close, starting Monday March 23. Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs will be the only childcare programs able to operate. Families who work to maintain the health, safety, and welfare of all Commonwealth citizens will receive priority access to emergency childcare programs and these centers should only be used by people who must go to work. Vulnerable children will also receive priority access and space will be made for people who must go to work but aren't necessarily emergency personnel.

More information on exempt emergency childcare providers can be found here:
https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure

Situation Report:

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

As of March 25, there have been 1,838 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, of which 71 are in Berkshire County. Delays in reporting and restrictions on testing have likely depressed

these numbers well below actuals. The number of people tested in Massachusetts has more than tripled since Sunday from just over 6,000 to over 19,000. Those results should be seen within the next couple of days. There have been 15 deaths in Massachusetts, two of which were in Berkshire County. There have been 54,453 reported cases in the United States, with all states and the District of Columbia reporting cases, and 737 deaths. New York has the highest number of cases, followed by California, Washington, Michigan, Illinois, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, and New Jersey. 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>.

MAVEN and Case Identification:

Posting of cases should be happening in a more timely manner going forward as bugs in the automated system are corrected. All Public Health Nurses or Boards should be checking your MAVEN twice a day during this period, including on weekends. If your community does have a case, DPH will also call your Public Health Nurse or Board directly. **If you are a community not currently on MAVEN or if your community has a contract with Porchlight VNA (which is going out of business), please contact us. We may be able to provide Public Health Nursing services to your community related to COVID-19.**

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>

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. 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/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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