



**TOWN OF BEDFORD**  
97 MCMAHON ROAD  
BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

## **Bedford Public Schools Update on COVID-19**

**April 10, 2020**

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Friday, April 10, 2020 to review the latest guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH), the office of Governor Charlie Baker, and Town Legal Counsel.

The COVID-19 Task Force is comprised of the following Town officials:

*Sarah Stanton, Town Manager*  
*Jon Sills, Superintendent of Schools*  
*Heidi Porter, Director of Health and Human Services*  
*Robert Bongiorno, Police Chief*  
*David Grunes, Fire Chief*  
*Taissir Alani, Facilities Director*

### Active Cases

It is with a heavy heart that we have learned of the first COVID-19 related death of a Bedford resident. This person was recently residing in an out-of-town long term care facility, and passed away at the hospital. Out of privacy to the family and in compliance with HIPAA, we are not releasing this resident's name. Our hearts go out to the family as we understand that losing a loved one is never easy and making arrangements and seeking comfort during these difficult times where social distancing is a must, just add to the heartbreak. Be kind and supportive to one another, and especially the families of those who have lost a loved one or are struggling with sickness.

As of today, April 10, 2020, there have been a total of forty-three (43) positive cases of COVID-19 in Bedford reported to the Town of Bedford Board of Health by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH). This total case number includes residents of the Town of Bedford, Hanscom Air Force Base, and the Bedford Veteran's Administration (VA) Campus as reported to us by the MA DPH.

The Bedford VA reports that the impacted Veterans are being cared for in respiratory isolation in the new community living center ward on the Bedford Campus established specifically for treatment of patients with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis and any impacted staff are at home in isolation. The VA reports that the new ward has staff dedicated exclusively to the patients housed there, following the operational guidelines of both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Veterans Health Administration. The Bedford VA is conducting the close-contact tracing and surveillance of COVID-19 positive residents in their care.

Nine (9) of the total Bedford cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there is currently one (1) known Person Under Investigation. There are other individuals impacted by COVID-19 in the community that have not sought medical attention, and/or have not been tested and are isolating at home regardless. Those individuals do not appear on the surveillance reports the Town receives from the MA DPH. The Board of Health continues to do the appropriate follow-up and outreach to those residents and close contacts known to us. Many of the identified close contacts of some of the Bedford cases never exhibited symptoms, have completed their required quarantine period and have been released from quarantine by the Board of Health.

## Town Update

### **Slow the Spread**

Social distancing, staying home except for necessary, essential and allowable errands, frequent handwashing, use of sanitizer, regular sanitizing of common-touch surfaces and wearing a face covering when you must go out in public, are all the ways we can slow the spread of COVID-19.

Click here for instructions on making a face covering – we all need to wear them: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings>.

Click here for a video depicting why social distancing is important: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxVxc6ccqTQ&feature=youtu.be>.

### **Religious Gatherings**

Although a difficult request around the religious holidays that are upon us, the Bedford Board of Health asks all residents to be respectful of each other and our desire to stem the growth of this epidemic by staying home and not gathering outside of your immediate households for any ceremonies or celebrations in the coming days. No public religious services shall be held or attended either inside houses of worship or outside, inclusive of the Fawn Lake Sunrise Service. Please be mindful of the orders not congregate in large groups, and please adhere to social distancing requirements.

### **Available Mental Health and Social Services**

During this time, Social Work services remain available to all Bedford residents. The Social Workers are available via phone and can assist with:

Ensuring individuals have food security during this time. Residents who are struggling with having an adequate amount of food in their homes can reach out to the Social Workers for assistance getting connected to the Bedford Food Bank, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP/EBT), and other community resources. The Social Workers will work with residents faced with a hardship and unable to travel outside their homes through food bank home delivery.

Information accessing financial supports such as SNAP, unemployment, MassHealth, and utility assistance. General support for coping with anxiety during this time. Residents are able to call and speak with a Social Worker who can provide strategies for managing anxiety.

Outreach calls for residents who are experiencing isolation. Residents who are concerned about individuals who are experiencing isolation can contact the Social Workers.

Getting residents connected with Health and Mental Health providers. At this time counseling services at the Town Center through Eliot Community Human Services have shifted to a tele-health service and referrals

continue to be accepted. Intakes are being conducted over the phone or by Zoom. Please note that Bedford residents do not pay a co-pay for therapy through Eliot and lack of insurance is not a barrier to services.

If you are an elder who is 60 or older please contact Danika Castle in the Council on Aging at 781-275-6825. If you are an individual under the age of 60 you can contact Christopher Bang in the Youth and Family Services Department at 781-918-4328. Any Bedford resident seeking mental health counseling or therapy services can contact one of the Social Workers or reach out to Eliot Community Human Services directly at 978-369-1113.

### School Update

The Bedford School Committee voted unanimously last night to approve an amended 2019-2020 district calendar that includes a cancellation of April Vacation and a new last day of school of June 24. The date of the last day of school is based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education directive that schools stay in session for 185 days this year, including April Vacation, or 181 days if vacation is cancelled. When we factor in the two snow days that we had in December, and the two closure days that we had prior to the governor's announcement, this brings us to June 24, 2020.

### General Guidance

For previous updates on COVID-19, please review the COVID-19 News and Announcements Page at on the Town website ([www.bedfordma.gov](http://www.bedfordma.gov)).

It is important to remember that while the COVID-19 outbreak is evolving quickly, influenza is still circulating in the area. Many of the things you do to help prevent colds and the flu can help protect you against COVID-19:

- Comply with the Governor's Stay at Home Order and non-quarantined residents should only leave the house for grocery shopping, doctor's appointments or some socially distanced fresh air. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- While fresh air and exercise are important components to staying healthy during the COVID-19 epidemic, please be mindful that if you are using the Minuteman Bikeway or the Bedford Trails, it is important to maintain social distancing of 6 feet from others and you are encouraged to cover your face when out in public.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean things that are frequently touched (like doorknobs, countertops, cell phone, television remote, computers, sink faucets, etc.) with household cleaning spray or disinfecting wipes.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- Stay home if you are sick and avoid close contact with others.
- Employ social distancing and keep 6 feet apart from others if you are not otherwise required to be in quarantine and must go out.
- For those at home, a little moderate exercise or meditation goes a long way. Get up, stretch, and maybe have a short walk.

The best source of guidance and recommendations is the DPH website: [www.mass.gov/covid19](http://www.mass.gov/covid19)

Alternatively, if you are without internet capabilities, please call the State hotline: 2-1-1.