



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

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

**April 16, 2020**

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Friday, April 16, 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*

### Current Case Report

We are sorry to report that a third death of a Bedford resident from COVID-19 was reported to the Town of Bedford Board of Health (BOH) by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH). Our thoughts go out to those families with loved ones stricken by or suffering with this illness.

As of today, April 16 2020, there have been a total of sixty-five (65) positive cases of COVID-19 reported to the Town of Bedford Board of Health by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH). The 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. There are an additional twenty-one (21) people attributed to the Town of Bedford under the state surveillance system. These 21 people are either staff at a Bedford facility who were tested there and used that address as their "location," or former Bedford residents now living in another city/state who indicated Bedford as their home. For those who are not current residents of Bedford, the Bedford Board of Health ensures that the local jurisdiction where those people live has been informed of their COVID-19 positive status so that that community can conduct the appropriate contact trace, follow-up and issue isolation/quarantine orders.

**The Town Administration has received some requests to release the numbers of total positive COVID-19 cases at various facilities in Bedford. We want to take a moment to clearly explain our position and legal requirements. The Board of Health holds and is responsible for this information and, legally, cannot publicly breakout the daily COVID-19 positive case data by address or facility. The aggregate reporting**

(today 65 cases) applies to all COVID-19 positive case within Bedford – including but not limited to residents of single family homes, apartments, the VA campus, Hanscom Air Force Base, special needs group homes and any and all other larger assisted living/care facilities in Bedford. Reporting in aggregate numbers is the public health practice throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This aggregate reporting standard is followed by other communities that also have congregate care facilities, and a VA campus, including Boston, Brockton, and Lowell, and Northampton, all of whom do not breakout the VA campus numbers in their individual community reporting. Of particular note, while the residents at Hanscom Air Force Base are technically housed in the town of Lincoln, the state surveillance system has historically and will continue to assign these cases to Bedford, providing further evidence as to the imperfect nature of the state tracking system. The Bedford Board of Health takes its duties seriously and diligently conducts surveillance on our residents with communicable disease while ensuring those who have inadvertently been assigned to us are properly tracked by the respective communities in which they live.

Any COVID-19 positive cases VA (and all facilities for long term care, as well as Hanscom Air Force Base) are included in the daily Bedford number, and have been since the beginning of the pandemic, if the impacted resident holds their legal address in Bedford. The daily COVID-19 update notes that the aforementioned facilities are included. Many residents at Hanscom, the VA, and our assisted living facilities, vote, and participate in Bedford as citizens of our community. In fact, many of the residents being cared for at the VA and Carleton Willard are long-time Bedford residents, with family still residing in Town. Our daily COVID-19 positive count does not include residents who are only receiving temporary care at said facilities, have been moved from another facility, or are COVID positive staff working at said facilities.

Please note, in part to alleviate the community concern, the VA does do a daily report of their numbers, which includes inpatients, outpatients and staff, many of whom do not call Bedford home. The information can be found here: <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/Healthcare/COVID19NationalSummary>

As of today, ten (10) of the total Bedford cases to date have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there are currently two (2) known Persons 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.

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.

By all accounts, the country, state and Town of Bedford are on the brink of a surge in cases. As such, it is imperative to strictly adhere to all the proper personal hygiene and protective practices that have been presented and encouraged since the start of this outbreak: abide by social distancing, stay home except for necessary, essential and allowable errands, don't touch your face, engage in frequent handwashing, use sanitizer, regularly sanitize common-touch surfaces and wear a face covering when you must go out in public. Thank you for your anticipated support and diligence in taking the necessary precautions to slow the spread.

### Town Update

### **Checking-in on Mental Health, Stress and Anxiety during COVID-19**

The daily news reports, social media posts and even the case numbers reported in our own daily Town of Bedford update on COVID-19 can be daunting and information overload in a time where there are few outlets for relief. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. The emotional impact of an emergency on a person

can depend on the person's characteristics and experiences, the social and economic circumstances of the person and their community, and the availability of local resources. People can become more distressed if they see repeated images or hear repeated reports about the outbreak in the media.

**People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:**

- People who have preexisting mental health conditions including problems with substance use;
- Children; and,
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders.

**Reactions during an infectious disease outbreak can include:**

- Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns;
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating;
- Worsening of chronic health problems; and,
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Coping with these feelings and getting help when you need it will help you, your family, and your community recover from a disaster. Connect with family, friends, and others in your community. Take care of yourself and each other, and know when and how to seek help. Call your healthcare provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row.

**Things you can do to support yourself:**

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do some other activities you enjoy to return to your normal life.
- Connect with others, but keep in mind that social distancing (staying 6 feet from others) is important for preventing spread of COVID-19. If you are in Quarantine or Isolation, make sure you share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member via telephone, skype, text message or email. Maintain healthy relationships.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.

**Some other resources include:**

- The Town Social Workers. If you are an elder who is 60 or older please contact Social Worker Danika Castle in the Council on Aging at 781-275-6825. If you are an individual under the age of 60 you can contact Social Worker 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.
- Advocates Psychiatric Emergency Service team is always available to offer skilled, compassionate support and connections to resources and services during difficult times. If you are experiencing a mental health or emotional crisis, please call (800) 640-5432 to speak to an Advocates crisis clinician. They are available to help 24 hours a day, every day.

## **Food Bank at JGMS, Tomorrow, Friday, April 17, 2020 from 1-3 PM**

To assist and support Bedford residents in need, the Town of Bedford has established a temporary food bank at John Glenn Middle School (JGMS).

### **This week, the Food Bank will be held Friday, April 16, 2020 from 1-3 PM at John Glenn Middle School.**

As a reminder, the Food Bank is for the following groups: school-aged children/families of the Bedford Public Schools in need of food support at this time (including, but not limited to, students currently on free or reduced breakfast and lunch), previously identified vulnerable seniors and veterans, and existing clients of the Bedford Food Pantry. For more information on the Food Bank, please visit [www.bedfordma.gov/bedfordfoodbank](http://www.bedfordma.gov/bedfordfoodbank).

There will be a separate food bank delivery system for homebound seniors and disabled residents. If you are homebound resident, and in need of food assistance, please e-mail [bedfordfoodbank@bedfordma.gov](mailto:bedfordfoodbank@bedfordma.gov).

## School Update

Regarding the last day of school resulting from the decision to cancel April Vacation, the Superintendent had indicated previously that he would confirm the date later this week. Unfortunately, while additional COVID-19 related last-day-of-school information is forthcoming from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, it is not yet available, but he expects it will be shortly. Please stay tuned.

## 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.