



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

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

**April 22, 2020**

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Tuesday, April 22,, 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

As of today, April 22, 2020, there have been a total of ninety-eight (98) positive cases of COVID-19 in Bedford and three (3) deaths 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.

The Town of Bedford also has 28 additional COVID-19 positive cases assigned to our community, not included in the 98 cases highlighted above, which are included in our total case numbers reported by the MA Department of Public Health. These 28 additional cases included staff from a Bedford facility, who when tested, attributed their "location" to Bedford when in fact they have residency in another community, as well as former residents who, when tested, listed Bedford as their "location" and actually live in, and are being followed, in another community/state.

Eighteen (18) of the total Bedford cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there is currently four (4) 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 and the VA is conducting follow-up and contact tracing of the Veteran's under their care. 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.

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>

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By all accounts, the country, state and Town of Bedford are on the brink of a surge in cases. In conjunction with this, the MA Department of Public Health is promoting a program for long term care facilities to do wide-scale testing of staff and residents, due to the vulnerability of the population these facilities serve. Given the presence of these types of facilities in Bedford, there is a possibility that this testing will result in an increase in the number of positive COVID-19 residents in Bedford in the coming days and weeks. The Board of Health will continue to work with these facilities to ensure proper isolation of any impacted residents or staff while they receive any necessary treatment and will continue to promote enforcement of use of proper personal protection and hand hygiene.

To continue to make strides towards slowing the spread of COVID-19, 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.

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)).

### School Update

The decision to close schools for the remainder of the year, while expected, has still created for most of us a strong sense of sadness and disappointment. For students of all ages longing to once again be face to face with friends and peers and teachers, it may feel like a terrible loss. I can imagine a kind of grieving that many will experience, particularly for our seniors. For teachers who miss their students and their colleagues, it may feel especially deflating. For parents hoping for needed relief from all of the stresses of having kids at home all day while managing work, missing income, and/or illness, it may feel overwhelming- and for teachers who are also parents, equally so.

But we will persevere and make lemonade from lemons the best we know how. As a district, we have a lot to work out regarding the implications of this long-term closure for teaching and learning and for the social, emotional and mental health of all involved. Please stay tuned for further messaging this week and early next week. In addition to ensuring that our students learn and solidify paired down but essential skills and knowledge for their grade levels, our priorities must include finding ways to engage all students and to maintain that engagement through the end of the year.

Understandably, we are simultaneously beginning to plan for what next fall will look like. While we do not yet know what the parameters will be, we know that we will need to address the lost learning time that will have occurred this spring.

## General Guidance

It is important to note that while the COVID-19 outbreak continues to evolve and we are in the midst of a surge, it is also allergy season. Pollen counts are very high right now and if you have allergies and the associated symptoms (sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, cough and runny nose) this may result in your desire to touch your face – but please avoid it! That is one of the easiest ways to contract COVID-19 if your hands are contaminated. A good plan is to have tissues on the ready and stock up on some allergy medicine, if that works for you, to allay symptoms that may lead you to touch your face.

Please remember to adhere to the following to protect yourself 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.
- Consider wearing a face covering if you must go out in public for essential errands.
- 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.
- 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](https://www.mass.gov/covid19)

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