



TOWN OF BEDFORD
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BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

Bedford Public Schools Update on COVID-19

April 27, 2020

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Tuesday, April 27, 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 27, 2020, there have been a total of one hundred and nine (109) positive cases of COVID-19 in Bedford and four (4) 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.

Twenty-three (23) of the total Bedford cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there are currently zero (0) 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.

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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Town Update

Domestic Violence during the Stay at Home Advisory

As we all work hard to slow the spread of COVID-19 by staying home for everyone's safety, please remember that for survivors of domestic violence and child abuse, home may not be safe. Additionally, the unprecedented stress of this pandemic could lead to unsafe conditions in homes where violence may not previously have been an issue. Domestic Violence Services Network, Inc. (DVSNI) is continuing to follow up on domestic violence referrals and requests for service on a daily basis and provides community advocacy and safety planning for anyone who calls in or is referred for help and support by law enforcement partners. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DVSNI clients need support more than ever and DVSNI shall continue to provide CONFIDENTIAL support, advocacy, and resources via telephone to the extent possible. For help and support, PLEASE CALL DVSNI's Help Line - 888-399-6111. If you or someone you know is in danger call 911. We need to keep each other safe now in every way.

Anticipated Surge in COVID-19 Positive Cases

By all accounts, the country, state and Town of Bedford are in the midst of a surge in COVID-19 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.

Slow the Spread

To continue to do our part to slow the spread, it is imperative to strictly adhere to all the proper personal hygiene and protective practices that have been presented 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.

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.

Comply with the Stay at Home Advisory and Social Distancing

Staying home means:

- Only leave home for essential errands such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy. When you do leave home, practice social distancing by staying 6 feet away from others.
 - If you are at high-risk, you should ask about special hours at your local pharmacy or grocery store for high-risk individuals.
 - When going to the pharmacy ask if you can fill your prescriptions for 90 days if possible; for some medications this is not allowed. If you are at high-risk, try to use a mail-order service.
- You can still go to the gas station, order and pick up take-out food, and receive deliveries.
- You can still go outside to get fresh air, but make sure you practice social distancing and avoid touching surfaces frequently touched by others. Don't participate in close contact activities such as pick-up sports games.
- Use remote modes of communication like phone or video chat instead of visiting friends or family.
- Non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, and elective procedures must be rescheduled.
- If possible, health care visits should be done remotely.

The following actions were observed in and around Bedford in the past few days and are **NOT** considered Social Distancing:

- Parents gathering in a parking lot/park for play dates for their children.
- Going for a walk with one of your close friends and talking while two feet apart on the sidewalk.
- Playing pickup basketball.
- Crowding grocery store workers and not maintaining a 6-foot distance from others while in the local markets
- Middle school aged kids riding their bikes together then stopping for a snack at the convenience store and gathering in a close group; and,
- Having friends and family over to your house.

We need everyone to comply with social distancing. This is hard. We get it, but it only works if we are all diligent all the time and keep away from others who are not in your immediate households. Please pitch in and be compliant so we can get to the other side of this outbreak.

The best source of guidance and recommendations is the DPH website: www.mass.gov/covid19

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