



TOWN OF BEDFORD
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BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

Bedford Public Schools Update on COVID-19

April 28, 2020

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Tuesday, April 28, 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 28, 2020, there have been a total of one hundred and fifteen (115) positive cases of COVID-19 in Bedford and six (6) 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-four (24) 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

Extension of the Stay at Home Order to May 18, 2020

Today, April 28, 2020, the Baker-Polito Administration extended the essential services emergency order to May 18th, and launched a Reopening Advisory Board that will produce a plan to the Governor by May 18th. The Administration also announced that the Department of Public Health's Stay at Home Advisory remains in effect and gatherings of 10 or more people remain prohibited until May 18th.

Essential Services Order: Governor Charlie Baker's emergency order requiring that all businesses and organizations that do not provide "COVID-19 Essential Services" close their physical workplaces and facilities to workers, customers and the public will be extended until May 18th. Businesses and organizations not on the list of essential services are encouraged to continue operations through remote means that do not require workers, customers, or the public to enter or appear at the brick-and-mortar premises closed by the order. This order also extends the existing ban on gatherings of more than 10 people until May 18th.

Stay at Home Advisory: Governor Charlie Baker announced that the Department of Public Health's stay-at-home advisory will remain in effect. Residents are strongly urged to stay home and avoid unnecessary travel and other unnecessary person to person contact during this time period. Residents who are considered at high risk when exposed to COVID-19 should limit social interactions with other people as much as possible.

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.

Available Mental Health and Social Services – Bedford Residents

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.

Contacts:

If you are a resident who is 60 or older please contact Social Worker Danika Castle in the Council on Aging at 781-275-6825.

If you are a resident 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.

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.

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.

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. Do not 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.

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.