



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

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

**April 8, 2020**

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Dear Families, Faculty and Staff,

Below are both the April 8 and April 7 Covid-19 Updates. My apology for neglecting to send the 7th yesterday. The April 8 update has information about the April Vacation survey responses.

Best,

Jon Sills  
Superintendent

The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Wednesday, April 8, 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

As of today, April 8, 2020, there have been a total of twenty-five (25) positive cases of COVID-19 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 and Hanscom Air Force Base and some residents of the Bedford Veteran's Administration (VA) Campus as reported to us by the MA DPH.

Seven (7) of these cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there are zero known (0) Person(s) Under Investigation. It is likely that 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 the initial cases never exhibited symptoms, have completed their required quarantine period and have been released from quarantine by the Board of Health.

The Bedford VA Campus reported today that there are currently fifteen (15) COVID-19 positive inpatients at their facility. Because the VA is a federal facility and conducting its own testing of and tracking of inpatients, not all of the positive cases identified at the Bedford VA appear on the surveillance report received by the Bedford Board of Health from the MA DPH. The Bedford VA reports that the impacted Veterans are being cared for in respiratory isolation in the new community living enter ward on the Bedford Campus established specifically for treatment of patients with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. 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.

As communication is received from the Bedford VA, the Town of Bedford Update on COVID-19, issued daily, will include a separate tally of COVID-19 positive cases identified at the Bedford VA Campus.

### Town Update

#### **Cancellation of Memorial Day Activities -**

We are disappointed to announce that Bedford's Memorial Day activities scheduled for Monday, May 25, 2020 have been canceled.

All Town ceremonies, events, and the annual parade will be canceled. The overriding concern for canceling these events is the safety and well-being of all Memorial Day participants and attendees.

This decision was not made lightly. It follows discussions undertaken with Town government and public health officials, as well as directives from Massachusetts and Hanscom AFB.

It is regrettable that the COVID-19 pandemic is not allowing us to gather as a community on Memorial Day to honor our veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice. This Memorial Day is unique. Please keep our veterans and active military in your thoughts and prayers, along with everyone who is keeping us safe in these troubling times. Together we will get through this as the strong and caring community Bedford is and always has been. (Submitted by Paul Purchia, Chair, Bedford Patriotic Holiday Committee).

#### **Grocery Store Occupancy Limits: -**

On April 7, 2020, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts issued guidance for grocery stores to help reduce exposure of shoppers and employees to COVID-19. Each store selling groceries shall limit occupancy to 40 percent of its maximum permitted occupancy level. The Bedford Board of Health is working with Bedford businesses who sell grocery items to ensure compliance with this order. Please be advised that prior to entry, residents may be required to wait outside stores, in a socially distanced manner, to ensure the occupancy restrictions are met.

#### **Stay Home, Stay Safe and Slow the Spread of COVID-19 -**

The Board of Health encourages Bedford residents to take actions to control the rate of spread of COVID-19 and lessen the height of the case curve and subsequent impact on our healthcare system. As a reminder, the following are some ways you can help:

## **Comply with the Stay at Home Advisory -**

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. Refrain from visiting nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, or other residential care settings.
- Non-essential medical care like eye exams, teeth cleaning, and elective procedures must be rescheduled.
- If possible, health care visits should be done remotely.
- Parents should not have play dates for children
- Taking these steps helps prevent the spread of the virus, helps preserve our hospital capacity for very ill patients, and preserves our supply of PPE (personal protective equipment) so critically needed by our medical workers.

## **Wear a Face Covering –**

We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this new evidence, the CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies).

## **Maintain Social Distancing –**

It is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-feet social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus. So, stay at least six feet away from anyone who is not a household member. The following actions are NOT considered social distancing: going for a walk with one of your close friends and talking while two feet apart on the sidewalk, playing pickup games or any group sport or activity, hanging out and talking in a close group in a parking lot or at the beach, or having friends over to your house.

We are all depending on each other to take these actions seriously and consistently now to Slow the Spread.

## **Outlets for stress and resources for coping during COVID-19 –**

It is natural to experience anxiety during stressful events like the current worldwide coronavirus pandemic. Whether it's the fear of contracting COVID-19, worries about loved ones, financial difficulties, school schedules, or a myriad of related challenges and concerns, anger, anxiety, depression and fear are all typical responses to stressful and uncertain situations.

The following are some suggestions and resources on how to cope:

- Practice self-care: Find ways to relax and unwind. Free online yoga classes are one option to take care of your mind and body, or try listening to a relaxing playlist.

- Reach out: Call and check on others' emotional and physical well-being. Share what you are experiencing. If you have the capability, video chat with friends and loved ones who live outside your household. Consider playing a game together via Zoom or FaceTime or watch a Netflix movie together while chatting online.
- Keep your mind occupied: Try not to ruminate on fear, anger or worry. Sometimes scheduling a deliberate time in the day for dedicated worrying can help compartmentalize the worry. Try to keep it brief, for example 10 minutes, twice a day. Mindfulness is an effective practice to help develop inner calm and resilience. Meditation and other compatible Apps downloaded on portable devices, such as smart phones and tablets, can provide an ideal platform for stress relief. Or maybe you'd like to take a virtual walk through a museum, zoo or theme park for a change of scenery.
- Maintain your health: Try to eat right, get fresh air and sunshine appropriately distanced from others, stay hydrated and build in some physical activity, even if it's just walking around your block, yard or living room. Here is a list of free fitness classes you can join from your living room.
- Be a good steward of public health: Be socially aware and responsible to minimize and mitigate exposure by following social distancing and other guidelines offered by the Town of Bedford and the CDC

### **Local Business/Restaurant Update –**

Announced earlier this month, the Bedford Take Out website at [www.bedfordtakeout.com](http://www.bedfordtakeout.com) is continually updated with a list of current restaurants that are open, and offering takeout and delivery to support our local restaurants. The website is popular with residents who would like to check out current options for take-out in a single easy-to-use website. The website has become a model for other communities seeking to support their local restaurants.

The Town of Bedford recognizes our business community is an integral part of our community, and the Town of Bedford aims to support businesses, small and large, during this difficult time. We provide daily updates to a dedicated business support website with COVID-19 Financial and Other Resources: <https://www.bedfordma.gov/economic-development/pages/covid-19-resources-for-business>.

### **School Update**

A shout out to our educators, who are doing an incredible job of connecting with their students and engaging them in learning during this difficult time. Many have been doing this ever since we closed school by providing wonderfully creative enrichment activities. We are still hard at work figuring out how to engage all students, and we recognize that some families are finding it to be very difficult to help their younger students access the learning.

### **April Vacation Survey -**

Of the 1,724 respondents, 77.4% were parents, 18% were teachers, and students and parents/teachers split the remaining 4.6% (the link was not sent to students separately, but a number of students weighed in using their parents' links). Of the 1,724 respondents, 91.3% favored cancellation of April Vacation. Of the faculty respondents, 154 of 172 voted to cancel April Vacation. The main impetus for all "cancelation" votes was to avoid interrupting remote/online learning that is gaining momentum and making up for lost time. The school committee will take up this question tomorrow evening and will consider a new calendar which would have school ending four days earlier than it would have if we were to hold April Vacation. A "thank you" to all who responded.

## 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.
- 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

You can also the Town of Bedford website for local updates and actions: [www.bedfordma.gov](http://www.bedfordma.gov)

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## **Town of Bedford Update on COVID-19**

**April 7, 2020**

The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met Tuesday, April 7, 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

As of today, April 7, 2020, there have been a total of twenty-two (22) presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 reported to the Town of Bedford Board of Health by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH). Five (5) of these cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there are zero known (0) Person(s) Under Investigation. It is likely that 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 the initial cases never exhibited symptoms, have completed their required quarantine period and have been released from quarantine by the Board of Health.

### Town Update

We are disappointed to have to relay that the Town of Bedford has made the decision to cancel the Summer Solstice Festival on June 27, 2020.

This is not only due to the logistical planning requirements of the festival during this difficult time but also the anticipation that the COVID-19 public health crisis may require focused attention to public health and safety well beyond stay at home orders and advisories. Social distancing measures may be required for several months. We are looking forward to soon being able to organize and participate in festivals and events that celebrate togetherness, culture and community spirit. We would like to thank our vendors for working with us, and we look forward to holding another event with our partners, Notch brewery, and the food trucks in the future. We will get through this together and stronger than ever.

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Town and School officials, and the Bedford Health Department, remain in continuous communication about this issue, and further updates will be provided to the community as we receive them.