



TOWN OF BEDFORD
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BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

Bedford Public Schools Update on COVID-19

May 1, 2020

If you need this document translated, please call your child's school principal - Si necesita este documento traducido, por favor comuníquese con la escuela de su hijo - Se você precisa este documento traduzido, entre em contato com a escola do seu filho - Si vous avez besoin de traduire ce document, s'il vous plaît contacter l'école de votre enfant - 如果你需要这份文件翻译，请联系您的孩子的学校 - إذا كنت تحتاج /تحتاجين إلى ترجمة هذه ، الوثيقة إلى اللغة العربية يرجى الاتصال بمدرسة طفلك/طفلاتك

The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met May 1, 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, May 1, 2020, there have been a total of one hundred and twenty-nine (129) positive cases of COVID-19 in Bedford and twelve (12) 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-seven (27) 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

Governor Baker Executive Order on Face Coverings (5/1/2020)

Effective Wednesday, May 6, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Order requiring face masks or cloth face coverings in public places where social distancing is not possible. This applies to both indoor and outdoor spaces. Exceptions include children under the age of 2 and those unable to wear a mask or face covering due to a medical condition.

Full details are outlined in the May 1 Order which can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/may-1-2020-masks-and-face-coverings/download>

There are many things that you can do to help protect yourself and others from becoming infected with COVID-19. People who show no symptoms of illness may still be able to spread COVID-19.

- A face covering may help prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to other people.
- A face covering can include anything that covers your nose and mouth, including dust masks, scarves and bandanas.
- Do not use health care worker masks, such as the N95 masks - those should be preserved for healthcare workers.

It is important that you wear these face coverings or masks in situations where it is difficult to maintain a social distance of six feet from others. For example, in a pharmacy or grocery store.

When you wear a cloth mask, it should:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face,
- Be secured with ties or ear loops,
- Include multiple layers of fabric,
- Allow for breathing without restriction, and
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
- When putting on and taking off a mask, do not touch the front of it, you should only handle the ties or ear straps, and make sure you wash the cloth mask regularly. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching the mask.
- Cloth masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance

For more information: <https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public>

May is Mental Health Month

May is Mental Health Month and, in light of the current environment, the Bedford Health and Human Services Department wants to focus on the importance of caring for our mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. From loneliness and situational depression resulting from isolation, anxiety from the fear of the illness, grief from losses, to worrying about economic security, these stresses are significant and can affect our mental well-being and that of our loved ones. Nearly half of Americans report that the coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health – as reported in an issue paper reported by the Kaiser family Foundation in April.

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others, CALL2Talk is a resource available through the 2-1-1 line. In March, Governor Baker's Administration launched the Massachusetts Network of Care, a searchable behavioral health directory of services and organizations dedicated to helping preserve and protect your mental health.

This website connects Massachusetts residents with information in multiple languages on behavioral health services and treatment in their communities – including more than 5,000 organizations – searchable by keywords and zip codes

Our colleagues at William James College have generated some Mental Health and Wellness tips during quarantine. We invite you to view them here: <https://interface.williamjames.edu/guide/mental-health-wellness-tips-quarantine>

They have also provided our community with free educational and informational resources and support groups. Please navigate to their webpage for virtual event dates and times. <https://www.williamjames.edu/community/resource-hub/public-events-calendar.cfm>

As has been the case since last year when they came on board, our Bedford Social Workers are available to help navigate residents through difficult situations. 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.

Outpatient Therapy is current available via tele-health. Bedford residents are not required to pay a co-pay and lack of insurance is not a barrier to services. 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.

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.

Answer the Call!

The Bedford Board of Health asks Bedford Residents to be part of the COVID-19 solution and “Answer the Call!” If you have tested positive for COVID- 19 or if you’ve been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, the COVID Community Team, including the Bedford Community Health Nurse and the School Nurses, will be reaching out via phone to you and your close contacts to slow the spread. We will help support you and will help to keep track of symptoms to move you through isolation and quarantine appropriately.

The Caller ID on your phone will show the call is coming from one of the following phone numbers: (781) 999-2093, (781) 999-4209, (781) 999-4223, (781) 999-4236, (833) 638-1685 or (857) 305-2728.

Your name will not be publically released but the information you can provide to us is imperative in slowing the spread so we can get to the other side of this outbreak. Bedford Residents, Answer the Call!

Please do not use the above phone numbers for general inquiries on COVID-19. For information on COVID-19 and the COVID-19 response in Bedford, instead please call the Bedford Board of Health at 781-275-6507 or visit the BOH COVID-19 website.

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. 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.