



TOWN OF BEDFORD
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BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730

Bedford Public Schools Update on COVID-19

May 27, 2020

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The Bedford COVID-19 Task Force met May 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, May 27, 2020, there have been a total of one hundred ninety-three (193) positive cases of COVID-19 reported to the Town of Bedford Board of Health by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH) and thirty-seven (37) deaths of Bedford residents attributed to COVID-19. The total case number includes residents of the Town of Bedford, including but not limited to those in: single-family homes, apartments, the VA campus, Hanscom Air Force Base, special needs group homes and any and all other larger assisted living/care facilities in Bedford as reported to us by the MA DPH.

As you may be aware, long term care facilities serving the elderly and congregate care facilities, house susceptible populations with underlying conditions who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Increased testing occurs at these facilities and results in more positive cases being identified. As such, cities and towns with these facilities, like Bedford, experience elevated positive case counts and, unfortunately, deaths due to the vulnerability to COVID-19 of the populations within those facilities.

Sixty-three (63) of the total Bedford cases have already recovered and have come off of isolation and there may other Bedford residents who would be considered persons under investigation in that they are symptomatic, have undergone testing but have not yet received results. 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>

PCR testing indicated for all symptomatic individuals and close contacts

At this time, all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, and anyone who is a close contact of a COVID-19 positive individual should be tested for COVID-19 by PCR or other molecular test from a nasopharyngeal, nasal, or oral swab or a sputum sample. Serologic (antibody) testing is not appropriate for this use.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever, chills or shaking chills
- Signs of a lower respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, lowered oxygen saturation)
- Fatigue, sore throat, headache, body aches/myalgia, or new loss of sense of taste or smell
- Other less common symptoms can include gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), rash, and inflammatory conditions such as "COVID toes"
- In elderly, chronically ill, or debilitated individuals such as residents of a long-term care facility, symptoms of COVID-19 may be subtle such as alterations in mental status or in blood glucose control

Contact your health care provider if you exhibit any of the above mentioned symptoms and to discuss the need for testing. Close contacts of confirmed cases are the people most likely to become infected themselves. Close contacts, regardless of symptoms associated with COVID-19, should be tested as soon as possible after they are notified of their exposure to COVID-19. You may want to check with your insurance provider to ensure coverage for any testing you acquire.

You can use the following link, provided by the MA Department of Public Health, to find a convenient testing site <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-testing#testing-sites>

Serology (Antibody) Testing

Commercially manufactured antibody tests are available through many healthcare providers and commercial laboratories and check for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) antibodies. Although governmental regulatory agencies are currently collaborating to assess the performance of commercial antibody tests, the majority of tests currently available have not received Food and Drug Administration Emergency Use Authorization.

Antibody tests may demonstrate whether an individual was previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 and antibody testing is important to help understand how many people in a population have been exposed to the virus. However, antibody tests are not indicated for diagnostic purposes. There is a large amount of uncertainty about the quality of any individual serologic test type and a lot is still unknown about the timing of COVID antibody development or duration. In order to be appropriately interpreted, more data are needed on the performance characteristics of these tests, the immune response to COVID-19, the timing and duration of antibody response, and how antibodies correlate to protective immunity.

Please be advised, if you acquire an antibody test, it is recommended that your healthcare provider also collect a nasopharyngeal, nasal or oral swab or sputum sample for a molecular diagnostic (PCR) test for COVID-19 at the same time. If you test positive for antibodies you will be assumed to be positive for COVID-19, unless you have negative PCR test, and will be required to enter into isolation as advised by the Board of Health. Please check with your insurance provider to ensure coverage for any testing you acquire.