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COVID-19 Information

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This is an unprecedented time for Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. The COVID-19 pandemic is a very steep challenge for all of us.

With this page, I want to keep you informed of our continued work on the many issues COVID-19 presents and provide a source of clear and updated information. Below please find general updates, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to official websites. My hope is to alleviate some of the understandable concern we all are experiencing during this uncertain and unprecedented time with accurate consistent information.

I am honored to serve as a member of the state Senate's COVID-19 Working Group established by the Senate President to identify immediate policy, legislative, and budgetary actions needed to most effectively address the impact of the virus. As part of this effort, I have been tasked with focusing on issues related to the population identified to be most at risk, older adults. So many of you have already helped me to identify priorities and potential solutions based on your first-hand experiences. In the days and weeks ahead, please continue to reach out to me and my staff with concerns, suggestions, and needs. Reach me at julian.cyr@masenate.gov.

Please stay safe and take care of yourself and your loved ones during this difficult time.

UPDATED AS OF FRIDAY, APRIL 3rd AT 5:00PM

The most up to date information and FAQs for Massachusetts can be found online at: mass.gov/covid19

CDC WEBSITE: www.cdc.gov/covid19

Detailed guidance for groups including consumers, assisted living centers, child care providers, housing authorities and many more is available here:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-recommendations>

List of Executive Orders from Governor Baker in the past few

days: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency>

These are times that are making us all stressed, anxious, and worried for our friends and family. Pay attention to your own mental health and pick up the phone if you

need help. There are many resources, including NAMI of Massachusetts: if you need to talk to someone, text NAMI to 741741 or call the NAMI Helpline at 1-800-950-NAMI (6264).

Further information:

Federal Updates

Federal CARES ACT:

Here is a summary of the recently passed CARES Act, which has been signed into law by the President: https://www.senatorcyr.com/federal_cares_act_summary

Massachusetts allocations of CARES Act funding is here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GJ9W1QGYtcUqLJHDnrArqjLEQFlvS9uP_4ReY7KC_II/edit?usp=sharing

US House of Representatives FAQ on CARES Act

The US House of Representative published an exhaustive FAQ on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). The FAQ can be found here: https://8333c73b-c725-46ee-8168-5a834cc82cbf.filesusr.com/ugd/d7fo78_828578e9c7184454ad9efd7d2eab7f13.pdf

Federal Disaster Declaration for Massachusetts COVID-19 Response

The White House and FEMA announced that the President has issued a Major Disaster Declaration for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that will make federal disaster assistance available beyond what was included in the Emergency Declaration declared by President Trump on March 13, 2020. More information from MEMA can be found here, and a description of the programs that accompany this declaration is here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-federal-disaster-declaration>

Public Assistance Program

Under FEMA's Public Assistance Program within the Major Disaster Declaration, affected local governments, state agencies and certain private non-profit organizations statewide will be reimbursed for 75% of their costs associated with response and emergency protective measures. The eligible emergency protective measures include non-congregate isolation and quarantine costs for homeless individuals and families as well as first responders as well as other types of properly documented costs.

Individual Assistance Program

Under FEMA's Individual Assistance Program within the Major Disaster Declaration, Crisis Counseling Assistance will provide funding for the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health to assist individuals and families in recovering from the psychological effects of the COVID -19 outbreak through electronic phone and chat technology.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency will provide webinars and other information about the process for applying for the Public Assistance Program to municipal and state officials and eligible non-profits.

Federal declaration of state of emergency:

On March 13 the President of the United States issued a proclamation declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak. The full proclamation can be found here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/>

Families First Coronavirus Act signed into law

Today, President Trump signed the Families First Coronavirus Act into law. This new law will provide funds to help deal with the COVID-19 public health emergency, as well as modify some federal programs, employment-related protections and benefits, health programs and insurance coverage requirements, and tax credits.

A statement on the bill signing is here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/bill-announcement-88/>

Paid sick leave included in new Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) law

Generally, the FFCRA provides employees of covered employers the following:

- Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick time at the employee's regular rate of pay (for a maximum benefit of \$511 per day or \$5,110 for the two week period) where the employee is unable to work, because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
- Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick time at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay (for a maximum benefit of \$200 per day or \$2,000 for the two week period), because the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), or to care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19, and/or the employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Treasury and Labor; and up to an additional 10 weeks of paid family leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay (for a maximum benefit of \$200 per day or \$12,000 over the ten week period) where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

Employers would receive a payroll tax credit for qualified sick leave wages and family leave paid by an employer in the amount of benefits paid (not to exceed the limits for pay) over the permitted duration.

Self-employed individuals qualify for an individual tax credit for qualified sick leave and family leave in the amount of \$200 a day (or \$511 for emergency paid sick leave for own quarantine or seeking own medical diagnosis) or 67% (or 100% for emergency paid sick leave for own quarantine or seeking own medical diagnosis) of average daily pay for self-employed individuals over the permitted duration,

whichever is less

To learn more about the qualifying reasons for expanded family and medical leave and the calculation of pay, please visit the Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employee Paid Leave Rights page. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave>

The Wage and Hour Division provides information on issues employers and employees face during influenza, pandemics, or other public health emergencies, as well as their effects on wages and hours worked under the Fair Labor Standards Act and job-protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Please visit the WHD COVID-19 or Other Public Health Emergencies page for additional information. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic>

A more detailed description of these provisions can be found here: <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/the-families-first-coronavirus-response-act-summary-of-key-provisions/>

Trump Administration postpones federal tax day until July 15

The deadline for filing tax returns will be postponed three months, to July 15 because of the coronavirus outbreak, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced. More information about this announcement can be found here: https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/tax-day-postponed-until-july-15-mnuchin-says-n1164811?fbclid=IwAR1zP2zXVSCzsBFy8Zp7-d6maqojBrLMOJe6f7uCMq9paeCuu7_Xqdb3H2o

Internal Revenue Service tips and FAQs

The IRS recently went live with a website that provides tips for taxpayers and tax pros. You can find that site here: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-operations-during-covid-19-mission-critical-functions-continue>

The IRS also recently created FAQs regarding this year's tax filing deadline extension. You can find that site here: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/filing-and-payment-deadlines-questions-and-answers>

Updates from the federal government on standardized testing, student loan interest

On 3-20, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced that students impacted by school closures due to the pandemic can bypass standardized testing for the 2019-20 school year. Upon a proper request, the federal Department of Education will grant a waiver to any state that is unable to assess its students because of the ongoing national emergency, providing relief from federally mandated testing requirements for this school year.

Since student performance, as measured by assessments, is required to be used in statewide accountability systems, any state that receives a one-year waiver may also receive a waiver from the requirement that testing data be used in the statewide accountability system because of the ongoing national emergency.

The Secretary also announced that borrowers with federally held student loans will automatically have their interest rates set to 0% for a period of at least 60 days. In addition, each of these borrowers will have the option to suspend their payments for at least two months to allow them greater flexibility during the national emergency.

This will allow borrowers to temporarily stop their payments without worrying about accruing interest.

The Secretary has also directed all federal student loan servicers to grant an administrative forbearance to any borrower with a federally held loan who requests one. The forbearance will be in effect for a period of at least 60 days, beginning on March 13, 2020. To request this forbearance, borrowers should contact their loan servicer online or by phone. The Secretary also authorized an automatic suspension of payments for any borrower more than 31 days delinquent as of March 13, 2020, or who becomes more than 31 days delinquent, essentially giving borrowers a safety net during the national emergency.

Department of Labor announced dislocated worker grants

The U.S. Department of Labor announced the availability of up to \$100 million for Dislocated Worker Grants to help address the workforce-related impacts related to COVID-19

The full advisory is here: <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20200318>

Department of Housing and Urban Development moratorium on foreclosures and evictions

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions for single family homeowners with FHA-insured mortgages for the next 60 days.

The full advisory is here: https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_20_042

Social Security Administration telephone information and services

All SSA field offices are currently closed and as a result Americans should expect service delays. You can still reach the SSA by phone, however, and a link to identify your local field office is here: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>

The Social Security Administration also recently published a website providing Americans with information related to their services during the coronavirus pandemic, and that website is here: <https://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/>

Cape Cod Information

COVID-19 Testing on Cape Cod

The Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment are working with Cape Cod Healthcare to run a drive up COVID-19 testing site at Cape Cod Community College. Only those with a doctors note and the symptoms of COVID-19 can be tested at this time. Instructions here: <https://www.barnstablecountyhealth.org/newsroom/important-instructions-for-getting-covid-19-testing>

Food Access for Kids at Cape Cod Schools: Being offered us a drive-up service or "grab and go" by several school districts:

Barnstable Schools: <https://www.barnstable.k12.ma.us/Page/4864>

Monomoy Schools: <https://www.monomoy.edu/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=13&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=9958&PageID=1>

Nauset Schools: <https://www.nausetschools.org/cms/lib/MA02212418/Centricity/Domain/8/Food%20Services%20Memo%203.16.20.pdf>

Dennis-Yarmouth Schools: <https://www.dy-regional.k12.ma.us/district/covid-19-coronavirus-information>

Mashpee Schools: <https://www.mpspk12.org/> and https://www.capenews.net/mashpee/news/food-services-in-mashpee-transition-to-takeout-delivery-after-executive/article_fec3371c-b448-5417-bedf-f387db841a94.html#utm_source=capenews.net&utm_campaign=%2Fnewsletters%2Fmashpee%2F%3F-dc%3D1584548695&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headline

Provincetown Schools: <http://www.provincetownschools.com/pts-food-distribution.html>

Truro Schools: <http://www.truromass.org/>

Food Access for Families in Need

Family Pantry of Cape Cod in Harwich: <https://www.thefamilypantry.com/>

Nantucket Information

COVID-19 Testing on Nantucket

The Nantucket Cottage Hospital has started drive-up COVID-19 testing in their parking lot. Testing is only available to individuals who have the symptoms for COVID-19: <http://nantuckethospital.org/home/coronavirus-news-and-information/>

Food Access for Kids on Nantucket

The Nantucket Public Schools will be offering both breakfast and lunch to those who are in need during this time. Pick up of those meals will be outside at the High School. (7-9 am for breakfast and 11 to 1 pm for lunch). More details at <https://www.npsk.org/>.

Martha's Vineyard Information

Updates from the MV Hospital: <https://www.mvhospital.com/health-resources/resources-and-information-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

Food Access for Kids on Martha's Vineyard

From 11:00 to 1:00 at the High School, the Oak Bluffs School, the Edgartown School, the Tisbury School and the West Tisbury School. Delivery will be directly to your car, so please drive to the curb and wait for a staff member to assist you. Principals will be reaching out to families to provide additional information. Details at www.mvyops.org.

State Government Updates

April 2nd: Command Center outlines projections for anticipated surge of COVID-19 cases

The projections are the result of the Command Center's work with medical experts to complete modeling of the outbreak in Massachusetts. The Administration also detailed its efforts to respond to this surge, including a significant increase in hospital capacity, staffing, and equipment.

Modeling and Projections:

- The Administration's COVID-19 Response Command Center has been working with its Advisory Board of medical experts and epidemiologists from Harvard University, University of Guelph and Northeastern to refine models related to the expected surge of COVID-19 cases. The full Advisory Board can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-covid-19-response-command-center-advisory-board-of>
- The model's latest projections estimate that the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts could range from 47,000 to 172,000 (or 0.7% to 2.5% of the total population of Massachusetts). The models show hospitalizations would potentially peak between April 10-20. The current fatality rate in Massachusetts is lower than other areas – it is approximately 1.5% of those infected. The Command Center is monitoring this statistic closely.
- The COVID-19 Response Command Center is working with hospitals to provide them with flexibility to expand ICU capacity. The Commonwealth is asking academic medical centers and teaching hospitals to work to significantly expand their ICU capacity. But after hospitals execute on their surge plans, the model estimates there could be a remaining gap in ICU capacity of more than 500 beds.
- In response, the Administration is aiming to find or build an additional 750 - 1000 beds in field medical hospitals and other alternate care sites to reduce strain on hospitals as much as possible. The Administration has identified additional possible sites for Field Medical Stations including the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Joint Base Cape Cod, Springfield's Mass Mutual Building and other smaller locations. The Administration has secured a contractor who can build out sites once a healthcare partner has been finalized.

The Command Center is also securing 1000 beds in capacity for step-down care options in nursing facilities for stabilized COVID-19 positive patients who can be transferred out of the hospital to make room for those with higher medical need.

The full Command Center projection chart is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/april-2-2020-command-center-projections>

April 2nd: Order closing state beach parking areas; select state parks to open early

Governor Baker issued an emergency order requiring all coastal beach reservation parking areas managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to close effective 12:00 PM on Friday, April 3, 2020 to reduce large concentrations of people at beaches during the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, effective 12:00 PM on Friday, April 3, 2020, DCR will open select seasonal state parks early and expand access at other parks to provide additional open space opportunities for residents to

enjoy and alternatives to popular state parks throughout the Commonwealth. The full list of seasonal state parks is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-seasonal-park-locations-0>

The full order on state beaches is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/april-2-2020-beaches-order>

Coastal parkways that provide access to state beaches will also be closed to both parking and dropping off passengers. State beaches will remain open and available to pedestrians for transitory use only (walking, jogging, biking, solitary fishing, etc.). A link to find specific parking and traffic restrictions is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-coastal-beach-parking>

State parks and associated parking areas remain open at this time; however, the public is asked to visit state parks and other open space properties that are located near their homes to ensure social distancing to limit the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, DCR's agency-owned ice rinks, visitor centers, campgrounds, playgrounds, fitness areas, athletic fields, athletic courts, golf courses, and bathroom facilities will remain closed until Monday, May 4, 2020.

DCR will also be limiting the amount of parking spaces available at certain high-visitation state parks. DCR continues to stress that if a park is crowded, visitors should consider visiting a different location or returning at a later date or time. The state parks system has over 450,000 acres of property, and every region of the state contains multiple parks to explore that may be less busy than others in the area. You can see all state parks here: <https://www.mass.gov/visit-massachusetts-state-parks>

DCR advises visitors of state parks to:

- Stay within solitary or small groups, and avoid gatherings of ten or more people;
- Practice social distancing of at least six feet between individuals
- Participate in only non-contact recreational activities;
- Practice healthy personal hygiene, such as handwashing for at least 20 seconds; and,
- Stay home if ill, over 70, and/or part of a vulnerable population.

To centralize COVID-19 updates that impact the state parks system, DCR recently developed a Massachusetts State Parks COVID-19 Updates webpage which can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-state-parks-covid-19-update>

March 31st: Guidance to hotels, motels, and short term rentals

As part of the updated essential business list, DPH issued new guidance today around hotels, motels, inns, beds and breakfasts and other short-term residential rentals. Based on this new guidance, hotels, motels, and short-term rentals may only be used for efforts related to fighting COVID-19, like front line health workers or individuals, or for Massachusetts residents who have been otherwise displaced from their residences.

The full hotel and motel guidance is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-31-2020-hotel-motel-guidance>

March 31st: Stay at Home Advisory remaining in effect

Last week, Governor Charlie Baker directed DPH to issue a stay-at-home advisory, and the Governor announced today that the advisory will remain in effect. Residents are advised 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

The Stay at Home Advisory can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/dph-public-health-advisory-stay-at-home-advisory>

March 31st: Extension of non-essential business closures

Governor 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 4. 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 prohibits gatherings of more than 10 people until May 4th.

The Administration updated the "COVID-19 Essential Services" list today, which is based on federal guidance that was updated earlier this week. The new list will go into effect tomorrow, April 1, at noon. While these businesses are designated as essential, they are urged to follow social distancing protocols for workers in accordance with guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH).

Some of the updates to the essential services list include:

- Clarity around the supply chain that supports other essential services
- Adding health care providers like chiropractors and optometrists
- Expanding the types of workers providing disinfectant and sanitation services
- The full essential services extension order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-31-2020-essential-services-extension-order>
- The full list of essential services is updated here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-essential-services?n>
- A COVID-19 Essential Services FAQs created by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development is here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-essential-services-faqs>

March 30th: Launch of online portal to donate or sell personal protective equipment

The Baker-Polito Administration announced an online portal where individuals and companies can easily donate or sell personal protective equipment (PPE) including:

- N95/N99 masks (respirators)
- Surgical/procedure masks
- Facemasks with integrated shields
- Powered Air-Purifying Respirators (PAPR)
- Goggles
- Gloves
- Protective suits/gowns
- Booties/shoe covers

- Headcovers
- Hand sanitizer
- Sanitizing wipes

More information about this PPE procurement and donation program is here:

<https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-ppe-procurement-and-donation-program>

The program also provides an entry point for local manufacturers to get more information on adapting their businesses to produce more equipment here in Massachusetts, an effort being led by the administration's recently established Manufacturing Emergency Response Team, co-chaired by Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy, and Mike Tamasi, President and CEO of AccuRounds, a precision components manufacturer located in Avon, MA.

For information on adapting a business to produce PPE, please email the Manufacturing Emergency Response Team <https://masstech.org/M-ERT>

If you are a manufacturer with PPE, please submit a form here:

https://massgov.formstack.com/forms/procurement_form

To complete the form to donate PPE, click here: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/covid-19-donation-program>

March 27th: State Income Tax Filing Deadline Being Extended to July 15

Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Robert DeLeo today announced an agreement to extend the 2019 state individual income tax filing and payment deadline from April 15 to July 15 due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. This income tax relief is automatic and taxpayers do not need to file any additional forms to qualify.

Legislation will be filed in the near future to finance the extension, and accompanying administrative changes will be implemented through the Department of Revenue. Specifically, the legislation will authorize the Commonwealth borrowing flexibility to manage deferred revenue this fiscal year and repay it in the next fiscal year, which starts July 1, 2020.

Individuals with questions or concerns regarding taxes can contact the Massachusetts Department of Revenue at (617) 887-6367 or send a secure e-message through MassTaxConnect: https://mtc.dor.state.ma.us/mtc/_/

The full announcement is here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/massachusetts-announces-state-income-tax-filing-deadline-being-extended-to-july-15>

March 27th: Travel guidance and self-quarantine

Beginning March 27, all travelers arriving to Massachusetts are instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days. This guidance will be displayed as posters at service plazas along 1-90 eastbound, distributed as flyers at major transportation hubs and on posted on highway message boards. Visitors are instructed not to travel to Massachusetts if they are displaying symptoms. Health care workers, public health workers, public safety workers, transportation workers and designated essential workers are exempt from this requirement.

March 26th: Senate passes scope of practice legislation

Today, the Massachusetts Senate passed legislation to expand the scope of practice for certain health care professionals for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency. This bill removes barriers to immediate care by granting certain health care professionals the authority to work at the top of their license, education and training to ensure that our health care system can meet the increased demand it's currently seeing due to the coronavirus outbreak.

An Act ensuring access to qualified health professionals, authorizes certified nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, nurse anesthetists, and psychiatric mental health clinical nurse specialists to practice independently and issue written prescriptions and medication as well as order tests and therapeutics. The bill limits this practice authority to nurses with two or more years of supervised practice, unless the Board of Registration in Nursing determines that a reduced supervised practice requirement is necessary to increase access to these nurses during the current state of emergency.

In addition, the legislation grants advanced practice registered nurses the authority to admit patients to mental health facilities for care and to restrain patients in cases where failure to do would create the likelihood of serious harm.

The bill also enables pharmacists to better coordinate with health care teams and engage in a broad range of patient services beyond filling prescriptions. These services can include conducting health and wellness tests, managing chronic diseases, performing medication management, and administering immunizations.

Finally, the legislation limits these scope of practice expansions to 90 days after the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency. This time limitation enables the state to manage this unprecedented demand on our health care system by allowing health care providers to work to the full extent of their training and licensure, maximizing the work that all types of health care professionals can safely provide. This immediate workforce expansion will help meet the needs of patients during this public health crisis.

The bill now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

March 26th: DPH Stay at Home Advisory and safe practices guidance

The Department of public health Stay-at-Home Advisory for Individuals over 70 and for those with underlying health conditions; and Safe Practices for the General Public full order and guidelines are here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/dph-public-health-advisory-stay-at-home-advisory-for-individuals-over-70-and-for-those-with>

March 25th: Housing Stability for Vulnerable Populations:

The Baker-Polito Administration announced the following guidance for renters and homeowners:

- DHCD is moving to temporarily suspend terminations of federal and state rental vouchers under their purview.
- MassHousing is transferring \$5 million to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for a COVID-19 Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) fund to assist families facing rent insecurity.
- The Division of Banks (DOB) has issued new guidance to Massachusetts financial institutions and lenders urging them to provide relief for borrowers

and will advocate for a 60-day stay on behalf of all homeowners facing imminent foreclosure on their homes.

- DHCD is issuing guidance recommending that all owners of state aided low-income housing, including Local Housing Authorities and private owners, suspend both pending non-essential evictions and the filing of any new non-essential evictions.
- Affordable housing operators are urged to suspend non-essential evictions for loss of income or employment circumstances resulting in a tenant's inability to make rent.
- This guidance urges operators to establish reasonable payment plans, notify Section 8 or public housing residents about interim income recertification to adjust rent payments, and to consider offering relief funding for residents ineligible for income reassessment.

Read the DHCD Guidance Here:

[Guidance to owners of state aided low-income housing](#)

[Guidance to affordable housing operators](#)

Notices and guidance regarding federal and state rental assistance programs:

[Guidance for Administering MRVP](#)

[Guidance for Administering ARVP](#)

[Initial policies and procedures for federal rental assistance administered by DHCD](#)

The full guidance from the Division of Banks is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-25-dob-message-to-industry-regarding-mortgage-loan-borrowers-impacted-by-covid-19>

March 25th: Emergency order extending school closures and non-emergency child care programs

Governor Baker issued an emergency order extending the closure of all public and private schools, and all non-emergency childcare programs, until May 4 in an effort to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

This order expands on previous orders issued on [March 15](#) and [March 18](#) suspending normal educational operations at schools and non-emergency child care programs until April 6, and the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) established a process to approve Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs to serve vulnerable children and families of first responders and essential workers.

- This closure extends one week beyond scheduled spring vacation week on most school district calendars.
- The order does not apply to residential special education schools.
- This extension will allow school administrators and educators added planning time to ensure students can complete course requirements, as well as provide teachers with time to expand remote learning opportunities.

Read the Orders here: [K-12 School Order](#) | [Early Education School Order](#)

March 24th: New Guidance Issued on prioritization and optimization of PPE

The MA COVID-19 Command Center, in partnership with MEMA, has developed new guidance on prioritizing and optimizing Personal Protective Equipment during COVID-19 Response. The full guidance is here: <https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

The Command Center is aggressively pursuing every legitimate supply chain opportunity both internationally and nationally and is placing orders. This includes coordinating with MassBio and MEMA to collect donated supplies through the Massachusetts Life Sciences Emergency Supply Hub.

March 24th: Department of Public Health expanded daily dashboard, text message alerts

The DPH Daily Case and Testing Dashboard now provides additional data categories to provide the public more information on the outbreak in Massachusetts. In addition to County, Sex, and Exposure of confirmed cases, DPH is now providing an Age Group breakdown. As testing across the Commonwealth ramps up, DPH is also now providing more robust information about all the labs submitting test data, including total number of patients tested and total positive results. The dashboard is here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-cases-quarantine-and-monitoring>

DPH also announced the launch of a new text-based notification system to deliver important information about the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response to Massachusetts residents.

The new messaging tool called "AlertsMA" will allow residents to subscribe to real-time notifications by texting the keyword **COVIDMA to 888-777**. After signing up, state and public health officials can send short messages and links to information directly to a resident's cell phone or other mobile device.

March 24th: Full list of essential businesses during Stay at Home advisory: Following the Baker Administration's 3-23 announcement of a Stay at Home advisory, the following guidance has been made available:

Businesses and organizations defined as providing "COVID-19 Essential Services" under Governor Baker's March 23, 2020 Emergency Order: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-essential-services>

Frequently asked questions about essential services: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-essential-business-faqs>

Essential services and revised gatherings order: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-23-2020-essential-services-and-revised-gatherings-order>

March 23rd: Baker Administration "stay at home advisory," and order on essential services, closing certain workplaces, and prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people:

The Baker Administration issued an order mandating that effective Tuesday March 24, all non-essential businesses close physical workplaces to all workers, customers and public until Tuesday, April 7 at noon. The order also prohibits gatherings of more than 10 people.

The full order can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-23-2020->

[essential-services-and-revised-gatherings-order/download](#)

The Baker Administration provided the following list of essential services:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-essential-services/download>

To request designation as an essential business, please click here:

<https://www.mass.gov/forms/essential-service-designation-request>

March 21st: Tax Relief for Businesses: The Department of Revenue announced that it will waive any late-file or late-pay penalties for returns and payment due for meals and room occupancy taxes between March 20 and May 31, 2020. A full press release can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-new-health-care-resources-small-business-relief-other>

March 19th: Governor Baker activates the National Guard: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-activates-massachusetts-national-guard-to-support-covid-19>

March 17th: Courts closed except for emergency business: <https://www.mass.gov/alerts/supreme-judicial-court-restricts-court-appearances-to-emergency-matters#undefined>

March 15th: Governor Baker announced closure of public elementary and secondary schools until April 6th, banned gatherings of 25 people or more, and banned service by bars and restaurants on site, allowing only for take-out and delivery food service. Among more updates. Details here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-emergency-actions-to-address-covid-19>

Further Details from Governor Baker 3-15 Press Conference: Governor Charlie Baker, Health and Human Services Secretary MaryLou Sudders, and Department of Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel provided the following guidance at a 6 PM press conference:

- Only emergency and executive branch employees should report to work tomorrow 3/16
- The Baker-Polito Administration is issuing a directive to all health insurers to cover telehealth services
- The Registry of Motor Vehicles will issue guidance extending renewals so people residents do not need to visit the RMV for renewals at present
- The Baker-Polito Administration is directing hospitals to cancel all elective procedures beginning on Wednesday to create additional capacity in hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients
- The Baker-Polito Administration is issuing a prohibition on visitors to nursing homes
- The Baker-Polito Administration will file emergency legislation on Monday 3-16 to relax Unemployment Insurance guidelines, including waiving the one week waiting period to collect unemployment and expanding eligibility for collecting unemployment for people who have been impacted by COVID-19
- The Baker-Polito Administration will file emergency legislation on Monday to help municipal governments with town meetings and adopting budgets
- The Baker-Polito Administration will file legislation to move date of Boston Marathon to September
- The Baker-Polito Administration is amending its Executive Order on

gatherings of larger than 250 people to prohibit all public gatherings of larger than 25 people including fitness centers and private clubs

- The Baker-Polito Administration is issuing guidance to prohibit on-premise consumption of food or alcohol at restaurants which will be effective from 3-17 until 4-17. Restaurants will be able to provide food for take out or delivery.
- The Baker-Polito Administration announced a three week suspension of all public and private elementary and secondary schools effective Tuesday - school can occur normally on Monday for districts that have not already suspended classes. School districts are still permitted to keep the buildings open for actions like getting food out to children who need it. Preschool and childcare services are not ordered to close, but are strongly urged to observe guidelines established by the Department of Public Health and the Department of Early Childhood Education.

Detailed orders for the above can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency>

March 15: Trial Courts closed on 3/16 and 3/17: <https://www.mass.gov/alerts/trial-courts-closed-to-the-public-monday-and-tuesday-march-16-and-17-2020#undefined>

March 14: Baker-Polito Administration announces creation of COVID-19 Response Command Center led by HHS Secretary Marylou Sudders

March 14: Baker-Polito Administration Announces New Clinical Protocols for COVID-19 Testing. Updated protocols will expedite testing for patients with a range of symptoms and conditions as well as health care workers and emergency responders; MassHealth issues guidance to providers to ensure access to treatment including telehealth: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-new-clinical-protocols-for-covid-19-testing>

March 14: Department of Conservation and Recreation on park closures: The Department of Conservation and Recreation announced a temporary closure of certain state conservation and recreation managed facilities. The full guidance can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-temporary-closure-of-certain-state-conservation-and>

March 14: Updated guidance for first responders, law enforcement, businesses and schools: The Department of Public Health has provided updated guidance and recommendations for emergency responders and law enforcement, businesses and employers, elementary and secondary schools, and colleges and universities:

- Guidance for emergency responders and law enforcement [click here](#).
- Guidance for businesses and employers [click here](#).

March 14: the MA Supreme Judicial Court postponed jury trials until after April 21 and issued restrictions on courthouse entry. This guidance is available through the following links: and issued updated guidance which can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/sjc-order-in-re-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-regarding-empament-of-juries> and <https://www.mass.gov/doc/sjc-order-in-re-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-regarding-access-to-state-courthouses-court/download>

Consumer Protection Information

Attorney General compiled list of COVID-19 resources

Attorney General Maura Healey has created a website with links to all of the Attorney General's office's COVID-19 resources. The website is here:

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/resources-during-covid-19>

Where can I find information about sick time laws, get help with insurance claims, or report price gouging? Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey has provided resources specific to the coronavirus crisis, and you can find a full list of those resources here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/ags-office-issues-guidance-on-coronavirus-resources-warns-of-consumer-scams>

Information about sick time laws: 617-727-3465

Help with insurance claims or medical bills: 888-830-6277

Report price gouging or defective products: 617-727-8400

If you're having difficulty negotiating a travel refund or are concerned about a potential scam, consider filing a complaint: www.mass.gov/how-to/file-a-consumer-complaint

Further guidance from the Attorney General can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/frequently-asked-questions-about-covid-19-employee-rights-and-employer-obligations>

Attorney General Healey files emergency regulations on price gouging

On 3-20, Attorney General Maura Healey filed an emergency regulation to prohibit price gouging of essential products and services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The amendment to regulation 940 CMR 3:18, filed today with the Secretary of State's Office and effective immediately, prohibits price gouging of goods and services necessary for public health and safety during a declared statewide or national emergency. Previously under the state's consumer protection law, the only existing regulation related to price gouging addressed the sale of gasoline and other petroleum products.

Attorney General emergency regulations on price gouging and debt collection

The AG's Office has promulgated two emergency regulations around: price gouging and debt collection.

One new regulation, 940 CMR 35.00, filed with the Secretary of State's Office and effective immediately, prohibits creditors from engaging in methods of debt collection that can require people to leave their homes or have in-person contact, including filing new lawsuits against Massachusetts consumers, visiting their homes or places of work, or repossessing their cars, among other protections. The AG's emergency regulation also prohibits debt collection agencies and debt buyers from making unsolicited debt collection telephone calls to consumers.

This emergency regulation will remain in effect for 90 days or until the conclusion of the declared state of emergency.

The AG's emergency debt collection regulation contains protections that apply to all creditors and prohibits them from deceptive practices in pursuing the payment of a

debt during the COVID-19 emergency, including:

- filing any new collection lawsuit;
- garnishing wages, earnings, properties or funds;
- repossessing vehicles;
- applying for or serving a capias warrant;
- visiting or threatening to visit the household of a debtor;
- visiting or threatening to visit the place of employment of a debtor;
- confronting or communicating in person with a debtor regarding the collection of a debt in any public place.

The AG's emergency debt collection regulation also prohibits debt collection agencies and debt buyers from making unsolicited debt collection telephone calls to Massachusetts consumers for the next 90 days, unless the state of emergency ends before that time.

The second regulation is an amendment to regulation 940 CMR 3:18, filed today with the Secretary of State's Office and effective immediately, prohibits price gouging of goods and services necessary for public health and safety during a declared statewide or national emergency. Previously under the state's consumer protection law, the only existing regulation related to price gouging addressed the sale of gasoline and other petroleum products.

Lastly, the AGO is asking residents to report price gouging of products, including PPE, to our office. Individuals can file a complaint online at mass.gov/how-to/file-a-consumer-complaint. If individuals are unable to file online, they can call our Consumer Hotline at 617-727-8400.

Local Government Matters

Updated guidance on Open Meeting Law:

On March 12, the Baker-Polito Administration issued an emergency order temporarily modifying the state's Open Meeting Law in order to allow state, quasi and local governments to continue to carry out essential functions and operations during the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. This emergency order suspends the requirement for public access to the physical location where a public meeting is taking place, provided there are other means of access available, such as a phone conference line, social media or other internet streaming services, or on-line meeting services. Additionally, the order relieves the requirement that a quorum of members be physically present at a public meeting. During this period, members may all participate by remote or virtual means. This order is applicable to meetings of public bodies including commissions, boards, and committees that engage in policy making at the state, quasi and local level, and it does not apply to Town Meetings or judicial and quasi-judicial hearings. The full text of the order is available at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/open-meeting-law-order-march-12-2020/download>

Updates on Legislation to Assist Municipal Governance:

Governor Baker announced a [package of legislation](#) to help address challenges to municipal governance resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, including potential delays in holding Town Meetings and adopting Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) municipal budgets. Provisions in the proposed legislation include:

- Amend existing statute authorizing Moderators to postpone Town Meetings by thirty days.
- Permit local Select Boards to postpone Town Meetings beyond the statutory June 30 deadline when the Governor has declared a state of emergency.
- Permit local Select Boards to temporarily adopt lower quorum rules.
- Permit continued month-to-month spending into FY21 by towns based on the prior fiscal year budget with approval of the Division of Local Services during states of emergency. Cities have similar authority under existing state law.
- Permit towns to access their free cash balance for FY21 spending with approval of the Division of Local Services.
- Permit municipal spending from revolving funds at the level set by their Fiscal Year 2020 appropriation until an FY21 budget is adopted.
- Authorize a three-year amortization period for deficit spending incurred as a result of COVID-19 crisis.

The announcement can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-emergency-actions-to-address-covid-19>

More Legislation filed by the Governor to help municipalities, school districts

The Baker-Polito Administration filed An Act to Further Address Challenges Faced by Municipalities and School Districts Resulting from COVID-19, which would provide administrative relief to state and local government entities impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, including modifying local permitting processes, enabling municipalities to extend tax and finance deadlines, and extending deadlines for certain education requirements.

A full announcement is here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-files-legislation-to-address-challenges-faced-by-municipalities>

Postponing elections

The Senate and House passed legislation on 3/23 to help protect public health by providing cities and towns the authority to postpone and reschedule certain municipal elections and related activities. The bill now goes to the Governor.

The House also issued orders to reschedule two special state elections until June 2, 2020. The Senate issued an order to reschedule two state special elections until May 19, 2020.

The legislation includes guidelines for public notification of rescheduled election dates, voter registration deadlines, absentee ballots processing, and the display of sample ballots. The legislation:

- Allows municipal governments to postpone caucus or certain elections scheduled before May 30, 2020 and reschedule the caucus or elections to a date prior to June 30, 2020.
- Allows any eligible voter to vote early by mail for elections occurring before June 30, 2020. More here: <https://karenspilka.com/updates/2020/3/23/municipalelections>

Information for Business Owners

[Guidance on Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loan \(EIDL\)](#)

Program

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is working closely with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to activate the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program which would provide assistance to eligible businesses and non-profits impacted by COVID-19. EIDLs provide small businesses with working capital loans of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses until normal operations resume.

Affected small businesses and non-profits should download, complete, and submit the [SBA EIDL Worksheet and Instructions](#) to expedite activation of the EIDL program. For questions, please contact Disaster.Recovery@mass.gov. Full guidance regarding the program is here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/small-business-assistance-for-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR3nJTouJT8xxlZ2KSrVD6NbFmhY2VNzBGAYA7yMv8DX3CPTowEzyU61>

Baker - Polito Administration announces \$10 million Small Business Recovery Loan Fund

The \$10 million Small Business Recovery Loan Fund will provide emergency capital up to \$75,000 to Massachusetts-based businesses impacted by COVID-19 with under 50 full and part-time employees, including nonprofits. Loans are immediately available to eligible businesses with no payments due for the first 6 months.

How to Apply:

- Please complete the application found on MGCC's website, [EmpoweringSmallBusiness.org](https://empowering-small-business.org). Completed applications can be sent via email to mgcc@massgcc.com with the subject line "2020 Small Business Recovery Loan Fund". MGCC can be reached by email: mgcc@massgcc.com

Loan Fund Details:

- Who Qualifies: Open to Massachusetts-based businesses impacted by COVID-19 with under 50 full- and part-time employees, including nonprofits (negative impact must be verifiable).
- Terms and Conditions: This fund is being offered with no payments due for the first 6 months, then 30-months of principal and interest payments and no prepayment penalties.
- Businesses can apply for loans up to \$75,000.

EOHED Provides list of essential business FAQs

EOHED has provided answers clarifying questions about which businesses fall within essential categories, as well as guidance on how essential businesses should continue operations.

The full FAQs are here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-essential-services-faqs>

Unemployment Issues for Impacted Workers

[Updated guidance from The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development \(EOLWD\) and the Department of Unemployment Assistance \(DUA\) regarding unemployment assistance](#)

Regarding current unemployment claims, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) have taken the following actions:

- Suspending all requirements regarding attending seminars at the MassHire career centers.
- Missing deadlines due to effects of COVID-19 will be excused under DUA's good cause provision.
- All appeal hearings will be held by telephone only.

The Department of Labor issued guidance to the states instructing state agencies to apply existing law flexibly. DUA may now pay unemployment benefits if a worker is quarantined due to an order by a civil authority or medical professional or leaves employment due to reasonable risk of exposure or infection or to care for a family member and does not intend to or is not allowed to return to work. The worker need not provide medical documentation and need only be available for work when and as able.

To assist individuals who cannot work due to the impact of COVID-19, the Baker-Polito administration [has filed emergency legislation](#) that will allow new claims to be paid more quickly by waiving the one week waiting period for unemployment benefits.

EOLWD and DUA are also filing emergency regulations that will allow people impacted by COVID-19 to collect unemployment if their workplace is shut down and expects to reopen in four or fewer weeks. The following conditions apply:

- Workers must remain in contact with their employer during the shutdown.
- Workers must be available for any work their employer may have for them that they are able to do.
- An employer may request to extend the period of the covered shut-down to eight weeks, and workers will remain eligible for the longer period under the same conditions described above.
- If necessary, DUA may extend these time periods for workers and employers.
- Employers who are impacted by COVID-19 may request up to a 60-day grace period to file quarterly reports and pay contributions.
- The pending federal legislation proposes further relief including additional money for unemployment benefits, and relief to employers for charges related to unemployment benefits paid due to COVID-19.

The announcement can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-emergency-actions-to-address-covid-19>

[DOR guidance on unemployment benefits for independent contracts, part-time workers not yet authorized](#)

Many Massachusetts residents are still not able to successfully apply for UI benefits because the Federal Government has not yet authorized Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

According to the MA Dept of Revenue, currently self-employed individuals and 1099 contract employees are not eligible for unemployment benefits. If the President of the United States makes a disaster unemployment declaration for Massachusetts or nationwide, the self-employed and 1099 contractors would become eligible for

unemployment assistance. This is already coded into the DUA system and would be available immediately upon declaration and press release announcement

DUA Virtual Town Halls on Unemployment Benefits

In order to better meet the needs of residents whose employment has been affected by the COVID-19, the Department of Unemployment Assistance will continue hosting daily town hall meetings to help constituents achieve a successful unemployment claim. DUA will also take questions from claimants across the Commonwealth.

Sign up information for the virtual town halls is available at <https://www.mass.gov/forms/massachusetts-department-of-unemployment-assistance-dua-virtual-town-halls>

Health Care Information

Enrolling in Health Connector for people who recently lost coverage through their job

The Health Connector has created resources for people who recently lost health insurance through their job and are now applying for health insurance through the Health Connector.

English Health Connector brochure: <https://www.mahealthconnector.org/wp-content/uploads/health-coverage-after-a-job-loss-eng.pdf>

Spanish Health Connector brochure: <https://www.mahealthconnector.org/wp-content/uploads/health-coverage-after-a-job-loss-esp.pdf>

Department of Public Health guidance on insurance coverage for telehealth

The Department of Public Health issued guidance on March 15 that stipulates that all commercial insurers and the Group Insurance Commission are required to cover medically necessary telehealth services in the same manner they cover in-person services.

Order: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-15-2020-telehealth-order/download>

Guidance for Hospitals on the Cancellation of Elective Procedures and Restricting Visitors

The Department of Public Health issued guidance on March 15th that hospitals must restrict visitors and cancel non-essential elective procedures, effective Wednesday. The announcement can be found here:

The order on restricting visitors can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-15-2020-hospital-visitor-restrictions-order>

The order on non-essential elective procedures can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-15-2020-elective-procedures-order>

Guidance on nursing home visitor prohibition

The Department of Public Health issued guidance on March 15th that assisted living residences are to ban visitors to protect the health of residents and staff. This is in addition to the federal guidance issued on Friday that bans visitors to nursing

homes and rest homes. The announcement can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-emergency-actions-to-address-covid-19>

Temporary Nurses

Guidance on expediting licensing for nurses from another jurisdiction: On March 11, the Board of Registration in Nursing updated its policies to expedite the processing of reciprocal license applications for nurses that are licensed in another jurisdiction to allow those applications to be processed in one business day. The full policy can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/expedited-processing-of-reciprocal-license-applications-in-the-event-of-a-declared-public/download>

DPH emergency credentialing and licensed staff transfer procedures

The Department of Public Health issued an order regarding expedited credentialing process for licensed independent practitioners and expedited transfers of licensed clinical staff among facilities.

The full DPH order on credentialing and staffing can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-of-the-commissioner-of-public-health-implementing-emergency-credentialing-and-licensed/download>

Department of Public Health order requiring local reporting of positive COVID-19 cases

On March 18, the Department of Public Health issued an order requiring local boards of health to communicate to the official in their district with the responsibility of administering emergency calls the addresses of those who have tested positive for Covid-19.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-of-the-commissioner-of-public-health-regarding-the-sharing-of-critical-information-with/download>

Department of Public Health order allowing pharmacists to administer treatment for substance use disorder

On March 18, the Department of Public Health issued an order allowing pharmacists to administer substance use disorder treatment medication. The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-18-2020-pharmacist-opioid-misuse-disorder-medication/download>

Department of Public Health order allowing flexible reassignment of physicians assistants

On March 18, the Department of Public Health issued an order providing for the flexible reassignment of physicians assistants.

The full order can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-18-2020-physician-assistant-order/download>

Department of Public Health guidance to hospitals regarding implementation of alternative, acute, inpatient care space:

DPH issued new guidance to hospitals regarding the implementation of alternative, acute, inpatient care space during the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

A full list of DPH guidance to hospitals can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-directives>

Division of Insurance guidance to commercial carriers:

DOI issued an order instructing commercial carriers to be appropriately flexible to help members maintain their existing coverage, including grace-periods and having staff available to explain the purchase COBRA.

The full order can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/bulletin-2020-05-flexibility-in-the-issuance-and-administration-of-insurance-during-covid-19/download>

American Red Cross facing severe blood shortage

The American Red Cross is facing a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations during the COVID-19 outbreak. There is an urgent blood donation need now for patients with chronic conditions and trauma, as well as for ensuring an adequate blood and blood product supply going forward. The Governor has deemed “Blood and plasma donors and the employees of the organizations that operate and manage related activities” as an essential service. Donating blood is safe and people should not hesitate to give. In addition, there is a need for community blood drive sites in the eastern part of the state.

To schedule a new blood drive: contact Bill Forsyth at (617) 699-3808 or email William.Forsyth@redcross.org

Those who are healthy, feeling well, and eligible to give blood or platelets are urged to make an appointment by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org, or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

DOI guidance on telehealth prescribing

The Division of Insurance issued guidance on using telehealth services for prescriptions without requiring a face to face visit.

The full guidance is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/alert-regarding-use-of-telemedicine-during-public-health-emergency-covid-19/download>

Department of Transitional Assistance launches online application portal for TAFDC and EAEDC

DTA launched an online application portal to assist with applications for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) programs.

The online portal is here: <https://dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/>

MassHealth Launches PCA Help Hotline

MassHealth announced today that it has established a dedicated hotline through MassOptions to connect MassHealth PCA Consumers to services in the event their PCA is unavailable. Consumers can call 1-844-422-6277 and will be connected to home health services in their region. MassHealth has also updated its policies to temporarily suspend the PCA overtime cap and provide flexibility around home health aide training & certification requirements to streamline the hiring process

and allow family members to be considered for hire. There are currently over 36,000 MassHealth members receiving personal care attendant (PCA) services. PCA services are essential services that support individuals with activities of daily living (ADLs), such as dressing, grooming, bathing, ambulating.

Early medical school graduation

Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders and DPH Commissioner Dr. Monica Bharel have coordinated with Massachusetts medical schools to facilitate early graduation of their qualified fourth-year students to allow graduates to support the health care workforce during the COVID-19 response. This coordinated effort includes Boston University School of Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Tufts University School of Medicine and Harvard Medical School.

Emergency limited medical licenses

The Board of Registration in Medicine will provide medical school graduates who have matched as an intern, resident or fellow with a Board-approved Massachusetts health care facility or training program with Emergency 90-Day Limited Licenses to practice medicine to ensure that our health care workforce is prepared during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

To qualify, medical residents must fill out an application to be approved by the program or facility, and once approved, residents will receive the emergency license and be able to start when their program begins. This Emergency Limited License will allow medical staff to provide support while the regular screening progresses, and it is not a substitute for the regular Limited License process.

Launch of Buoy Health Care tool to check symptoms

The Baker-Polito Administration announced the launch of Buoy Health's new online resource for residents to check their symptoms and connect with the next appropriate health care resource. This tool does not replace emergency medical care, but it may be used as a support for residents during the COVID-19 outbreak to connect them with appropriate health care resources if they display coronavirus symptoms.

Buoy Health's online 24/7 tool is free for Massachusetts residents and uses current COVID-19 guidance from the CDC and Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Visit [Buoy.com/mass](https://www.buoy.com/mass) to learn more and use the tool.

Order on Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) and prescribing

The administration has issued a public health order to provide APRNs in good standing with greater flexibility in their prescribing practices. This order includes the following updates:

Certified nurse midwives will be allowed to continue to prescribe as already authorized.

Authorizes APRNs who have at least two years of supervised practice experience to prescribe without physician supervision

Authorizes APRNs with fewer than two years of supervised practice experience to prescribe with physician supervision, but without the normally required written

guidelines.

Read the order here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-26-2020-advanced-practice-registered-nurses-order>

MassHealth waiver approved by federal government

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved, in part, the Baker-Polito Administration's 1135 waiver to fast-track MassHealth enrollment, streamline administrative requirements for providers and better deliver critically needed health care services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. CMS has approved the following items of the waiver:

Enrollment of out-of-state providers and easing other provider requirements when enrolling in MassHealth.

Allowing providers to be reimbursed for care in alternative, unlicensed settings

Suspension of prior authorization requirements and extending pre-existing prior authorizations through the emergency.

Health care professional volunteers partnership:

To support ongoing COVID-19 emergency response efforts, the Baker-Polito Administration has partnered with the Massachusetts Medical Society to match volunteers with our communities and health care providers based on skillsets and need. There is an immediate need for respiratory therapists and public health nurses, and the administration is asking health care professionals interested in volunteering to sign up at MAResponds.org.

Department of Public Health orders on pharmacy, determination of need, and nurse staffing

The Department of Public Health has issued three emergency orders to support the health care system's response to COVID-19: Pharmacy Practice: To ensure pharmacists are able to fully support the health care system's response to COVID-19, this emergency order makes several changes regarding pharmacy practice, including expedited approval for pharmacists licensed in other states to practice in Massachusetts, and allowing the remote processing of prescriptions by pharmacy technicians.

Read the Order: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/pharmacy-practice-order>

Determination of Need

This order exempts health care facilities from the requirement that they submit a Notice of Determination of Need for certain activities that will support their response to COVID-19.

Read the Order: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/don-order>

Read the Guidance: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/guidance-re-don-for-covid-19-work>

Nurse Staffing

To ensure hospitals have the flexibility they need to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, this emergency order exempts hospitals from certain nurse-staffing

requirements, while requiring that they must ensure that staffing levels remain adequate to meet patients' needs, and staff is trained and competent to meet the needs of their patients. Read the Order: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/nursing-staff-order>

Division of Insurance orders on drug benefits and publicizing COVID-19 information

The Division of Insurance issued the following bulletins today:

Guidance to insurance carriers about providing flexibility in the administration of prescription drug benefits: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/bulletin-2020-06-administration-of-prescription-drug-benefits-during-covid-19-coronavirus-public/download>

Guidance to insurance carriers about making COVID-19 information available to covered members: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/bulletin-2020-07-making-consumer-information-available-during-the-covid-19-crisis-issued/download>

Mass Medical Society partnership to match health and medical volunteers

The Baker-Polito Administration has partnered with the Massachusetts Medical Society to match health and medical volunteers with communities and health care providers based on skill sets and need. There is an immediate need for respiratory therapists and public health nurses.

Health care professionals interested in volunteering can sign up here: [mass.gov/health-services-covid-19-volunteer-form](https://www.mass.gov/health-services-covid-19-volunteer-form)

Department of Public Health list of testing sites for those with clinical referral

DPH has posted a new list of COVID-19 testing sites for individuals who have a clinician's referral. If someone thinks they have symptoms of COVID-19, they should first call their health care provider. If that clinician thinks a test is appropriate but are unable to offer one at their own health care facility, they can provide a referral that the individual can use to schedule a test at a site nearest to them. A referral and appointment are necessary.

The list is here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/frequently-asked-questions-about-covid-19#is-there-a-list-of-places-where-i-can-get-tested-for-covid-19-if-i-think-i-have-symptoms?>

Orders expediting the onboarding of health care volunteers

Last week, the Administration launched an initiative to recruit volunteer medical professionals to support hospitals as the Commonwealth continues to expand medical capacity. Since launching the initiative, more than 1,800 volunteers have already signed up, reflective of the Commonwealth's world-class health care workforce.

To support expedited onboarding of these volunteers, the Department of Public Health has issued an order authorizing the Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management to perform a CORI check on any volunteer who registered through the volunteer portal without a notarized CORI acknowledgement form. The Order requires any entity performing a CORI check pursuant to the Order to implement sufficient compensating controls to reasonably verify an individual's identity,

including inspection of a photographic form of government issued identification via teleconference.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/cori-notary-order>

Order on on-demand licensing and relicensing for health professionals

The Department of Public Health has issued an order designed to provide on-demand licensing and re-licensing for certain health care professionals. The Order expedites licensing for professionals with licenses in good standing in other states, and professionals who have allowed their Massachusetts licenses to expire within the past 10 years while in good standing. This order applies to a wide range of health professionals: registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, advanced practice registered nurse, dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistant, pharmacist, pharmacy technician, nursing home administrator, physician assistant, respiratory therapist, perfusionist, genetic counselor, community health worker and emergency medical technician.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-29-2020-maximizing-available-health-care-providers-order>

Order waiving certain regulations to expand capacity by transferring long-term care facility residents

The COVID-19 Response Command Center is working with long-term care facilities to establish dedicated skilled nursing facilities to care for individuals infected with COVID-19. The initiative will offer an alternative location where individuals who are stable but still need medical care can be transferred to recover, relieving pressure on hospitals and opening up hospital beds for the treatment of patients with the greatest medical need. The Administration has received federal approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for this initiative.

The Department of Public Health has issued an order waiving certain MassHealth regulations regarding the transfers and discharge of long-term care facility residents, for the limited purpose of safely transferring and discharging all residents living in a long-term care facility that is intended to be used as a designated COVID-19 facility.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/masshealth-moving-residents-order>

A letter to providers outlining the program is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-27-2020-long-term-care-facilities-letter>

Order extending financial relief to providers of critical health care and social services

Governor Baker issued an order providing the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) administrative flexibility to extend financial relief to providers of critical health care and social services that serve EOHHS clients, including members of MassHealth. The financial relief may be in the form of temporary rate adjustments, supplemental payments, and new rate and payment methodologies that reflect the modified ways services are being delivered. These measures will be subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Executive Office for

Administration and Finance. This will allow EOHHS to extend critical financial support to:

Providers that are facing extraordinary demand due to the COVID-19 emergency, while, at the same time, have lost significant revenue because they have had to cancel other procedures and appointments;

Providers that are necessary to keep vulnerable individuals safe in their homes or residences and out of more acute settings like hospitals; and

Human service providers that have been forced to respond to the unanticipated circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic by altering the way they deliver services and the hours and scope of these services.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-30-2020-hhs-rates-order>

Education Issues

Updated guidance on elementary and secondary school closures

The Baker-Polito Administration announced a three week suspension of all public and private elementary and secondary schools effective 3-17. School districts are still permitted to keep the buildings open for actions like getting food out to children who need it. Preschool and childcare services are not ordered to close, but are strongly urged to observe guidelines established by the Department of Public Health and the Department of Early Childhood Education.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-15-2020-school-closure-order/download>

Full guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education can be found here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/covid19.html>

Summary of recent Department of Elementary and Secondary guidance

DESE has provided a summary of its COVID-19 guidance.

Web pages related to special education services: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/covid19.html>

Web pages related to educator preparation programs: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/covid19.html>

Web pages related to college, career, and technical education:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=25973>

School meals: A link to Project Bread's School Closure Meal Site Finder (<https://meals4kids.org/summer>) is now on DESE's COVID-19 page: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/covid19.html> At this point, federal reimbursement is only available for meals served in areas where at least 50 percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunches. Districts that are not currently eligible for federal reimbursement can use the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Area Eligibility Mapper (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/areaeligibility>) to use census data to try to identify a location where they could serve meals and be reimbursed. Districts can also serve grab-and-go meals to eligible students even if those students make up less than 50 percent of a given school or district. However, those districts

are not currently eligible for federal reimbursement.

Academics: Students should be doing as much learning as possible while they are at home, and DESE is working to make this easier. Staff in the Center for Instructional Support have assembled a list of resources (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/ed-resources.html>) that districts can add to their own, and DESE is working with public broadcaster WGBH and its partner station WGBY to provide other resources.

Educators have free access to PBS LearningMedia (<https://mass.pbslearningmedia.org/>) and the stations' newly created online distance learning center (<https://www.wgbh.org/distance-learning-center>). In recognition of the fact that not every student has a computer and internet access, and in addition to existing programming, WGBH plans to expand its educational broadcasting from noon to 5:00 p.m. weekdays on the WORLD Channel. The WORLD Channel is a 24/7 WGBH channel that offers news and documentaries and which is now shifting some of its schedule to meet this urgent need. (More information on where to find the WORLD Channel on WGBH and WGBY is available online.) Additional guidance from DESE will be forthcoming.

Adult education: The Department has closed adult basic education and English for speakers of other languages programs, as well as post-secondary and workforce training programs that are taught in public school buildings, public colleges and universities, and community-based organizations. At this point, DESE hopes to reopen the adult education programs when schools reopen.

MCAS: The Department is exploring all options around this year's testing requirements. To date, DESE has postponed both the Grade 10 English language arts assessment scheduled to begin on March 24 and the opening of the grades 3-8 English language arts assessment window scheduled for March 30. The Department will keep districts informed of decisions related to the spring 2020 assessment schedule and the competency determination. There may be an opportunity for a one-year assessment and accountability waiver from the federal government, but even if that is granted, we would need legislative relief from our state legislature to waive the state law around the testing requirement.

Please be advised that MCAS-Alt portfolios do not need to be submitted by April 3, nor is it necessary to obtain a parent's signature that they have reviewed the portfolio prior to submission. The Department will contact schools at a later date regarding a new submission deadline.

Districts may still submit cohort appeals (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/>) for students in grade 12. For cohort appeals, use only the online application process. Do not submit paper-based appeals. A guide to the online application process is available for download. Please do not submit appeals for students in grades 10 or 11 at this time. Questions about this subject can be emailed to mcasappeals@doe.mass.edu.

Educator licensure: Governor Baker has issued an executive order extending licenses for certain licensed professionals (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/eo-on-license-registration-extension-dpl-opsi/download>), including licensed educators. The order states that a license that is "in good standing" as of March 18, 2020, and that has expired or will expire during the state of emergency, is now extended and will remain valid until 90 days after the end of the state of emergency. The

Department expects to issue guidance to implement the terms of the order.

Payments to hourly employees: Commissioner Riley is strongly recommending that school districts pay their hourly employees during the current emergency school closure. Like all of us, these employees need to follow public health directives and take care of themselves and their families. While they do so, school districts could ask them to continue their learning by reading educational articles, books, taking an online class or performing other tasks that could be a benefit to the school districts. Districts must be able to quickly resume providing services to students as soon as schools re-open, and in order to do that, they will need to have an available, ready work force, including hourly employees.

A link to DESE's COVID-19 webpage is here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/covid19.html>

DESE Guidance on remote learning

During this time, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is requesting that educators continue to develop and assemble high-quality educational materials to provide students with effective remote learning resources through the month of April. The Department is also creating a model for districts to use and modify in collaboration with local stakeholders to fit their school district's needs, and will continue to work with schools to identify best practices for implementing effective remote learning.

Remote learning encompasses a wide variety of learning methods, including both analog and online. While technology is an excellent tool, districts should also consider ways students can continue to learn offline. This could include exploring nature, activities to support students' local communities (with appropriate social distancing) and engaging in hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students' experiences.

Additionally, through a new partnership between DESE and [WGBH](#), educational resources will be posted on the [department's website](#), and middle and high school students can access [WGBH](#) and [WGBY](#) educational programming on [WGBH](#) and [WGBY](#) on the [WORLD](#) channel from noon to 5 p.m.

USDA reimbursements to schools operating as meal sites

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved DESE's request to waive the requirement that school meal sites must be located in areas where at least 50 percent of school lunch program participants are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Therefore, all school districts that are distributing meals during school closures related to COVID-19 and are focusing the distribution of these meals to children and teens in need of them are now eligible for USDA reimbursement.

Child Care

Updates and guidance on emergency childcare centers

Last week, the Commonwealth announced that effective Monday, March 23, all early education centers and family childcare providers will be closed. Starting Monday, selected sites will open to serve as emergency drop-in childcare services for families with no other options to continue going to work to ensure the safety, health, and

welfare of the Commonwealth's residents. Child Care is meant to be for those who must report to work. Outside of the obvious emergency responders and medical professionals, this includes critical service workers like grocery store employees. As of Friday, the Commonwealth had approved over 300 sites to start operations on Monday.

Map of Emergency Child Care sites: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?&mid=1IVpbXIBhvtFIntpePxkzEyUPDKYWTWys&ll=42.074357529137025%2C-71.89863047862093&z=8>

Zipcode search of Emergency Child Care sites: https://eeclead.force.com/EEC_ExemptEmergencyChildCare

Resources on emergency childcare program can be found here:

https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyParents#programEmergency

To inquire about exempt emergency child care programs, fill out the form linked here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfLfeCesZdBAUMFCfQ7wqS-xqhrY3nDzaZDBdbPUiro8Zyv2w/viewform>

The process for authorizing emergency exempt childcare is detailed here:

https://eeclead.force.com/resource/1584817342000/The_EECCP_Process

Local coverage in CC Times: <https://www.capecodtimes.com/news/20200322/cape-cod-facilities-offer-emergency-child-care>

DESE Guidance to school district regarding payments for contracted services

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education sent the below guidance to school district:

In response to questions I have received about payments while schools are closed, I am writing to provide further recommendations to districts relating to: (1) tuition payments for resident students enrolled in certain public school programs; (2) tuition payments for out-of-district day or residential special education programs; (3) payments for contracted special education related service providers; and (4) outsourced operational services, such as school transportation.

1) Tuition payments for collaboratives, non-residential vocational enrollments, recovery high schools, Horace Mann charter schools, and inter-district tuition agreements

Given the expectations that schools will continue to provide services to students even while physically closed and that Chapter 70 aid will continue to be distributed based on prior year enrollment, it is our expectation that districts and municipalities with resident students enrolled in other Massachusetts public schools will continue to make all required tuition payments. This includes tuition for:

- collaboratives,
- non-resident Chapter 74 vocational enrollments,
- recovery high schools;
- Horace Mann charter schools, and
- inter-district tuition agreements.

Cities and towns are also expected to pay assessments due to regional districts to which they belong.

Payments for Commonwealth charter school tuition, Commonwealth virtual school tuition, and inter-district school choice tuition will continue to be processed by DESE through DOR's monthly local aid distribution.

2) Tuition payments for out-of-district day or residential special education programs and "circuit breaker" reimbursement

It is our expectation that school districts will continue to provide tuition payments to day and residential special education programs to maintain this essential system capacity and promote continuity of service for students to the greatest extent possible. Most residential schools remain open, and day programs have agreed to continue providing learning opportunities and services to students remotely during this period. The tuition payments will be eligible for reimbursement under the circuit breaker program if they exceed the statutory threshold and are otherwise eligible.

3) Service payments for contracted special education-related service providers (e.g. external organizations and agencies that provide occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and other services to in-district students)

On March 21, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) released a supplemental fact sheet addressing the risk of COVID-19 while serving students with disabilities. In this recent guidance, USED indicates that districts should continue to provide special education services to students with disabilities to the extent feasible and consistent with public health obligations. Given the need to continue to provide some services, I recommend that districts work with providers to review and potentially amend the providers' scopes of service to ensure vendor contracts reflect the necessary requirements to get these services up and running. For instance, districts could incorporate distance learning services as well as professional learning to prepare contract staff for distance learning or other available means of providing services. The need for this ongoing work to serve students (and to prepare contracted staff to do so effectively) should enable providers to continue to bill districts for services rendered.

4) Outsourced operational services

In addition to guidance already issued by the federal Office of Management and Budget (M-20-11 and M-20-17), the version of the federal stimulus bill passed by the U.S. Senate on March 25, 2020 includes a provision that any state or school district that receives money from the Education Stabilization Fund established by the bill "shall to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to the coronavirus." That bill is scheduled to be voted on by the U.S. House of Representatives on March 27, 2020. To the extent consistent with that directive, we expect school districts to continue payments for outsourced operational services that are needed to ensure continuity of essential services when schools reopen. Such payments may be conditioned on negotiated changes to contracts in order to address unanticipated service needs during the state of emergency. These services include, but are not limited to, transportation, custodial, and food services, in addition to the day and residential special education programs noted above.

Social Distancing Guidelines

Updated Executive Order on large gatherings, restaurants, and on-premise food and beverage consumption

The Baker-Polito Administration issued an Executive Order to prohibit on-premise consumption of food or alcohol at restaurants, effective from 3-17 until 4-5.

Restaurants will be able to provide food for take out or delivery.

The Baker Polito also revised its Executive Order prohibiting large gatherings of over 250 people to prohibit gatherings of over 25 people.

The full Executive Order can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-15-2020-large-gatherings-25-and-restaurants-order/download>

Registry of Motor Vehicles

Massachusetts RMV announcements regarding transition to suspension hearings by phone and online reservation system for required In-person transactions

The Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) is announcing several additional measures being implemented to prioritize reducing customer volumes in physical locations and maintaining proper “social-distancing” under Governor Charlie Baker’s declaration of a State of Emergency:

- Appointment-Only Online Reservation System
 - Effective now, Tuesday, March 24, an appointment-only reservation system is being implemented for certain necessary and required in-person transactions at the RMV’s eight open and operating Service Centers. These essential transactions include certain Commercial Driving License (CDL) transactions and some new registrations. Appointment reservation times will be available on a rolling basis up to two business days in advance on www.Mass.Gov/RMV in the myRMV Online Service Center under “Make or Cancel a Reservation.” Customers who make an appointment will be sent a confirmation email that they should be prepared to show on arrival. The Milford and Wilmington RMV Service Centers will remain open to exclusively perform walk-in commercial transactions for CDLs and permits (CLPs), and CDL road tests continue to be administered.
- Suspension Hearings and Reinstatement Procedures
 - Effective Monday, March 23rd, the RMV implemented new protocols for suspension hearings. Applying for and initiating a suspension hearing to seek reinstatement will continue to require an in-person visit to an RMV Service Center, but the hearings are now being conducted by phone.
 - At this time, customers will not be able to request a hearing under the appointment-only reservation system outlined above. Some suspended customers may already be able to complete the reinstatement process and payment online if all other outstanding requirements have been satisfied by visiting www.Mass.Gov/RMV and selecting “Pay my Reinstatement Fees.”
 - Hearings are being conducted at Boston/Haymarket, Brockton, Fall River, Lawrence, Springfield and Worcester. Hearings at the Pittsfield

RMV occur weekly on Wednesdays and are scheduled to resume on March 25th. No hearings will be conducted in Plymouth. Chemical test refusal (CTR) hearings are only held at Boston/Haymarket.

- Customers arriving at these locations to request a hearing will be provided tickets on a limited first-come, first-served basis, depending on the availability of Hearings Officers at that location that day. Customers should bring copies of all necessary documents, depending on the type of suspension, to submit along with an application completed on-site. A Hearings Officer will call a customer directly to conduct their suspension hearing by phone.
- 60-Day Extension of CDL Medical Certificates
 - CDL Medical Certificates (Med Certs) that have expired or will expire after March 1st will have a 60-day extension applied to prevent license downgrades and elective medical visits, as well as alleviate demand on medical providers, during the State of Emergency.
- Suspending Issuance of New REAL IDs and Non-Commercial Learner's Permit Knowledge Exams
 - On March 23rd, the federal government announced there will be a delay of the October 2020 REAL ID compliance deadline. Effective March 25th and until April 7th, the RMV is also suspending the issuance of new REAL IDs and knowledge/written exams for non-commercial learner's permits, both of which are currently required, but non-essential, in-person transactions. As a reminder, all non-commercial Class D and M road tests for permit holders have already been suspended through April 6th. Renewals for standard driver's license and ID credentials can be performed online at www.Mass.Gov/RMV along with more than 40 other transactions that can be conducted online, over the phone, or by mail.
 - For information about available services and additional steps the RMV has taken under the State of Emergency declaration, including the extension of expiring licenses / permits and vehicle inspection stickers, please visit: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rmv-covid-19-information>.

Registry of Motor Vehicles further extends renewal deadlines

The RMV announced that effective April 1, 2020, all of the passenger plate registrations that have expired in March or will be expiring in April have been extended for 60 days. Registrations that expired in March have been extended until May 31st and registrations that expire in April have been extended until June 30th. Registration renewals can continue to be performed online at Mass.Gov/RMV during this time. Customers seeking to do so in-person will not be able to make an appointment and should delay their visit to a Service Center at this time.

In addition, the RMV recently has implemented key changes to service delivery and organizational protocols as follows:

- Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the RMV has implemented a strict no walk-in policy at a limited number of Service Centers that remain open to the general public. Service for necessary in-person transactions is available by

appointment only. Customers should visit [Mass.Gov/RMV](https://www.mass.gov/rmv) to make a reservation at an open Service Center or find information on over 40 transactions that can be conducted online, by phone, or by mail.

- All Driver's Licenses, ID cards, and Learner's Permits, including Commercial Licenses & Permits, that have expired or are expiring between March 1, 2020 and April 30, 2020, have had a 60-day extension applied to the current expiration date and do not need to be renewed at this time. This does not apply to customers whose end of stay in the United States is the same as the expiration date on their Driver's License, ID card, or Learner's Permit. CDL Medical Certificates that expire on or after March 1st until April 30th will be extended until June 30th to prevent license downgrades and elective medical visits, as well as alleviate demand on medical providers.
- The annual motor vehicle safety and emissions inspection stickers that expire on March 31 and April 30 have been extended 60 days and all motorcycle inspection stickers originally set to expire on May 31 must be inspected by June 30. The RMV is also extending the time during which newly registered vehicles must be inspected based on the purchase date.
- In addition, the RMV has suspended all road tests through April 12th. Class D and M Learner's Permits knowledge exams have been suspended indefinitely. Commercial Learner's Permit tests are available to be taken at the Milford and Wilmington RMV Service Centers during normal business hours and commercial road tests continue to occur.

For details on these extensions and additional information on RMV services and the RMV's response to COVID-19, visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rmv-covid-19-information>

Other Information

Department of Agricultural Resources guidance for food growers

On March 18, the Department of Agriculture Resources issued guidance for food producers and farmers markets. The full guidance from MDAR can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/mdar-covid-19-fruit-and-vegetable-memo/download>

MDAR has created a website with all COVID-19 resources relevant to agriculture. MDAR's COVID-19 website is here: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/covid-19-resources-for-agriculture>

Department of Environmental Protection order to ensure continuity of waste and recycling collection

The Baker Administration announced the issuance of an emergency order to ensure that intrastate waste and recycling collection and disposal will continue uninterrupted during the COVID-19 emergency. Due to the essential nature of these services and anticipated impacts due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Administration's order provides relief from state and federal requirements that govern the hours of service allowed for commercial vehicle operators involved in waste and recycling transportation and collection, while maintaining important safety protections and measures.

The Administration's action will help support continuity of waste and recycling operations by helping to ensure availability of adequate staffing resources

throughout this emergency, and is consistent with the State of Emergency declared by Governor Charlie Baker on Tuesday, March 10, 2020. The order will remain in effect until April 12, 2020 unless the Administration determines otherwise.

Department of Public Utilities order temporarily prohibiting utility shutoffs

The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) issued an order prohibiting investor-owned utility companies from shutting off gas, electric, and water utility service to any customers for failure to pay a bill or a portion of a bill until the State of Emergency is lifted or the DPU determines otherwise. The announcement builds upon the DPU's March 13 moratorium (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-shutoff-moratorium-eversource-and-national-grid/download>) requesting utility companies refrain from shutting off gas and electric service to residents across the Commonwealth. The new order will expand the moratorium to include any investor-owned utility customers, including industrial, commercial, and small business customers, during the State of Emergency.

The Order also prohibits investor-owned utility companies from sending communications that threaten to shut off gas, electric, or water service to any of their customers for failure to pay a bill or any portion of a bill the Companies issued to a customer. Any company that fails to comply with these orders may be assessed penalties of up to \$1 million per violation.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/chairs-1st-set-of-orders-under-c-25-s-4b-re-covid-19/download>

Department of Conservation and Recreation announces temporary closure of state parks, athletic fields and courts

DCR has temporarily closed athletic fields and courts, such as basketball, tennis, handball, pickle ball, and bocce, throughout the state parks system effective today, March 24, 2020 until Tuesday, April 7, 2020, at which time the closure will be reassessed. Importantly, all state parks across the Commonwealth remain open and available for the public to visit. DCR reminds residents and visitors to avoid gathering in groups of ten or more people, maintain social distancing, and practice healthy personal hygiene to stop the spread of the virus.

Similarly, DCR has extended the closure of agency-owned ice rinks, visitor centers, campgrounds, playgrounds, fitness areas, and bathroom facilities until Tuesday, April 7, 2020, which will also be reassessed at that time. The temporary extension of the closure of these facilities is consistent with an emergency order issued by Governor Charlie Baker on Monday, March 24, 2020.

Furthermore, the agency will be removing trash receptacles throughout the state parks system to aid in the prevention of spreading COVID-19. DCR asks that all visitors of state parks adhere to a "carry in, carry out" trash policy during this public health emergency, and urges visitors to do their part to help protect our shared natural resources by leaving no trace and taking any trash with them.

DCR has developed a Massachusetts State Parks COVID-19 webpage, which centralizes COVID-19 updates that impact the state parks system, and the webpage can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-state-parks-covid-19-update>

Department of Environmental Protection statement on pharmacy and grocery store order

Sections of today's Executive Order will assist our essential businesses, such as pharmacies and grocery stores, by prohibiting the use of reusable checkout bags for the duration of the state of emergency, as a precautionary measure. Essential businesses continuing to operate during this time, including those subject to local bans on single use plastic bags, may choose to use recyclable paper bags, compostable plastic bags or single-use plastic bags. They may not charge customers a fee for these bags.

As you know, plastic bags and plastic wrap should not be included with common household recycling. Given the precautions being taken, we ask that plastic bags be held onto at this time for future recycling at a drop-off location, which you can find here: <https://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org/>.

Please visit www.RecycleSmartma.org for tips on and answers to recycling questions.

Order on waste haulers to ensure the continuity of recycling services

The Department of Environmental Protection issued an order relating to waste haulers to ensure the continuity of recycling services during the COVID-19 crisis.

The full order is here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-issues-order-to-ensure-continuity-of-waste-and-recycling>

Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing tool for COVID-19

MCDHH has created a visual tool to help hospital staff, medical personnel, first responders, and service providers communicate with hard of hearing and Deaf individuals and patients during this unprecedented crisis. The tool is here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/covid-19-card>

EOEEA & EOHED order on permits not expiring or lapsing

Governor Baker issued an emergency order that provides that a permit will not expire or lapse during the state of emergency for most permits issued by agencies within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. The order also pauses deadlines for these agencies to decide or hold hearings on permit applications. The clock on those deadlines will resume 45 days after the end of the emergency. It also ensures that no permit is automatically issued because an agency is unable to make a decision on a permit application during the emergency.

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