

Coronavirus resources for local government leaders

Governments, agencies and communities around the globe are currently responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China in December.

The virus is named “SARS-CoV-2,” and the disease it causes is “coronavirus disease 2019,” commonly known as COVID-19.

Because communities and municipal leaders are often on the front lines in emergency situations, the following are some helpful resources to inform local leaders and help them respond.

- [Massachusetts Department of Public Health – Information on the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) information portal](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Exposure in Travel-Associated or Community Settings](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance and Recommendations](#) – for various audiences, including schools, employers, and EMS and 911 Public Safety Answering Points, provided by Mass. DPH, including information from U.S. CDC
- [Governor Baker and State Health Officials Discuss Community Preparedness with Health Care, Infectious Disease Experts and Front Line Leaders](#) (March 4)
- [Massachusetts Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management](#) – Know Plan Prepare
- [Local Emergency Management Planning Guidance](#) from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
- [Massachusetts Association of Health Boards](#)

Examples of local outreach, preparedness and response

- [City of Somerville Novel Coronavirus Preparedness and Information](#)
- [Message from the Bedford Board of Health on Coronavirus and Local Preparedness](#)
- [City of Newton public information on COVID-19 outbreak and local preparedness](#)

Additional information

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports that the risk of COVID-19 to the general public in Massachusetts remains low.

In response to the coronavirus outbreak, the DPH has:

- Established an Incident Command Structure to facilitate regular dissemination of information from federal and state partners to statewide stakeholders
- Launched a new website that provides up-to-date information on the status of novel coronavirus for all residents (www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus)

- Developed and disseminated clinical advisories to all Massachusetts health care providers and issued guidance to hospitals, health systems and Emergency Medical Services
- Scheduled calls with other key health care partners including local boards of health

On Feb. 28, the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory received approval to begin testing patients for COVID-19, in accordance with guidance from the U.S. CDC. Only those who are experiencing flu-like symptoms and have recently traveled to China or have had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 should be tested, according to the DPH.

Those who have traveled to affected areas within the past 21 days are advised to contact their local board of health or health department. Those who have recently traveled to affected areas and are experiencing lower respiratory illness symptoms, such as, but not limited to, fever, cough, and shortness of breath, are advised to also contact their health care provider immediately.

Clinicians who have patients they think may have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should contact the DPH via the 24/7 EPI line (617-983-6800).

Individuals who are in voluntary self-quarantine continue to be monitored by their local boards of health.

Currently, there is no vaccine available to prevent COVID-19 and no medication available to treat the disease. Treatment is supportive care and relief of symptoms.

Local officials are encouraged to remind residents and businesses of the following best practices to avoid exposure to the virus:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at a time.
- Using alcohol-based hand rubs and gels.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoid sharing food utensils, containers and other personal items.

Those who have any cold or flu symptoms can help others by:

- Staying home when you are sick.
- Covering your cough or sneezes.
- Wearing a mask if you leave home and have a cough.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, and this information may change as updates are available from the DPH and U.S. CDC.