

# Norfolk County-8 Coalition

MDPH/LBOH WEBINAR 12/29/2020



## Inter-agency Staff on the Webinar

- Jana Ferguson, Assistant Commissioner, DPH
- Ron O'Connor, Office of Local and Regional Health
- Dr. Catherine Brown, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences
- Donna Quinn, Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management
- Michael Flanagan and Mary Dozois, Department of Labor Standards
- Helene Bettencourt, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Cheryl Sbarra, Massachusetts Association of Health Boards
- Chief Edward Dunne, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association
- John Welch, Community Tracing Collaborative

### **Announcements:**

***Move-in guidance for colleges:*** All higher education institutions and boarding schools should minimize the presence of staff and faculty on their campuses in keeping with these new restrictions (COVID order No. 59) and follow all continuing mandatory safety standards for workplaces, and all other applicable aspects of the higher education COVID-19 Control Plan. Refrain from bringing any students back to campus until Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, including gradual and scheduled move-ins over the weekend of January 16-17, if necessary. This does not apply to students who are living on campus right now—they do not need to leave and then come back. Institutions should notify their LBOH of their plans. Guidance will be sent to LBOH after the webinar.

***SARS-CoV-2 variants:*** New variant strain of Coronavirus that contains a series of mutations—discovered in UK (southeastern part). It does seem to spread more easily between people, compared to the original strain due to one mutation, D614G. In the lab, G614 variants propagate more quickly in human respiratory epithelial cells, out-competing D614 viruses. There is also evidence that the G614 variant spreads more quickly than viruses without the mutation. Coronavirus is an RNA virus. RNA viruses in general mutate rapidly, good example is the flu. Mutates constantly, to the extent that it results in the need of new vaccines every year. Right now, the UK variant does not indicate that it's any more dangerous. Concerns with the mutation are 1) ability to evade detection through specific diagnostic tests. This UK variant does create a different result pattern in one of the PCR tests used in the US. It doesn't make it

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negative, but it does create a different result pattern. Labs are currently looking at this. 2) will the vaccine still work? Polyclonal vaccine produces antibodies that target several spikes of the COVID-19 virus, and none of the mutations identified alter the structure of the spike protein to evade immunity induced by vaccines or by natural infection. Public health consensus—the UK variant is most likely already in the US, but we need to focus on it being an RNA virus, and that it needs to be watched over next several years to see how much this mutates and if new vaccines need to be created.

**Q:** Could you get the new variant even if you had COVID-19?

**A:** We don't really know the answer right now. We also don't know how frequently you can get the same variant of COVID-19. When your body is infected it creates polyclonal antibodies. It is unlikely that this virus has varied enough to not respond to polyclonal antibodies.

**CARES Act Extension:** Deadline for spending CARES Act money is extended until December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Expenses must meet at least 3 major statutory conditions

- 1) Necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19
- 2) Expenses must be budgeted as of March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- 3) Expenses must be incurred during the covered period beginning March 1, 2020 and ending December 31, 2021.

**First Responder Vaccine Planning:** Over the last week or two getting information from communities interested in providing first responder vaccine clinics (ability to vaccinate over 200 first responders). Application deadline to participate in this was last Wednesday. During the weekend, we tried to pull together where we have coverage around the state. Expectation is that DPH could start making vaccine available to first responder clinics/mass vaccination clinics (being run by the state, right now looking at sites at the Big E, Topsfield Fair, Gillette Stadium) by the latter part of the week of January 4<sup>th</sup>. The launch date for first responder vaccinations is January 11<sup>th</sup>. Need to coordinate with MIIS to make sure your numbers are correct. We will have plans in place in case you overorder. Anticipating a week or so worth of vaccine being delivered to you. Right now, eligible vaccine recipients are COVID-19 facing healthcare workers, this does include vaccinators and other staff who could be exposed to incoming patients for vaccination clinics. Doesn't only need to be a clinical person. If someone is doing registration, they are also eligible. Also includes people who are doing testing. Additionally, DPH is creating a webpage that will help first responders identify vaccination clinics. Details will include how to sign up/make an appointment.

**Q:** Where will the vaccine be shipped to?

**A:** The site address used in MIIS.

**Q:** If we have left over vaccines, why can't we go on to the next group?

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**A:** It creates a lot of frustration when people hear that other communities are vaccinating another group of people and “line jumping”. You can continue to share vaccines with others in coordination with MIIS, but only if the other community targets the group the state is focused on.

**Q:** When are public health personnel eligible for vaccination?

**A:** If you have staff working at the clinic, you can do them before the clinic or during.

Other public health workers not at the clinic are eligible in Phase 2.

**Q:** Dispatchers and campus police (colleges/schools)?

**A:** Campus police are first responders and can be vaccinated as police. The ID they need to have is an employee ID or an ID from the Chief of Police Association. Regarding dispatchers, they are considered part of Phase 3, general population. If people have other questions about vaccination prioritization, direct them to [covid-19-vaccine-plan-MA@mass.gov](mailto:covid-19-vaccine-plan-MA@mass.gov)

**CTC:** On Christmas we did not receive a transfer of cases from MAVEN to CTC, so the past few days is about catching up with cases and adapting to changes in testing schedules. We are fully staffed to manage a large number of cases, really no backlogs happening from day-to-day. Still in the position to make 6 phone calls in the course of 3 days to reach individuals. Prioritization of care resource coordination, lowest on priority are people who are requesting Christmas tree delivery. Backlogs with resource coordinators have been cleared and able to reach out within 24 hours of receiving the request.

### **Questions from emails:**

**Q:** Using igloos for outdoor dining? With capacity limits with limiting restaurants to 25%, how do igloos factor into this?

**A:** The 25% applies to indoor dining room which is a fixed area, and the igloos don't affect that. Igloos expand this for additional seating, do count for indoor dining, but because these igloos can only contain one table and 6 people, you can use almost as many as you want to increase patrons. They are subject to another indoor dining requirements, wearing masks, 6 people/table, 90 min limit. Subject to 25% reduction? No, since the igloos are only for one table, in this case it is limited to number of people at a table, capped at 6. If it's a larger structure that holds many tables, then it would be capped at 25%.

**Q:** If someone has received the vaccine, and are later identified as a close contact, should they be tested?

**A:** The vaccine does not make you test positive on the PCR or antigen test. It gives you antibodies, so you could be serologically positive. If you received the first and second vaccine, and are considered a close contact later, you still need to be tested. No vaccine is 100% effective.

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**Q:** Recommendations for people who have had COVID-19 in the last 90 days.

**A:** No contraindication of getting vaccinated if you've had COVID-19. If you've recently had COVID-19, and you're in a group that's currently getting vaccinated, you can still get vaccinated. We are not advising people to not get vaccinated.

### **Questions from Q&A chat box not answered aloud:**

michael mendez - 2:56 PM

**Q:** What sector specific standards would a stand alone psychiatrist office fall under? -

-Mike Coughlin - 2:57 PM

**A:** <https://www.mass.gov/lists/reopening-health-and-human-services-in-massachusetts>

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Michael Hugo - 3:01 PM

**Q:** Is a Funeral Home (Wake) subject to the Place of Worship or the indoor event standard? -

-Mike Coughlin - 3:01 PM

**A:** Wakes are addressed in the Places of Worship standards

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Jill Conselino - 3:07 PM

**Q:** Has there been any updates, or will there be any updates with relation to high school sports guidance and youth sports guidance? -

-Mike Coughlin - 3:07 PM

**A:** Last updates to sports from EEA were issued on December 13.

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Jill Conselino - 3:08 PM

**Q:** so there are not any additional restrictions now with the new rollbacks that started 12/26? -

-Mike Coughlin - 3:09 PM

**A:** Not for youth and adult sports, no

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MaryAnn OConnor - 3:14 PM

**Q:** I'm being told by dance studio that they heard from State and Dance Classes and Dance Practice are to use EEA Youth and Amateur Sports Classes. And to not cut to 25% but stay at 40% capacity with 6ft distancing. Is that correct? -

-Mike Coughlin - 3:18 PM

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**A:** Dance facilities are addressed in the youth and adult sports guidance and capacity is still 40%

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Diane Passafaro - 3:19 PM

**Q:** What sector specific standard do Animal Hospitals fall under?-

-Mike Coughlin - 3:27 PM

**A:** this is the only posted information regarding veterinary services on Mass.gov:

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

-Donna Quinn - 3:28 PM

**A:** We are reviewing them each day and trying to respond as quickly as possible

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Ruth Clay - 3:26 PM

**Q:** A number of us have been sending questions to the vaccine e-mail. Where and when will be find answers?-

-Mike Coughlin - 3:32 PM

**A:** <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-covid-19-vaccine-information>;

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/when-can-i-get-the-covid-19-vaccine>

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Douglas Telling - 3:36 PM

**Q:** Are EMT's considered first responders?

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-Mike Coughlin - 3:38 PM

**A:** yes

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Mark Oram - 3:27 PM

**Q:** Many had attempted to spend down the funding by December 31, 2020. Is there any discussion on additional funding based on the deadline moving to December 31, 2021?-

-Jana Ferguson - 3:42 PM

**A:** This will depend on whether the Federal Govt. makes more CARES Act money available for states and local govt to apply for.

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Jessica Tracy - 3:51 PM

**Q:** What about Animal Control Officers? -

-Mike Coughlin - 3:53 PM

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A: Covid-19-vaccine-plan-ma@mass.gov

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John Garside - 3:07 PM

**Q:** so a private gathering in a back yard that is in a tent should be considered indoors or outdoors? limited to 10 or 25?-

-Jana Ferguson - 3:55 PM

**A:** Private outdoors are at 25. If all the tent sides are down, the risk is higher and so the limit is lower at 10

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Mary Connolly - 3:43 PM

**Q:** Who do we reach out to check on the status of our "plan" submitted?-

-Jana Ferguson - 3:58 PM

**A:** Please send me an email [jana.ferguson@mass.gov](mailto:jana.ferguson@mass.gov)