

Norfolk County-8 Coalition

MDPH/LBOH Webinar 3/16/2021



Inter-agency Staff on the Webinar

- Jana Ferguson, Assistant Commissioner, DPH
- Ron O'Connor, Office of Local and Regional Health, DPH
- Dr. Catherine Brown, Glynnis LaRosa and Laurie A. Courtney, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences, DPH
- Donna Quinn and Mary Clark, Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management, DPH
- Michael Flanagan and Adam Kinney, Department of Labor Standards
- Helene Bettencourt, Anne Gilligan, and Anne Marie Stronach, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Dr. John Welch, Community Tracing Collaborative
- Cheryl Sbarra, Massachusetts Association of Health Boards
- Chief Edward Dunne, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association
- Jeff Farnsworth, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Announcements:

DESE Technical Assistance to support in-person learning: Return to full-time, in-person school five days per week would proceed in three phases. This does not preclude school districts who are already bringing their students back.

Phase 1: Elementary School (Grades K-5) on April 5th

Phase 2: Middle School (Grades 6-8) on April 28th

Phase 3: High School (Grades 9-12) to be announced in April

Timelines will be determined in consultation with medical experts and state health officials.

Parents will still have a choice for their children to learn remotely through the end of this school year. For schools not able to meet the deadlines, there are waivers available.

Some waiver examples include:

-Districts that have been primarily in a fully remote model all year to take a more incremental approach (for instance, seeking first to return in a hybrid model (80% of our schools are in this model), before proceeding to full in-person instruction later this school year.

-Schools that operate with a grades K-4 configuration with grade 5 in another school building. Waiver can be used to delay implementation for grade 5 until the middle school phase begins.

-In very limited circumstances, waivers may be considered for operational constraints and feasibility issues, on a temporary basis.

-Other requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Waiver support: Contact SLTsupport@mass.gov for questions or requests for calls. Office hours will be held daily via Zoom (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6327665744>) at least through March 22nd at 10am-11am and 2pm-3pm. Individualized phone calls will be accommodated as necessary. Districts will receive a confirmation email with a DESE point of contact when we

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receive the request for the call. Additional details about the waiver process on p. 11-13 in the "[Guidance on In-person Learning and Student Learning Time Requirements](#)".

DESE support includes:

-*Guidance documents:* include detailed requirements and implementation recommendations for returning to in-person school.

-*DESE COVID-19 operations help center:* available for individual consultations with districts and schools facing challenges with implementation, including optimization of physical space. This is technical assistance and support team, not compliance monitoring. Best for schools having operational issues trying to shift to in-person model. DESE support team members include school nutrition, facilities, and program staff.

-*Staffing supports:* districts can take advantage of several opportunities to hire additional staff to support an in-person return including emergency license opportunities, DCS database partnership for substitutes, and the high school internship program.

-*Funding:* significant funds to support this work, including \$194.4M in [ESSER I](#) and \$740M in ESSER II. These funds allow for the Title 1 formula to support our neediest districts. Additionally, \$182M in school reopening grants were issued last year.

Additional information: New installment of [FAQs](#) as of yesterday about using plexiglass dividers at lunch to space students less than 6 ft apart, how should schools and districts plan to provide educational services during summer 2021, and can students exchange books at school libraries.

Q: Does regular testing occur in any schools who have reduced spacing to 3ft, any evidence of increased transmission?

A: We don't have the answer to this right now without looking into it, but 45 districts using less than 6 ft in schools have been operating successfully.

Q: Social distancing requirement at recess?

A: Recess question will be addressed at next week's FAQ. Currently sitting with the medical community.

Q: Guidance for commencement and proms?

A: On the way.

Vaccine update, public data reporting on MA as of 3/15: MA ranks #1 for first doses administered per capita amongst states with 5M people or more (Bloomberg); #1 for total doses administered (1st and 2nd doses) per capita amongst the states with 5M people (CDC); #9 for total doses (1st and 2nd) per capita (CDC); #8 for first doses administered per capita amongst all states (Bloomberg).

Other updates: Homebound populations, Google Survey sent out to decide how you would like to proceed with homebound populations was due March 12th. Responses around the state have been split between both options, but larger cities are going towards option 2—using the state's in-home vaccination program. The 1-800 call number is not up yet. By next week this will be available. For those who opted for option 1 (homebound vaccinations being hosted by LBOH)

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no J&J vaccine yet to support these efforts. More information to come. We mentioned the start date to be 3/22 but this is to start the intake process (pulling together a list of individuals who might be classified as homebound), not vaccinate. Not enough vaccine right now.

Lots of people had questions about FEMA reimbursements, there will be a FEMA rep at the next LBOH call.

Questions from Q&A answered out loud:

Q: Variants—dramatic increase in B.1.1.7 variants? Any indication on how fast this variant is increasing?

A: B.1.1.7 is increasing, but because we are not testing a surveillance set of samples every week there isn't a way to quantify how rapidly it's increasing, but it's definitely on the increase. Today we reported the first case of the P.1 variant in MA. At this time, 213 cases of B.1.1.7 and 6 cases of B.1.351. B.1.1.7 is increasing across the board, but the other two have not seem to have taken off.

Q: Large capacity venues (5k or more people)—what is meant by opening to the public? If a college stadium is open, can it also be used for group activities for students?

A: In order to open, they need to submit a [safety plan to DPH](#), and it needs to be approved before opening. There is no restriction as to what type of activity can occur.

Q: Any exception for school offices in regard to 50% occupancy requirement?

A: DESE—in school setting, you are exempt from office space, however we encouraged schools to keep 6ft distancing and keep the occupancy of these areas down as much as possible. DLS—this is consistent with our standards as well.

Q: Pregnancy and the vaccine?

A: They can be vaccinated if they fit in any of the groups that qualify for vaccination to date, also great [ACOG resources](#). Also on [CDC website](#). Always have them refer to their physician.

Q: New guidance about quarantining?

A: Just updated last week on [mass.gov](#). Basically, if you've had COVID-19 in the last 90 days, and you are exposed, you do not have to quarantine. If you completed a vaccine series, and you are exposed, you do not need to quarantine. This is only for people who are asymptomatic. If you are symptomatic, you need to seek medical attention and quarantine until your test result.

Q: Can an antigen test be used to confirm release of quarantine? Implications of case classifications with antigen tests? Sharing information with First Responders?

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A: Can use any PCR test or BinaxNOW antigen test. Any antigen test result is only ever a probable case, we expect them to be treated as cases, but the national surveillance case definition treats positive antigen tests as probable cases. These are not included in your daily case counts, percent positivity/town status. First responders should always proceed with caution, expecting whoever they will interact with has COVID-19.

Q: Is there a difference in quarantine periods after vaccination if a variant is involved?

A: No

Q: People who have been exposed/vaccinated, can they be asked to provide documentation by their employer/contact tracers/schools, who can ask for this proof?

A: Legally, it goes back to Jacobson v. Massachusetts, where the law in Cambridge required everyone to get vaccinated with smallpox vaccine. It was upheld as legal, however when you look at how the masking policy has been received across the country it is doubtful that there will be a federal law that requires everyone to provide proof that they've been vaccinated. It might be a legal thing to do, but politically, is this going to create more problems than it solves? MAHB will put together a memo on this, but it's controversial.

Questions from Q&A not answered out loud:

-13396137120 Crowley - 3:00 PM

Q: Can you review the guidance for the 90 grace period after a documented infection? Do we count from the last day of isolation? Also, will there be a similar period after the second vaccine is received?-

-Laurie Courtney - 3:04 PM

A: I believe that you are referring to the 'grace period' from -

-Laurie Courtney - 3:07 PM

A: Sorry - see the updated guidance at <https://www.mass.gov/guidance/information-and-guidance-for-persons-in-quarantine-due-to-covid-19> -

-Laurie Courtney - 3:08 PM

A: individuals who had COVID-19 in the last 90 days (from day of symptom onset or day of first positive test if asymptomatic), AND individuals who have received either two doses of the Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines -

-Laurie Courtney - 3:08 PM

A: or a single dose of the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, at least 14 days ago, are not required to quarantine following an exposure.

-Carol Mondello - 2:56 PM

Q: Question about holding a Job Fair- if it was at somewhere like our high school field house- could we go by the 100 person capacity?

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-Michael Flanagan - 3:05 PM

A: Yes, it would be an event and need to follow those standards.

-Susan B Avallone - 3:05 PM

Q: I have people telling me that some of the young women who are childbearing will not get vaccine. Is there a link you can direct me to for education materials I can share?-

-Laurie Courtney - 3:12 PM

A: Suggest they speak with their provider. Also see the CDC site at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>-

-Laurie Courtney - 3:13 PM

A: Also see ACOG, and their doc: <https://www.acog.org/-/media/project/acog/acogorg/files/pdfs/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/covid-19-vaccination-site-recommendations.pdf>-

-Karen Young - 3:20 PM

Q: Any updated guidance for PE? -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:34 PM

A: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/supplement/additional-safety-guide.docx>-

-Teresa Riley-Singh - 3:29 PM

Q: do the state sites, i.e. Danvers, Foxboro, etc., offer mobile services (to homebound residents) as of now? -

-Jana Ferguson - 3:35 PM

A: No, the vaccination sites are not doing this. We will have a vendor selected that will work independently of the mass vax sites.

-karen regan - 3:29 PM

Q: Will there be a change in the 6 foot distance requirement when contact tracing if students return at 3 feet?-

-Jana Ferguson - 3:35 PM

A: No, this will stay 6 ft.-

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-valerie Nelson - 3:40 PM

Q: If you want to use a stadium for other events/gatherings, but no spectators, would that also need a plan submitted? Thinking that these have large, outdoor spaces that may be good to utilize with proper protections.-

-Michael Flanagan - 3:42 PM

A: Yes, any space with capacity greater than 5000 is required to submit a plan to open and hold events.-

Jamie Terry - 3:40 PM

Q: Hey Michael, Would a large event fall into the safety plan submittal as well?-

-Michael Flanagan - 3:43 PM

A: Yes, large event venues are not limited to sporting facilities. The requirements would also apply to convention halls and other such settings.-

-Michael Hugo - 3:20 PM

Q: Is there a written exception to the 50% Office Occupancy for school staff in offices? Looking for it in DESE Documents...-

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:43 PM

A: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/>-

Cathryn Hampson - 3:40 PM

Q: DESE guidance allows for students to do small group work for 15-10 minutes facing each other. Would these students be quarantined if one ended up positive? -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:47 PM

A: DESE will continue to follow close contact protocols.

-Jamie Terry - 3:45 PM

Q: ok I'm asking again in the view of the Brimfield Flea Market.. the show promoters are strongly pressing for an answer on if they can hold the May market.-

-Michael Flanagan - 3:54 PM

A: Flea markets are considered retail and need to follow those requirements.-