

Norfolk County-8 Coalition

MDPH/LBOH Webinar 4/13/2021



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
- Cheryl Sbarra, Massachusetts Association of Health Boards
- Chief Edward Dunne, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association
- Jeff Farnsworth, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
- Dr. John Welch, Community Tracing Collaborative
- Sean Cronin and Heath Fahle, Executive Office for Administration and Finance

Announcements:

J&J vaccine: CDC and FDA issued a pause in J&J vaccine administration due to blood clot reports, very rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals receiving the vaccine—Cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) along with low platelet counts. In addition, they find that normal blood clotting medication, such as heparin, is not appropriate in these cases. This is why they need to do more research. 6 reported cases (none in MA) had symptoms 6-13 days post vaccination, all in women. [Symptoms include](#) severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath. FDA reported (on 4/12) that 6.8M doses administered, and 184,034 doses have been administered in MA. Doses of J&J delivered today, you might have received a shipment of them, continue proper cold chain storage. If you received it, mark “do not use, awaiting guidance”. Future deliveries will be held pending further guidance from MDPH and CDC. CDC will convene a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on Wednesday to further review these cases and assess their potential significance. FDA will review that analysis as it also investigates. Individuals who have questions about upcoming scheduled appointments for a J&J vaccine are being directed to contact the provider where they have the appointment. Individuals who have received J&J vaccine and have concerns are being asked to contact their health care providers.

Q: Blood clot cause death or disease?

A: Of the 6 cases, 1 patient died.

Q: Does this pause the homebound program?

A: Yes. No timeline on how long this will take or what the federal government will decide. We have heard “matter of days” in a statement from the FDA.

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CTC: Quite busy, we won't be reducing any of our staff this month or in May.

Also, in the final stages of finalizing a contract with the Command Center to extend until September. Caseload is meeting our capacity, each day we are reaching out to the cases that are sent to us without time to spare. We are moving in and out of prioritizing cases with single text messages and telephone calls. Other cases in a more infectious period, we are doing more outreach to them, but this honestly changes per hour. Overall, no backlog like we experienced in the fall.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): 4 eligible uses—1) response to the public health emergency or its negative economic consequences; 2) provision of premium pay to eligible workers—could be public employees, non-profit, private entity such as a grocery worker (as designated by the local chief municipal official, amount[s] of up to [\\$13 per hour that is paid to an eligible worker, in addition to wages or remuneration the eligible worker otherwise receives, for all work performed by the eligible worker during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Such amount may not exceed \\$25,000 with respect to any single eligible worker](#)); 3) revenue replacement (relative to fiscal 2019 local revenue figures). US Dept. of Treasury will need to provide better definitions on how to calculate this need. If the definition for how to calculate revenue replacement is too narrow, this may have little impact; 4) investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. \$350B allocation of resources for state and local government to support COVID-19 response and recovery. [\\$3.4B for Massachusetts to spread across cities and towns](#). Statute mandates that these payments be split in 2 tranches (50% upfront, 50% of allocation not less than 12 months after receiving the first payment). First payment will be paid to the Commonwealth and they will distribute to cities and towns, should be coming within 60 days of the enactment of legislation. The commonwealth has 30 days to pay out to cities and towns. Statutory prohibitions—not able to use the funds to support pension systems or offset tax reduction at the state level—municipalities might be able to do this, but TBD. Funds are more flexible than CARES Act, have a longer time horizon, March 2021 to December 2024, more time to deploy these resources, still lots of guidance and definitions necessary from US Dept. of Treasury.

Q: Premium pay, when will guidance come out about what this means?

A: US Dept. of Treasury is the federal administering agency. Looking forward to them publishing program guidance and how they're interpreting the various provisions of the statute, including premium pay and how they'll regulate the specifics of this type of spending. If we use history as a guide, as last year's CARES Act was signed into law, US Treasury released guidance about a month after legislation was signed into law. This new legislation is a little broader and offers both more leeway but more need for treasury to offer definition and guidance. Won't be surprised if it comes out in the next week or two, but also wouldn't be surprised if it takes another 4 weeks.

Q: How to access funds and what are appropriate expenditures for the funds?

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A: Wait for guidance.

Q: Will technical assistance be available to support municipalities or organizations receive funds?

A: We expect similar support as provided during the CARES Act. Once information is released, we will send this out to our local partners.

Q: Different from the grants sent to the 20 equity communities?

A: Different processes, that came from the CDC.

Q: Going to be direct payments to municipalities? Do you know what threshold they're using for how to determine payment to the municipality?

A: If your municipality has a population of more than 50k people, US treasury will pay you directly.

Dr. Brown updates: Not a lot new about the variants since last meeting. Variants of concern are still being identified through two mechanisms: 1) random sampling happening at the large national laboratories contracted by CDC to do sequencing for community prevalence 2) at the local level, particularly interested in certain type of events, reinfections or individuals who are fully vaccinated and subsequently developed COVID-19. Trying to collect specimens for sequencing from these cases. CDC has expanded the number of national labs they contracted with, this increased the number of specimens that are being sequenced. The Broad Institute that has been doing sequencing for MA was doing it at a small scale but got their high throughput system up and running. They have scaled up dramatically, 700 specimens last week, doing twice that this week. Doing almost 400 specimens a day starting next week. This will increase amount of data we have available to understand what's happening. In terms of variants themselves, no new or shocking information about them. CDC stopped reporting on individual case counts of variants as of Monday, and switched to estimated prevalence of the different variants by jurisdiction. They estimated that by the end of March (sequencing data is always a couple weeks out of date) almost 30% of MA cases are probably related to the B.1.1.7 variant, 3.9% related to California variant, 3.1% related to P.1. Almost 0% related to B.1.3.51. 64% of circulating viruses do not belong to these variants of concern. Vaccine breakthrough cases, related to variants or not? Hard to answer this question right now because data not very solid, but as of right now, no indication of seeing a larger proportion of vaccine breakthrough due to a particular variant. Continue practicing mitigation strategies (masking, social distancing, etc.). This will protect us against these variants.

Q: Any recommendations to find out if people have been vaccinated to see if someone might be a breakthrough case? Should the questionnaire include this?

A: Yes, this is helpful and a recommended piece of case investigation. CTC also includes this in their questionnaire.

Q: If someone does notice a positive case in a fully vaccinated person, should they reach out to the epi line to report it?

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A: In situations where there is a recent test, and a specimen might be available for sequencing, then reporting it to try to obtain the specimen might be worthwhile. Although it's best practice in terms of getting specimens for testing, not every specimen is suitable (need a high enough viral load). If you do have vaccine breakthrough, more than 2 weeks out post vaccine, and have a recent test, yes this is someone we would want to follow up with.

Questions from Q&A answered out loud:

Q: Golf carts allowed to be shared if people are wearing masks?

A: Don't see anything in the standards that prevents this, but they do need to wear masks per mask standards.

Q: Sneeze guards in serving line for food?

A: Schools need to comply with food protection programs, and they are licensed by their LBOH. Yes, they should have their sneeze guards up.

Q: Food trucks permitted in outdoor events this summer? Can patrons sit on a field to eat as long as they're 6 ft apart, or do they have to be seated at tables?

A: Yes, as long as they follow [restaurant standards](#). They have to be seated, cannot be walking around and eating. If the food is being brought back to a place where they'll be sitting on their own blanket and are not walking around, this is fine.

Q: Private schools need to follow DESE COVID-19 guidelines?

A: We encourage them to follow DESE guidelines, many of them do. If they don't follow our guidelines, they must follow DLS guidelines. If you have specific questions about a private school email Reopeningk12@mass.gov

Q: School bands, and what COVID-19 standards would they follow for practices and shows?

A: April 1st guidance, ["Supplemental Guidance for Student Groups and School Events for School Year 2020-2021"](#)

Q: Car shows allowed outside at a lot? No food, just wondering if we can host the event.

A: Yes, follows the [indoor/outdoor event standards](#).

Q: Any updated information about proms?

A: Updated and released. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/supplement/2020-0831student-groups-school-events.docx>

Questions from Q&A not answered out loud:

-Richard Sagall - 3:32 PM

Q: Where do the regulations stand on office workers returning to work when all the staff is 2 weeks post vaccination?-

-Jana Ferguson - 3:33 PM

A: The office workplace standards still apply-

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-5089583049 Farias - 3:30 PM

Q: What happens if the car show/antique car show is in a parking lot to an ice cream stand-

-Adam Kinney - 3:33 PM

A: If there is an ice cream stand, they have to follow the same standards as any other food establishment, People can't be walking around mask less and eating-

-Maribeth Ting - 3:11 PM

Q: I was asked today by the school food service director - are they allowed to use plastic cutlery dispensers for students or must they be individually wrapped?-

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:34 PM

A: School must comply with food protection programs.

-Lenny Izzo - 3:31 PM

Q: Will you be issuing additional guidance for after school programs and childcare? And do private run after school programs that are held within public school buildings follow the 3 foot of 6 foot rule?-

-Anne Gilligan - 3:35 PM

A: Afterschool school programs may be overseen by Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership <https://www.massafterschool.org/>-

-william burke - 3:35 PM

Q: what guidance is for college/higher ed senior days, etc. The DESE info is for elementary/secondary schools -

-Adam Kinney - 3:36 PM

A: Higher education information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-higher-education->

-Ruth Clay - 3:30 PM

Q: Does the guidance just mentioned for band practice apply if they do not practice at the school?-

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:39 PM

A: DESE guidance applies for all school activities. -

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-Jessica Tracy - 3:40 PM

Q: Question about school pool testing: Pool testing of staff that are vaccinated, is this recommended? What about high students that are vaccinated? -

-Anne Gilligan - 3:41 PM

A: Pooled testing questions should be sent to k12covid19testing@mass.gov

-Julia Pingitore - 3:31 PM

Q: Do 8th grade "graduations" fall under the commencement guidelines that were released? DESE refers to these as "promotions" as opposed to commencements? -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:42 PM

A: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/supplement/2020-0831student-groups-school-events.docx>

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:44 PM

A: School event guidance (link above) may be helpful. -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:44 PM

A: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/commencement-guidance/download->

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:46 PM

A: The commencement guidance (link above) from DLS does cover K12 as written. -

-Kim Dixon - 3:47 PM

Q: Life Guard training recertification needs to be completed, how? -

-Jennifer Robertson - 3:58 PM

A: American red cross and others are offering in-person lifeguard certification and re-certification courses. -

-James Philbrook - 3:37 PM

Q: Has DESE adopted the guidelines related to vaccinated students or teacher's ? -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:58 PM

A: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/commencement-guidance/download->