

Norfolk County-8 Coalition

MDPH/LBOH Webinar 10/12/2021



Inter-agency Staff on the Webinar

- Sam Wong, Erica Piedade, Michael Coughlin, Rachael Cain, and Aimee Petrosky, Office of Local and Regional Health, DPH
- Dr. Catherine Brown, Laurie Courtney, and Dawn Fukuda, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences, DPH
- Donna Quinn, Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management, DPH
- Anne Gilligan and Anne Marie Stronach, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Jhana Wallace, Department of Public Health
- Jeff Farnsworth, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
- Chief Edward Dunne, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association
- Dr. John Welch, Community Tracing Collaborative

Announcements:

DESE Update on K-12 Programs: On August 23th, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) authorized the commissioner to require masks for public school students (age 5 and above) and staff in all grades through at least October 1, 2021. Consistent with the authority provided by the Board, and after consulting with medical experts and state officials, the Commissioner is [extending the mask requirement](#) through at least November 1, 2021.

Following requirements remain in effect:

- 1) Public school students (age 5 and above) and staff in all grades are required to wear masks indoors in schools, with few exceptions. All visitors are also expected to wear a mask in school buildings
- 2) The mask requirement will be in place until at least November 1st, 2021. The Commissioner will revisit the requirement in the near future to revise it as warranted by public health data
- 3) Masks should cover an individual's nose and mouth
- 4) It is strongly recommended that students younger than 5 also wear a mask in school
- 5) Students and staff who cannot wear a mask for medical reasons, and students who cannot wear a mask for behavioral reasons, are exempted from the requirement. The mask requirement applies when students and staff are indoors at school, except when eating, drinking, or during mask breaks
- 6) Mask breaks can occur throughout the day. If feasible, breaks should occur when the windows are open or students are outdoors
- 7) Masks may also be removed indoors when necessary to participate in elective classes, such as the use of wind instruments in band

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Sports, Buses, and Discipline:

- 1) Masks are required for any sports-related activity for student-athletes and coaches when indoors. I.e. football doesn't need to wear masks.
- 2) By federal public health order, all students and staff are required to wear a mask on school buses. It is recommended windows on buses remain cracked, even as temperatures decline. Students should be encouraged to dress in appropriate outerwear layers while riding the bus.
- 3) Whether and when a student should be disciplined for failure to wear a mask is a local decision, guided by the district's student discipline policy and particular facts. Districts should provide written notice to students and families about expectations and potential consequences and are encouraged to use a progressive discipline approach.
- 4) The mask requirement includes an exemption for students who cannot wear a mask due to medical conditions or behavioral needs. Further, some students with disabilities may need additional supports to wear masks and may need to be accommodated.

Vaccine rate threshold: As of October 15th, if a school demonstrates a vaccination rate of 80 percent or more of all students and staff in school (building) through an [attestation form](#) submitted to DESE, the vaccinated individuals in that school would no longer be subject to the mask requirement. Unvaccinated students and staff would be required to continue wearing masks. DESE will continue to work with medical experts and state health officials to review and consider additional metrics to determine when individuals in schools would no longer be subject to the mask requirement.

Important links on DESE website:

[COVID-19 Testing Program](#)—authorized school application; COVID-19 testing FAQs, webinar records and slides, consent forms and parent letters

[On the Desktop](#)—extension of mask mandate; policy on vaccination rate threshold and attestation form; reminders for identifying close contacts and close contact decision tree; protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios; protocols flowcharts.

[General FAQs](#)—protocols and other reopening FAQs, also sent out in the Commissioner's weekly update.

Q: Do organizations that use school facilities but do not belong to the school have to wear masks?

A: No, the visitors are out of the purview out of the regulation being used to extend the mask order but they are expected to wear masks.

VEI Engagement Support Program: Grocery Store Gift Cards: In some cases, individual may be challenged to be vaccinated. The provision of engagement support is one mechanism to recognize that individuals that take the time to be vaccinated could be making an economic sacrifice to do so. Gestures to acknowledge a sacrifice is being made to get vaccinated:

- 1) \$25 grocery store gift cards (different from the food program for isolation and quarantine)
- 2) Cards may be used at vaccine clinics only, may not be used for other programs

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3) Any entity distributing gift cards must have mechanisms in place to record/track inventory of cards received and cards disbursed. DPH can provide an easy-to-use template for inventory management

4) Entities using gift cards provided by the commonwealth must be prepared to share records of gift card receipts and distribution as described above with DPH upon request.

Inventory/tracking records do not need to be submitted unless requested.

Prior to requesting cards, information to consider:

1) engagement supports are directed to individuals, communities, and populations most likely to benefit from these service enhancements.

2) Gift cards (engagement supports) are intended to improve access and attendance in vaccination clinics

3) The gift cards should in some way “help” (promotion, turn-out, etc.) or “enhance” a vaccination clinic.

4) For improved program engagement, let potential recipients know ahead of time that cards will be available at the vaccine clinic. DPH has several resources to support vaccination outreach and access. Visit this [website](#) to learn more.

Who is eligible to receive a card? Any individual aged 12+ that attends a vaccination clinic is eligible to receive a card with a first, second, or single (J&J) dose of a COVID-19 vaccination with a maximum of one card/person total.

Who is eligible to disburse cards? Any DPH contracted vaccine provider or municipal health department is eligible to request cards from DPH to give out at vaccination clinics

Where can I give out cards? You may use cards at any DPH provider contracted or municipal vaccine clinic including regular standing clinics and special events where covid-19 vaccination is also being provided.

How many cards can I give to a vaccine recipient? Cards are limited to one \$25 card per person total, distributed when recipient comes for a 1st, 2nd, or single J&J dose.

Can anyone getting a vaccine receive a card, including children and teens? Anyone aged 12+ is eligible to receive a card (5+ if/when approved).

Process for accessing grocery cards:

Communities or providers interested in accessing cards should email Jhana Wallace, Program Coordinator, at jhana.wallace@mass.gov or call at 617 230 4487. Prior to picking up cards or receiving cards by mail, requesters must attend a short training with the program coordinator AND review, sign, scan, and send an electronic copy of the signed *Policies and Procedures Agreement for Use of DPH Grocery Cards at COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics* back to DPH. This training may be accomplished virtually or by phone.

Information needed for card request: 1) Date/time(s) of clinic(s) associated with the request. May request for next 4 weeks, including ongoing and special events. 2) Type of card—Market Basket or Stop & Shop. 3) Number of cards—using accurate estimated form previous clinics is

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helpful. 4) Confirm that the city/clinic is aware that there will be monitoring requirements in place to use gift cards.

Process for picking up cards: Cards are located at the DPH office at 250 Washington St. Boston. Recipients are able to pick up cards on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays only, between the hours of 9am-4pm (subject to change). When picking up in person, providers will: 1) sign an attestation form of card receipt and ownership 2) Receive a printout with all card serial numbers 3) review and confirm card count and serial numbers. Card recipients will also receive an email with the card serial number spreadsheet for their own records.

Process for receiving cards by mail: Cards will be mailed on Mondays and Wednesday's only. Upon receipt of the signed *Policies and Procedures Agreement for Use of DPH Grocery Cards at COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics*, cards will be packaged for mailing, with photocopies made for both recipients and DPH records. Recipients will have up to 3 days to sign, scan, and return an attestation of ownership to DPH electronically by email. If attestations are not received within 3 days, recipients will receive a follow up phone call/email reminder. Further delays in returning an attestation may result in the inability to receive gift cards for future clinics.

Q: Is there a list of sites utilizing the grocery gift cards?

A: I do have a list of organizations that have requested to use cards, but a lot of these are used at mobile clinics. I'd be happy to discuss this in more detail if you give me a call or send me an email.

Q: You mentioned this is for the primary series, will LBOH be able to give out the cards for booster shots?

A: It isn't in the current outreach program because we are focusing on the primary series, but if you think it'll be helpful for boosters, I think it's fine, reach out and we can chat about it. If people are getting boosters than they are usually motivated to get vaccinated.

Q: How do you keep track of people who have received gift cards?

A: Do your best, in some cases people may come back to the same site and you can keep track of this. If they come to the site from a different vaccine provider, there will be times when people take advantage of the program.

Community Health Inclusion Index (CHII) Funding Opportunity/Mini Grants: For LBOH to increase access to people with disabilities through Healthy Community Design. Working with Mass in Motion, Office of Local and Regional Health, Office of Health Equity in partnership with the Mass Health Officers Association. Amount, \$10,000. Grant cycle is January – June 2022. Between January and June, you'll have to extend the grant funds. Webinar about this opportunity on Thursday, October 14th at 3:00 pm. [Application information on the MHOA website](#) and is straightforward recognizing that LBOH are busy.

Q: How many awards are available?

A: About 4.

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Other updates: A month from now, the covid-19 landscape is going to look a bit different. Right now, we have Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J. We can use these for various ages, 12 and older. We can also use the mRNA (Moderna and Pfizer) for certain people who meet the moderate to severe immunocompromised diagnoses for a third dose, to be given at least 28 days after the second dose. For people who received primary series of Pfizer, and it's been 6 months, they can receive a booster. This week, FDA is meeting to discuss Moderna boosters, J&J boosters, and mixed series boosters.

Q: What if people got a third shot, would they be open for another booster dose?

A: Let's wait and see.

Q: Who can get these Pfizer booster doses?

A: Check CDC website and standing orders.

Q: If we have a Pfizer vaccine on hand, would we be able to use this vaccine for ages 5-11 once approved? Once it's released, would it most likely be released as a EUA?

A: We aren't sure what the final approval will look like, but from what I've heard, no, it will need to be a different formula. Unsure if the pediatric vaccine approval will fall under EUA.

Q: What is the minimum order for the vaccine that people can order?

A: What I've heard from Pfizer and their pediatric formula, expecting/hoping to have it available in units of 10 vials, and 10 doses per vial for a minimum order. Trying very hard to drop orders for other formulations.

Q: Storage requirements for pediatric doses?

A: Heard about Pfizer, but not Moderna or J&J. Pediatric Pfizer, they say it will be stable in the refrigerator for 10 weeks. Going from ultra-freezer to the fridge—no in-between.

Questions answered out loud from the Q&A Chat:

Q: Stop the spread testing sites extending hours in Western Mass?

A: Unsure, but will loop back with information.

Q: Is the isolation protocol for covid positive people still the same for vaccinated vs. unvaccinated folks?

A: At this time, yes. There is some data to suggest that people who are vaccinated are infectious for a shorter time period, but there is not enough of this data to know if this is consistent across people.

Questions not answered out loud from the Q&A Chat:

-13396137120 Crowley - 3:06 PM

Q: Please review quarantine guidance for students that are exposed outside the classroom and develop covid symptoms. -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:14 PM

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A: The Test and Stay program is intended for school-based close contacts, only. Individuals identified as a close contact of an individual outside of school should follow Protocol B-2 or B-3 in the SY22 DESE/DPH Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios.

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:15 PM

A: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/protocols/>-

-Wesley Chin - 3:07 PM

Q: Are masks required for indoor youth sports run by rec departments or organizations not affiliated with public schools? -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:18 PM

A: Masks are required for any sports-related activity for student-athletes and coaches when indoors, in alignment with guidance provided by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA).-

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:20 PM

A: All visitors are also expected to wear a mask in school buildings.-

-Kristen Buntin - 3:08 PM

Q: Some school members are using "mesh" masks and arguing they meet the mask mandate of "covering nose and mouth". Further clarification from DESE about what constitutes a mask would be helpful.-

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:24 PM

A: What is DESE's guidance on appropriate mask wearing?

At this time, per DESE's Implementation of Mask Requirement document, all individuals in schools - including vaccinated individuals – must wear masks. Individuals' masks must completely cover their nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of their face without gaps. The CDC has published additional helpful guidelines on proper mask wearing, including emphasizing that individuals should not choose masks that have any holes or vents, such as -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:25 PM

A: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/2021-0920faq-installment.docx>-

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:27 PM

A: The above excerpt was posted on the FAQ on 9/20 to address the mesh mask-

-Marcia Testa - 3:11 PM

Q: Can you describe how the "quality of mask wearing" (i.e., improper fit, frequent touching, exposing the inside of the mask to wear, taking the mask off and laying it on non-sterile surfaces, not replacing the mask each day) should be monitored in schools. -

-Anne Marie Stronach - 3:29 PM

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A: Whether and when a student should be disciplined for failure to wear a mask is a local decision, guided by the district's student discipline policy and the particular facts. Districts should consult with their legal counsel to address these matters. Districts should provide written notice to students and families about expectations and potential consequences, and are encouraged to use a progressive discipline approach.

-michelle borrello - 3:08 PM

Q: testing sites for students still a huge issue-

-Catherine Brown - 3:32 PM

A: Michelle - could you provide some more specifics of this issue as you have experienced it please?-

-Suzy Feinberg - 3:49 PM

Q: Crystal ball question: Do you think the downward case trends will hold up through Thanksgiving?-

-Catherine Brown - 3:50 PM

A: I am optimistic but my crystal ball is still pretty foggy-