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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces New Initiatives to Stop Spread of COVID-19

Creates Cross-Agency Enforcement and Intervention Team, Ramps up Enforcement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

8/07/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

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BOSTON — Today, Governor Charlie Baker announced a new set of initiatives aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, especially in higher risk communities that have seen a recent uptick in cases. While Massachusetts has seen a decrease in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations since May, there has been a slight uptick in certain communities in recent days.

Today, the Administration announced a set of initiatives, including stricter statewide rules for public and private gatherings and targeted community guidance. The Administration also announced that, starting next week, additional reporting for town-by-town data will be published weekly to show the spread of COVID-19 at a community level. Additionally, **previously announced** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-free-covid-19-testing-site-in-framingham) free COVID-19 testing in 17 communities has been extended through September 12.

Statewide Guidance:

Governor Baker is signing an **updated gatherings order**, effective Tuesday, August 11, which will:

- Reduce the limit on outdoor gatherings from 100 to 50 people (indoor gatherings limit will remain at 25 people)
- Apply these limits to all types of gatherings, on both public and private property
- Require face coverings where more than 10 people from different households will be mixing.

Due to the recent increase in positive cases, step two of phase III of the Commonwealth's reopening plan has been postponed indefinitely.

Restaurant rules have been updated to state that alcoholic beverages may only be served for on-site consumption if accompanied by orders for food prepared on-site. The administration will be taking measures to ensure that bars masquerading as restaurants will be closed.

Public safety officials, including state and local law enforcement, have the jurisdiction to enforce these orders and event hosts in violation of these orders will be subject to fines or cease and desist orders.

To read the gatherings order, **click here** (/doc/revised-gatherings-order-august-7-2020).

To read the updated restaurant protocols, **click here**
(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safety-standards-and-checklist-restaurants?n&sa=D&source=hangouts&ust=1596906704345000&usg=AFQjCNFqvAafSRZT4ieTbSLbywT0xBzUbA)

Cross-Agency COVID Enforcement and Intervention Team:

The Administration also announced a targeted cross-agency COVID Enforcement and Intervention Team that will be responsible for ramping up enforcement statewide and coordinating local intervention efforts at the local level in higher risk COVID-19 communities.

Communities will be designated as higher risk COVID-19 communities based on public health data, including but not limited to rising trends for new cases and the percentage of positive COVID tests.

Member agencies include the Executive Office and Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), who will serve as coordinators of the team, the Command Center, the Massachusetts State Police (MSP), the Department of Labor Standards (DLS), the Division of Professional Licensure (DPL), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Division of Local Services (DLS), the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) and the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS).

Stop the Spread:

Last month, the Administration launched the **Stop the Spread** (/stopthespread) initiative, which provides free testing to residents in targeted communities throughout the Commonwealth.

There are currently sites in 17 communities: Agawam, Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Framingham, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Marlborough, Methuen, New Bedford, Randolph, Revere, Springfield, Taunton, and Worcester.

The initiative is a data-driven focused effort to reduce the prevalence of COVID-19 in communities that are above the state average in total cases, positive test rate, and have experienced a decline in testing levels since April. These sites are open to all residents of the Commonwealth.

Today, the Administration announced the extension of free testing in these 17 communities through September 12.

Statewide Enforcement and Intervention will include:

- Targeted interventions and inspections by a range of member agencies, including Local Services, Labor Standards, DPH, MSP and ABCC, coordinated by EOPSS and MEMA.
- Increased enforcement, including fines, of sector guidance for businesses to ensure businesses and residents are aware of and following COVID-19 orders.
- Support for ABCC and local licensing boards in exercising their existing authority to fine restaurants or suspend or cancel liquor licenses when restaurants do not comply with required COVID-19 safety measures.
- Targeted public messaging campaign to alert residents of higher risk COVID communities (road signs, PSAs, etc.).
- Technical support to local government officials to support enhanced local COVID-19 prevention efforts such as assistance in accessing CARES Act funding.
- Potential restrictions or shutdowns for parks, playgrounds, businesses or other entities and locations believed to be contributing to the COVID-19 spread in higher risk COVID-19 communities.
- Additional resources for public health support such as testing, tracing and quarantining.

For more information **click here** (/reopening).

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito (/orgs/office-of-the-governor)

Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and the Baker-Polito Administration are committed to serving the people of Massachusetts and making the Commonwealth a great place to live, work and raise a family.

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Executive Office of Health and Human Services (/orgs/executive-office-of-health-and-human-services)

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the largest secretariat in state government and is comprised of 12 agencies, in addition to 2 soldiers' homes and the MassHealth program. Our efforts are focused on the health, resilience, and independence of the one in four residents of the Commonwealth we serve. Our public health programs touch every community in the Commonwealth.

More (/orgs/executive-office-of-health-and-human-services)

Department of Public Health (/orgs/department-of-public-health)

DPH promotes the health and well-being of all residents by ensuring access to high-quality public health and healthcare services, and by focusing on prevention, wellness, and health equity in all people.

More (/orgs/department-of-public-health)

Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-economic-development)

The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development promotes vibrant communities, growing businesses, and a strong middle class.

More (/orgs/executive-office-of-housing-and-economic-development)

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (/orgs/executive-office-of-public-safety-and-security)

EOPSS is responsible for the policy development and budgetary oversight of its secretariat agencies, independent programs, and several boards which aid in crime prevention, homeland security preparedness, and ensuring the safety of residents and visitors in the Commonwealth.

More (/orgs/executive-office-of-public-safety-and-security)