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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Outlines Ongoing Steps To Address Homelessness During COVID-19, Announces New Childcare Actions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

4/17/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

Department of Public Health

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today outlined its ongoing comprehensive strategy to address homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Administration also announced additional support for foster families and a new emergency order authorizing the creation of emergency childcare sites.

Comprehensive Steps To Address Homelessness: The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes that the challenges of COVID-19 are being felt especially hard among most vulnerable populations, including the 18,000 Massachusetts residents experiencing homelessness. Massachusetts was among the first states to create designated isolation sites for COVID-positive homeless individuals, the result of a partnership between the Commonwealth, homeless shelters and municipalities that has been underway for weeks.

The Administration's strategy to support homeless individuals and families includes five key initiatives:

- **Establishing Isolation & Recovery Sites For COVID-19 Positive Homeless Individuals**: The Administration has opened five state-operated isolation and recovery sites across the state to provide regional solutions for people experiencing homelessness that need a safe place to isolate and recover after testing positive for COVID-19. Statewide, these sites have a capacity of 550 beds and are staffed with 24/7 security and nursing staff, and are located in Everett, Lexington, Northampton, Pittsfield, and Taunton. These sites augment medical facilities at the **Boston Hope field hospital** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-field-medical-station-details-new-support-for-health) and **Newton Pavilion** (/news/massachusetts-dedicates-former-hospital-for-shelter-treatment-of-homeless-individuals), which offer 732 respite beds for individuals who are homeless. As of April 15, over 160 people experiencing homelessness have been served by a state-operated Isolation and Recovery Site.

- **Deploying Supplies To Support Local Quarantine Solutions**: With the Administration's support, communities across the Commonwealth are standing up quarantine sites to provide a safe place for homeless individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 but are not symptomatic. Exposed individuals quarantine for 14 days to ensure they do not develop symptoms of COVID-19. The Administration created an expedited process for homeless shelters and municipalities to request equipment and supplies for quarantine solutions, such as tents, beds, and portable showers. Additional information on requesting support can be found **here** (/doc/faq-for-cities-and-towns-regarding-fema-reimbursement-for-quarantineisolation-solutions-0/download). To date, eleven communities have received supplies from MEMA to support their quarantine efforts: Brockton, Cambridge, Fitchburg, Framingham, Greenfield, Hyannis, Lowell, Southbridge, Taunton, Waltham, and Worcester.
- **Supporting Families In Emergency Assistance and Domestic Violence Shelters**:The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) have instituted practices outlined by the CDC to mitigate COVID-19 outbreaks within congregate shelters. Shelter coordinators have implemented health screening procedures during the placement process and have reinforced social distancing and infection control practices for shared spaces. DHCD has increased the state's scattered site capacity to enable additional depopulation, quarantine, and isolation of families at various stages of COVID-19 exposure. Extended leaves from shelter have also been approved for families that have temporary alternative housing available with relatives. DHCD has developed protocols for shelters dealing with families that have tested positive for COVID-19, especially when some family members test negative. This group has also convened a case team to triage unique circumstances.
- **Expediting PPE Distribution To Shelters**: The Administration has established an expedited **process** (/doc/homeless-shelter-covid-19-faq/download) for homeless shelters to request PPE and other supplies necessary to maintain appropriate cleaning and sanitation practices. As of April 15th, Massachusetts has distributed masks, surgical masks, face shields, gloves, partitions, temperature strips, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies to 84 shelter sites.
- **Providing Technical Assistance To Organizations, Municipalities Seeking Funding Through FEMA's Public Assistance Program**: FEMA will reimburse 75% of municipality and non-profit organization costs associated with qualifying quarantine and isolation services for people experiencing homelessness. Massachusetts has established a dedicated portal to support municipalities and organizations through the grant application process, developing robust partnerships across the state to ensure all applicants are well-supported. As of April 15, 236 applicants have been processed and approved by MEMA.

Foster Care Relief: The Administration recognizes that as result of schools closing and closure of non-essential businesses, foster families are incurring increased costs. Foster parents are vital to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and its mission to keep children safe, as they care for some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable children who have been abused and neglected.

To support foster parents providing departmental foster care, DCF will be making a $100 monthly payment for each child in placement on the 15th of April, May and June. Currently, on average, foster parents are reimbursed between $830 to $975 per child per month, depending on the age of the child in their care. This $100 additional payment represents a 10% - 12% increase over current reimbursements for foster parents. The relief will benefit the approximately 4,500 foster families who provide departmental foster care for 6,700 children. This includes unrestricted and kinship foster families.

Emergency Childcare: Yesterday, Governor Baker issued an emergency order authorizing the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to establish emergency sites for children and youth living in residential homes that have tested positive for COVID-19 and need to be cared for in quarantine or isolation.

Read the Order (/doc/april-16-2020-eec-order)

Read More from EEC
(https://mailchi.mp/84b8db93c3d6/press-release-baker-polito-administration-awards-6-million-for-early-education-programs-1516544?e=e34de0bf6c)

The Baker-Polito Administration will continue to update the public on developments related to COVID-19. Residents can visit **www.mass.gov/covid19** (/covid19) for the latest information, call 2-1-1 with questions, and subscribe to text-alerts by texting "COVIDMA" or "COVIDMAESP" (for Spanish alerts) to 888-777.

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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 working to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and keep Massachusetts residents safe and healthy.

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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.

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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.

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From pre-school to post-secondary education, the Executive Office of Education works to connect all Massachusetts residents with an education that creates opportunities.

While Massachusetts' students rank first in the nation on many educational measures, the Executive Office of Education strives to strengthen the foundations of education reform, empower schools and educators, and develop pathways to college and careers so all students in the Commonwealth can succeed, regardless of their zip code.

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