



PLANNING and PREPAREDNESS

RESPONDING TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

RESOURCES FOR PHYSICIANS AND PATIENTS



MASSACHUSETTS
MEDICAL SOCIETY

March 23, 2020

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from the NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

If you have questions, we will bring them to the appropriate stakeholder for an answer. Please send questions to the [MMS Department of Health Policy and Public Health](#).

Public Health

Massachusetts DPH releases guidance on prioritization of PPE

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has released “[Guidance on Prioritization of PPE in MA](#)”. In the near term, given current supplies, PPE will be prioritized for medical facilities on the front lines. Please submit all requests for PPE via the channels shown on the [illustrative diagram](#). The Commonwealth will coordinate your requests. For hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers, emergency medical services, local public health, and other health facilities, this means to request or report PPE shortages to your regional Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC), which are listed below.

Region	Website	24/7 Regional Duty Officer Phone	Duty Officer Email NOT monitored 24/7
Region 1	https://region1hmcc.org/	413-773-1502	hmcc@frcog.org
Region 2	https://archecoalition.org/	508-408-5173	N/A
Region 3	https://hmccreg3.org/	978-946-8130	dutyofficer@hmccreg3.org
Region 4AB	https://mrpcoalition.org/	857-239-0662	mrpcdutyofficer@challiance.org
Region 4C	https://bphc.org/Pages/default.aspx	617-343-6920	mic@bphc.org
Region 5	https://www.region5hmcc.com/	855-266-7243 ID# 32432	dutyofficer@region5hmcc.com

MMS Advocates for PPE

The Medical Society [sent a letter](#) to the Massachusetts Medical Society congressional delegation, thanking them for [their leadership](#) urging the federal government to direct more personal protective equipment from the Strategic National Stockpile to Massachusetts. The letter highlighted the dire need for more PPE, citing a North Shore physician practice as an example of how PPE shortages could seriously impede the progress made improving capacity to test for COVID-19.

New NEJM Group COVID-19 e-newsletter

To help physicians, allied providers and public health professionals stay current with the latest developments in the coronavirus pandemic, the NEJM Group now publishes a free e-newsletter. Alerts will be delivered as needed (at least weekly) and will include new studies, correspondence, and other items in NEJM; NEJM Journal Watch summaries of key information from other sources; articles and podcasts from NEJM Catalyst; and important news stories from Physician's First Watch. The e-newsletter will also include links to external resources like the [CDC](#) and the [WHO](#). NEJM Group will send the newsletter for as long as it's helpful and necessary, continuing to shed light on the pandemic and its implications for medicine. If you'd like to receive this newsletter in the future, please visit the [NEJM.org](#) site and create an account (or log in to your existing account). Under **My Account**, make sure to check the box for **General Information** in the **Alerts** section.

Practice Management

MMS publishes “Practice Management Guide for COVID-19”

The true impact of a COVID-19 outbreak in U.S. communities cannot be predicted. However, all healthcare leaders can take steps now to prepare for such an outbreak and protect both their patients and staff. The MMS Department of Practice Solutions and Medical Economics prepared an operational guide that provides physicians with multiple resources and updates related to key issues such workplace safety, wages and salaries, and small business loans. [Read more »](#)

MassHealth enrollees’ protection

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services has effectively immediately assured eligibility protection for current and future MassHealth enrolled individuals during the COVID-19 emergency. All MassHealth enrollees with Medicaid coverage as of March 18, 2020 will be covered through one month after the conclusion of the emergency period. Coverage will only end if an individual requests termination of eligibility or if they are no longer a resident of the state. Members will not lose coverage or have a decrease in benefits for any other reason. MMS is grateful to the EOHHS and the Baker Administration for taking decisive action to address these immediate financial and enrollment concerns.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announce reporting relief

On March 22, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced unprecedented relief for clinicians, providers and facilities participating in Medicare quality reporting programs. CMS will be granting exceptions from reporting requirements and extensions for clinicians and providers participating in Medicare quality reporting programs with respect to upcoming measure reporting and data submission for those programs. Specifically, CMS is implementing additional “extreme and uncontrollable circumstances” policy exceptions and extensions for upcoming measure

reporting and data submission deadlines for 19 CMS programs. This work was brought about in conjunction with advocacy by the American Medical Association and other providers. [Read more »](#)

Government Guidelines

Gov. Baker orders all non-essential businesses to close physical workspaces, provides PPE update

Today (Monday, March 23), Gov. Baker issued an [emergency order](#) ordering all non-essential businesses to close their physical workspaces to their employees, customers, and the public. The order will go into effect Tuesday, March 24 at noon and last until Tuesday, April 7 at noon. An exhaustive list of essential businesses is [available here](#). The list includes grocery stores and the businesses that support them, gas stations, pharmacies, medical facilities, manufacturers of medical products, and pharmaceutical companies. All non-essential businesses must operate remotely. Baker also issued additional [guidance](#) regarding restrictions on assemblage.

Additionally, Baker announced that the DPH will issue a stay-at-home advisory recommending self-isolation and social distancing protocols, also effective until Tuesday, April 7. The advisory urges people to stay at home and avoid unnecessary activities outside the home and people over 70 or with underlying health conditions are strongly urged to stay home and strictly limit close contact. Consistent with the stay-at-home advisory, people will still be able to access essentials, including access to food/groceries, medicine/pharmacy, etc. Travel will not be prohibited under this advisory, and the T and buses will still be operating.

The governor announced progress on the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) front, confirming orders of PPE and receipt of additional supplies donated from the biotech industry. The governor also announced that additional “tests have been ordered.”

Massachusetts Medical Society supports Gov. Baker's actions

The Society thanks Governor Baker for taking appropriate measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. By issuing the decisive stay-at-home advisory today, March 23, the governor has affirmed that further comprehensive adoption of social distancing must be practiced by all for the safety of our communities, our patients and the health care workforce. The Medical Society looks forward to working closely with the governor and all stakeholders to leverage public health practices that will help reduce the harm caused by COVID-19.

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