

**MetroWest  
Center For  
Independent Living**

**People with Disabilities  
Living in the Community**

## **Covid-19 Updates**

As the country begins to open back up, we need to continue to stay safe by evaluating and controlling each interaction. As now required by Governor Baker, wear a mask! Massachusetts has not set an opening date. <https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public>

Also of concern this year is how we will vote safely. Expanding vote by mail capabilities is under discussion by legislators and Secretary Galvin.

The Covid 19 crisis has brought many disability issues to the forefront. Access to services, health care and information, rationing of healthcare, vote by mail, keeping our voices heard, general attitudes and problems with incentivizing nursing homes. We have talked about some of these issues - there are not answers to most of the problems, but we do need to continue to advocate for disability civil rights.

MWCIL is ready to work with you on any important issues. We will resolve as much as possible remotely to protect both our staff and consumers. We understand that most services and safety nets have been disrupted, and we will try to help.

Visit our [Website Covid-19 page](#) and download our [Local Resources pdf](#).

Paul Spooner,  
Executive Director



Another tulip bouquet from Painted Lady Flower Farm in Franklin



Virginia Blue Bell

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## ***MetroWest Resources***

MWCIL.org has a Covid-19 page with local and national resources, information on the disease, and more. Visit [mwcil.org](http://mwcil.org).

MetroWest Center for Independent Living has compiled information from most of our service area towns. You can download this file:

[MWCIL Service area resources.pdf](#)

We recommend Senate President Karen Spilka's page of resources available for MetroWest residents. Visit <https://karenspilka.com/covid>.

**City of Framingham Resource Page:** [Framinghamma.gov/covid19](http://Framinghamma.gov/covid19)

- Framingham has announced a financial relief program which will help provide assistance with rent, mortgage, and/or utility payments for a period of two months to alleviate the burden on households which have seen a loss of employment and their primary income as of 3/10/2020. Download the application:
  - [www.framinghamma.gov/DocumentCenter/](http://www.framinghamma.gov/DocumentCenter/)

**Resources for elders** in the community provided by [Baypath Senior Services](#):

[Senior Living Service during Covid-10.pdf](#).

**MWRTA** has launched the "4 Grocery" shuttle to run hourly between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. to carry shoppers from the Framingham hub to the Market Basket in Ashland, Roche Bros. in Natick, and the Wegman's at the Natick Mall. Read more at

[www.mwrta.com/application/files/](http://www.mwrta.com/application/files/).

**SMOC** (South Middlesex Opportunity Council) continues to provide a wide array of services. Visit their website for more information: [www.smoc.org](http://www.smoc.org)

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## ***Massachusetts News***

### **Face Masks**

Governor Baker is requiring face masks or cloth face coverings in public places where social distancing is not possible. This applies to both indoor and outdoor spaces. Exceptions include children under the age of 2 and those unable to wear a mask or face covering due to a medical condition. You can read more, and watch a video at [mass.gov](http://mass.gov).

If you are a MassHealth member who receives services at home from a PCA, independent nurse, or direct care worker and test positive for COVID-19, you can receive personal protective equipment (PPE) delivered to your home at no cost. To request PPE, call 844-368-5184 or visit this website for more information: [www.mass.gov/doc](http://www.mass.gov/doc).

### **Essential Voices left out of Governor's Reopening Board**

From the DPC May 4 Newsletter by Colin Kapernick

"Last week, as Governor Baker prudently extended the statewide closure order until May 18th, he also announced the formation of a board to study how the state should pursue reopening. However, as apointed out, the board isn't exactly representative of the community: of the 17 members, five are public officials and 12 are business leaders, including CEOs of clothing companies and technology firms. Several important voices are missing: there are no labor leaders, and no healthcare workers-two voices that seem absolutely critical to represent those whose jobs put them at risk from the pandemic. We'd also add that the board contains no representation from people with disabilities or seniors, the two communities that have represented the large majority of those lost to the pandemic, and who would be most at risk from an acceleration of the virus. If only business leaders are at the table, we'd be concerned that economic concerns, while critical, will not be adequately balanced by the need to protect human life. "

### **Reopening Massachusetts**

Massachusetts is currently "closed" to non-essential businesses. As of today, golf courses may reopen with restrictions such as closed clubhouses and no carts. While golf is not essential, it probably can be played safely. However, no carts restricts usage to people who can walk long distances, so reopening this way is discriminatory. Other states mandated one person per cart. Obviously golf is not important but we hate to see the initial steps discriminate against people who rely on the cart.

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***During COVID-19 Pandemic:  
A Checklist for People with Disabilities***

## June Isaacson Kailes, Disability Policy Consultant

"It is time to think through all that you may face if you require medical care in a hospital. Know that it is NOT business as usual. You should do everything you can to stay out of a hospital, but if you have no choice, BE PREPARED! Healthcare staff may not or do not hold the same attitudes about your quality of life that you do. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the usual standards of practice; "usual" standards are not being followed. This is because hospitals need to help many more people than they usually do. It's up to you and your advocates to be prepared if you must go to a hospital or long-term care facility. Be your own best advocate, do your preparation. "

Download the details at [jik.com](http://jik.com).

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### *DPC Survey*

[Disability Policy Consortium](#) developed a five minute survey to find out what the most critical needs facing our community are. Are you getting the medical care you need? Can you access vital supplies? Do you have enough food? If you need PCA support, are you filling your hours? Your answers to these and other key questions will **help us identify the highest priorities for our emergency advocacy, and help us push policymakers to take action.**

This information will help DPC to make sure that healthcare providers and state/ local governments make decisions to address COVID-19, that include the needs of people with disabilities. Everything you say will be kept confidential. Please take the survey at the link below, and share it with your friends in the community. With your help, we will do everything we can to make sure our community gets through this.

Survey Link: [www.research.net/r/COVID-19-DPC](http://www.research.net/r/COVID-19-DPC)

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### *Vote By Mail*

Local elections are in May in most towns in Massachusetts, the state primary is scheduled for September 1 and the general election is November 3. Legislators and advocates are wrestling with concerns about keeping voters safe while allowing easy access to voting. We have updates below. With the State Primary on September 1 and General Election November 3, solutions need to be found right away.

### [Town Elections](#)

If your town has a local election scheduled in the next few weeks, you should [contact your town clerk](#) about the status of that election. A new law has been passed to allow towns to postpone their local elections by a local vote. Some towns with upcoming elections have already obtained court orders to allow them to move their elections.

Whether or not your town has postponed your local election, a law has been passed to allow early voting by mail in local elections being held on or before June 30, 2020. You may [apply now for your mail-in early ballot](#).

If your town's election has been moved, ballots for the original election date will still be valid. If you have already submitted an absentee ballot, that ballot will be counted.

## **Massachusetts**

Legislators, Secretary of State Galvin and Attorney General Healey are all working on mechanisms to implement some form of Vote by Mail for the September primary and the November election. The primary brings added complications because there are different ballots for Democrats and Republicans, and unenrolled voters can request either. Added to that complication is the fact that voters can change their enrollment 20 days before an election, but these ballots and applications may need to be prepared and mailed before that.

Representative Jeffrey Roy (Franklin and Medway) has filed a bill with a proposed vote by mail mechanism for the remainder of 2020. [rep santiago and rep roy election bill.pdf](#)

The [Lowell Sun](#) reports on Secretary Galvin's proposal and a bill from Representatives John Lawn and Michael Moran which is also supported by Senators Eric Lesser and Adam Hinds.

The most striking difference between the bills being filed in the legislature and Secretary Galvin's proposal is that the bills require mailing either a ballot application (Roy's bill) or an actual ballot (Lawn's bill) before the election, while Galvin proposes to allow voters to apply for a mail in ballot.

None of the bills address a key disability issue which is that people who cannot see or write on a ballot will have to go to the polls to use the Automark machine, putting themselves at increased risk. Everyone supports expanded early voting and open polls on election day which should allow voters to be more socially distanced than we usually are.

## **Nationwide**

Vote By Mail is gaining increased interest by the Senate and Congress. The [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) (NCSL) has summarized the situations in each state. 5 states already have vote by mail. Oregon or Colorado may also have electronic voting for people who are overseas.

Presumably electronic voting would be useful for people who are visually or physically impaired, and who have screen readers or voice recognition on their home computers. Today, each state is in charge of its own elections.

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## ***Disability Policy Consortium Survey on Covid 19 for People with Disabilities***

As you well know, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on Massachusetts, shutting down businesses and public services, isolating us in our homes, and taking the lives of more than four thousand of our friends and neighbors. We know that people with disabilities have been among the hardest hit communities during this pandemic, but amid all the chaos, reliable information is hard to come by. **That's why we need to hear from you.**

We've developed a five minute survey to find out what the most critical needs facing our community are. Are you getting the medical care you need? Can you access vital supplies? Do you have enough food? If you need PCA support, are you filling your hours? Your answers to these and other key questions will **help us identify the highest priorities for our emergency advocacy, and help us push policymakers to take action.**

This information will help DPC to make sure that healthcare providers and state/ local governments make decisions to address COVID-19, that include the needs of people with disabilities. Everything you say will be kept confidential. Please take the survey at the link below, and share it with your friends in the community. With your help, we will do everything we can to make sure our community gets through this.

Survey Link: <https://www.research.net/r/COVID-19-DPC>

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## ***Health Connector Special Enrollment Expanded***

Thanks to the [Disability Policy Consortium](#) for this story from **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation.**

Massachusetts residents losing their jobs and job-based health coverage can get health coverage through the Health Connector. Massachusetts residents can apply for coverage at [www.mahealthconnector.org](http://www.mahealthconnector.org). The ConnectorCare program connects qualifying Massachusetts residents with affordable health coverage with low or \$0 premiums and low co-pays and no deductibles. This special enrollment period will run through May 25.

A new webpage that includes all the information someone would need to get into coverage after having lost employment/employment-based coverage - including

a detailed FAQ for people trying to understand their different coverage options (e.g., COBRA, Health Connector, etc.). You can find that webpage here: <https://www.mahealthconnector.org/the-right-plan-right-now>.

Shorter PDF flyers for individuals that have recently lost jobs and job-based health coverage. These are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese and are posted here:

<https://www.mahealthconnector.org/help-center/resource-download-center>

Reach out to the Health Connector with questions.

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## ***Mass.gov Resources***

**Main information page** on the Coronavirus:

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

### **Mass Health:**

- **Long Term Supports and Services including PCA information:** <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ltss-provider-updates-for-covid-19/download>
- Expansion of **Home Health Aide Services:** [MassOptions.org](https://www.massoptions.org).  
**MassOptions hotline** at 1-844-422-6277
- **Consumer Information:** <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/masshealth-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-applicants-and-members-0>
- **General MassHealth Information:** [www.mass.gov/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-and-masshealth](https://www.mass.gov/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-and-masshealth)
- **90 Day Supplies of Medication for MassHealth Members:**[www.mass.gov/doc/pharmacy-facts-141-march-12-2020-0/download](https://www.mass.gov/doc/pharmacy-facts-141-march-12-2020-0/download)

**Attorney General:** <https://www.mass.gov/guides/resources-during-covid-19>

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## ***Housing***

Thank you to Independence Associates for additional information on Housing issues.

The state is implementing a temporary moratorium on evictions and foreclosures due to Covid 19. If you are having trouble making rent, talk to your landlord and get everything in writing for proof of conversations later on.

- **Detailed information** (a little tough to navigate) -



[www.mass.gov/lists/moratorium-on-evictions-and-foreclosures-forms-and-other-resources](http://www.mass.gov/lists/moratorium-on-evictions-and-foreclosures-forms-and-other-resources)

- **RESIDENTIAL TENANTS:** In order to avoid having to pay late fees or receiving a negative credit report, the law requires tenants to send a form of hardship notice to their landlord within 30 days of every missed rent payment. That means if a tenant missed paying rent due April 1, the tenant must send the form by April 30 (3 days from now). One form must be filled out for each month of missed payment. If a tenant is unable to fill out and transmit the form, they can also email or post a letter to the landlord with the same information. Direct link to form: [www.mass.gov/doc/form-of-notice-and-documentation-covid-19-hardship-residential-tenant/download](http://www.mass.gov/doc/form-of-notice-and-documentation-covid-19-hardship-residential-tenant/download)
- **HOMEOWNERS:** The Division of Banks has also put out a Frequently Asked Questions document regarding the moratorium on foreclosures. Direct link here: [www.mass.gov/doc/chapter-65-dob-faq](http://www.mass.gov/doc/chapter-65-dob-faq)
- **SMALL BUSINESS TENANTS:** Similar to residential tenants, small businesses are also not subject to late fees or negative credit bureau reporting if they submit a form of notice to their landlord within 30 days of missed rent payment. Small businesses must submit two forms:
  - A certification of hardship: [www.mass.gov/doc/form-of-notice-covid-19-hardship-small-business-tenant](http://www.mass.gov/doc/form-of-notice-covid-19-hardship-small-business-tenant)
  - Back up documentation: [www.mass.gov/doc/documentation-of-financial-hardship-small-business-tenant](http://www.mass.gov/doc/documentation-of-financial-hardship-small-business-tenant)
- **LANDLORDS:** The law allows the landlord to use last month's rent to pay for certain expenses including, but not limited to, mortgage payments, utilities, repairs and required upkeep. However the landlord must send a form of notice to the tenant when doing so. The form is here: [www.mass.gov/doc/notice-to-tenant-use-of-advance-rent-payment](http://www.mass.gov/doc/notice-to-tenant-use-of-advance-rent-payment)
- **Help with Rent**
  - List of regional agencies, see [www.masshousinginfo.org/regional-agencies](http://www.masshousinginfo.org/regional-agencies).
  - Additional information about resources for tenants is available at [www.mhp.net/news/2020/resources-for-tenants-during-covid-19-pandemic](http://www.mhp.net/news/2020/resources-for-tenants-during-covid-19-pandemic).
- You will not be subject to late fees or a negative report to a credit bureau if you certify to your landlord in writing within 30 days from the missed payment that your non-payment of rent is due to a financial impact from COVID-19. If possible, you should use the approved form at: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/moratorium-on-evictions-and-foreclosures-forms-and-other-resources>. If you cannot access the form on this website, you can ask your landlord to provide the form to you. You may also send a letter or email so long as it contains a detailed explanation of your household loss in income or increase in expenses due to COVID-19.

**Department of Community and Housing Development (DHCD)** has information including updates for Residential Assistance for Families in

Transition (RAFT) Program - [www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-dhcd-website#residential-assistance-for-families-in-transition-\(raft\)-program-and-covid-19-state-of-emergency-](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-dhcd-website#residential-assistance-for-families-in-transition-(raft)-program-and-covid-19-state-of-emergency-)

**CHAPA** has adapted operations and policy priorities. COVID-19 Affordable Housing Resources: [www.chapa.org](http://www.chapa.org)

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## ***Unemployment***

Mass.gov has an online, virtual town hall that will teach you how to sign up for unemployment. Visit [www.mass.gov/forms/massachusetts-department-of-unemployment-assistance-dua-virtual-town-halls](http://www.mass.gov/forms/massachusetts-department-of-unemployment-assistance-dua-virtual-town-halls).

Or visit the State Unemployment Insurance page for online application forms, as well as links to rules and exceptions during the Covid-19 pandemic. [www.mass.gov/unemployment-insurance-ui-online](http://www.mass.gov/unemployment-insurance-ui-online).

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## ***Food***

Visit [foodpantries.org](http://foodpantries.org) to see all of the food pantries in MA.

Senate President Karen Spilka's MetroWest Resource page has many local food sources: [karenspilka.com/updates/2020/3/13/metrowest-covid-19-resources](http://karenspilka.com/updates/2020/3/13/metrowest-covid-19-resources)

Project Bread has additional food sources: [www.projectbread.org/get-help](http://www.projectbread.org/get-help).

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## ***2020 Census***

You should have received one or two mailings from the Census Bureau on how to fill out your census information online. This information is completely confidential. Please let us know if you have questions. Visit the [Revupma.org](http://Revupma.org) page on the Census.

### **From Marlene Sallo, Executive Director of Disability Law Center**

"On April 1, 2019 elected officials, nonprofit workers, and the public gathered at Nevins Hall in Framingham to kick off the state's 2020 census. This event marked the one-year countdown to the National Census Day (April 1, 2020).

The census is mandated by our Constitution and aims to include every person living in the United States. Census data provides the basis for distributing more than \$675 billion in federal funds every year to support states, counties and community programs, such as housing, education,

transportation, employment, and health care.

During the 2020 Census, households will be able to self-respond in three ways: Internet, Telephone or Paper Questionnaire. The Census Bureau has indicated that the online questionnaire and telephone contact centers will all be fully accessible to people with disabilities and that the paper questionnaire will be available to download in both braille and large print. Completing the 2020 Census form ensures that neighborhood schools, health centers, and other vital parts of our communities are adequately funded.

Please make sure to participate in the upcoming census. Find out more at [www.censuscounts.org](http://www.censuscounts.org).

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## Activist Resources and Directories

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### *National Contact Information*

[Directory of House of Representatives](#)

[Directory of Senators](#)

#### **Senator Edward J. Markey**

Address:

255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Phone:

(202) 224-2742

Contact:

[www.markey.senate.gov/contact](http://www.markey.senate.gov/contact)

Website:

<http://www.markey.senate.gov/>

#### **Senator Elizabeth Warren**

Address:

317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Phone:

(202) 224-4543

Contact:

<https://www.warren.senate.gov/contact/shareyouropinion>

Website:

<http://www.warren.senate.gov/>

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### *State Government Contact Information*

[Directories of State Senators and Representatives](#)

[Contact Governor Baker](#)

[WhereDoIVoteMa.com](#) - Enter your address, and get a list of all of your elected officials.

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## ***National Resources***

**Save My Care** - a movement to bring together families, advocates and health care providers to protect the health and financial security of all Americans. [Visit the website.](#)

**National Council on Independent Living** has Action Alerts for issues on the table in Washington. [Visit the Advocacy Monitor webpage.](#)

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**Join REV UP** - Make the disability vote count!

For more information, visit [www.revupma.org](http://www.revupma.org).

And follow our [Face Book page!](#)



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## ***MA Tales of Independence***

**Visit our video projects at:** [www.matalesofindependence.net](http://www.matalesofindependence.net).

The concept and history of Independent Living are complex. MA Tales of Independence is a collection of videos by people who are successfully living independently. Each person tells their story including things like: how they achieved independence, why independence is important to them and what barriers they had to overcome. Some of our videos have historical information about the struggle and others are about growing up today. Most have college degrees, jobs and families.





2020 Staff

## **MetroWest Center for Independent Living**

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**Email:** [info@mwcil.org](mailto:info@mwcil.org)

**Phone:** (508)875-7853

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