

**MetroWest  
Center For  
Independent Living**

**People with Disabilities  
Living in the Community**

## **Covid-19 Updates**

Governor Baker will announce new phased openings in MA on Monday, May 18. Are you ready? Make sure you know the risks and your 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



Dogwood



Tulips from Painted Lady Flower Farm in Franklin

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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 Reopening***

Governor Baker intends to announce phase one of reopening Massachusetts on Monday, May 18. The four phases are titled "Start", "Cautious", "Vigilant" and "The New Normal". Governor Baker will not release any details before Monday.

To learn about the current conditions in MA, download Monday's [Covid-19 Command Center Update from MEMA](#).

**Mandatory Workplace Standards** will apply to all businesses opening in Phase 1. [Mass.gov](#) lists all of the details. The Reopening Advisory Board also is developing Sector Specific Safety Standards and Best Practices that will detail how particular industries should operate upon reopening, as well as provide for limited exceptions to the mandatory standards.

Some questions:

1. What are your choices if your job restarts but you do not feel safe?
2. How safe is safe enough when going back out in the public? This

link, <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them> may give you some idea of the risks of common activities.

3. What details do you need to know when your workplace reopens? Some issues will be cleaning schedules, common areas, density (i.e. is everyone there at the same time?), required masks. Do they match the new Mandatory Workplace Standards, and is this enough for your particular job?

The Massachusetts High Technology Council has released an in-depth document titled [COVID-19 Back to Work Planning Briefing](#). This document has detailed descriptions of what other countries are doing, and the best conditions for when and how to return to work.

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## ***TeleHealth and Insurance***

The increase in TeleHealth services is very positive during social isolation, as well as for people with disabilities who may have transportation issues.

Governor Baker's March 16 orders included the following ([mhealthintelligence.com](http://mhealthintelligence.com)):

"The most important provision states that all commercial insurers, self-insured plans, and the Group Insurance Commission to cover medically necessary telehealth services. (GIC administers health insurance and benefits for state employees and retirees.) The order specifies that all payers in the state "are required to allow all in-network providers to deliver clinically appropriate, medically necessary covered services to members via telehealth.

The order prevents payers from imposing restrictions on the technology used to deliver telehealth services and reimbursing services delivered via telehealth at a lower rate. As for billing, payers are responsible for notifying providers about billing requirements.

Furthermore, payers cannot impose cost-sharing via copayments, deductibles, or coinsurance for COVID-19 treatment delivered using telehealth. Likewise, the order stipulates that prior authorization is not required to receive medically necessary treatment of coronavirus by in-network providers using telehealth."

Now that the governor plans to phase opening of the state, what does that mean to TeleHealth coverage? For most people going forward, continued TeleHealth coverage can mean the difference between exposure to the disease and safely getting medical advice at home. For some people with disabilities, it may mean the difference between getting medical advice and getting no attention.

I am unable to accurately determine the existing MA laws. Information from multiple sources indicates that the current laws do not define TeleHealth coverage, and it is up to insurers and healthcare providers, but

this is not confirmed.

We recommend that we use these new skills to benefit everyone, and ensure that Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance cover TeleHealth whenever it is a possible replacement for an office visit.

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## ***PBS News Hour Discussion on Covid-19 and Americans with Disabilities***

### **Judy Woodruff:**

"For more than 60 million Americans with disabilities, the rapid spread of COVID-19 is particularly dangerous.

Many live in long-term care facilities, which are at greater risk for coronavirus deaths. These Americans also are two times as likely to live in poverty as someone without a disability.

But, so far, legislation has fallen short for helping them.

Stephanie Sy has a closer look at all of this.

And we begin by hearing some voices of those affected by this."

*The discussion continues with several people with different disabilities.*

Read the entire article: [www.pbs.org/newshour/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/)

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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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## ***Town Elections***

Visit the state website for more information on the changes to annual town meetings during covid 19, including an application that you can download and print: [www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/covid-19](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/covid-19).

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.

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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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**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](http://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](http://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](http://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 #2020Census, 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 #2020Census 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

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