

**MetroWest
Center For
Independent Living**

**People with Disabilities
Living in the Community**

Covid-19 Updates

Monday, May 18, Governor Baker unveiled the specific details for re-opening Massachusetts. Visit [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) for the more information. Individuals will have to evaluate their own situations to determine which activities are safe for them.

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



Susan Rorke

Japanese Kerria, lilac and azalea



Susan Rorke

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.

MetroWest Center for Independent Living has compiled information from most of our service area towns. This file is updated weekly:
[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

- 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/

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/.

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

MetroWest Testing Sites

Thank you to [MetroWest Daily News](#) for a list of local Covid-19 testing sites.

Sites are in Bellingham, Franklin, Framingham, Marlborough, Natick, Northborough and Westborough.

Download a MS Word copy of the article: [Covid-Testing-Metrowest.docx](#) or download a pdf copy: [Covid-Testing-Metrowest.pdf](#).

Massachusetts Reopening

On Monday, May 25, Governor Baker released the plans for reopening Massachusetts. Visit Mass.gov for the details.

WBUR National Public Radio simplifies the new "normal" in their article: [6 Thinks to Know about the Plan to Reopen Massachusetts](#).

Not everyone agrees with the plan. Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley tweeted "MA isn't ready to 'reopen.' Policy decisions that offer a false choice between public health & economic recovery will hurt our communities." She also said "she said the state has not expanded testing nor lowered infection rates enough to move ahead - and doing so now would disproportionately endanger the health of "vulnerable" communities most of all, as well as potentially set back the economic recovery." Read more in the [Boston Globe](#). The article also mentions other groups, such as North End restaurateurs, who think the reopening plans are too slow.

Again, each individual has to carefully weigh their own situation with the the remaining risks. The information below should help understand some of the outstanding risks.

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.

Disinformation

National Public Radio published an interesting article titled "[Researchers: Nearly Half Of Accounts Tweeting About Coronavirus Are Likely Bots](#)" by Bobby Allyn.

"Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University culled through more than 200 million tweets discussing the virus since January and found that about 45% were sent by accounts that behave more like computerized robots than humans." The article goes on to describe some examples and sources of the disinformation.

Facebook and other platforms probably have similar posts.

"Carley with Carnegie Mellon said countering bot accounts on Twitter is not a simple task. Blocked accounts can resurface, and the disinformation networks are sophisticated and difficult to completely root out."

She offers this advice, though: Look out for subtle typos, for tweets being sent out very quickly, or profile images and usernames that appear suspicious.

"Even if someone appears to be from your community, if you don't know them personally, take a closer look, and always go to authoritative or trusted sources for information," Carley said. "Just be very vigilant."

Know the sources of your information!

Mental Health

Common sense tells us that decreased access to doctors and services, isolation and confinement, daily stress, anxiety and unsolicited responsibilities (home-schooling for example) are a recipe for mental health triggers. People who have no history or diagnosed mental illness are struggling to stay on track.

Make sure you take care of yourself - stay aware of your mental health, and reach out for help if you are feeling vulnerable.

This article in Boston.com offers advice on "[How to Maintain Your Well-being during Covid-19](#)" by Ainslee Cromer.

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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

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.
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
- **90 Day Supplies of Medication for MassHealth Members:** www.mass.gov/doc/pharmacy-facts-141-march-12-2020-0/download

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

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
- **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
- **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
- **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
 - Back up documentation: 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

- **Help with Rent**

- List of regional agencies, see 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.
- 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

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.

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.

Food

Visit 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

Project Bread has additional food sources: www.projectbread.org/get-

[help.](#)

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 page](http://Revupma.org) 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."

Activist Resources and Directories

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

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/>

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.

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.](#)

Join REV UP - Make the disability vote count!

For more information, visit www.revupma.org.

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



MA Tales of Independence

Visit our video projects at: 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.



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