

**MetroWest
Center For
Independent Living**

**People with Disabilities
Living in the Community**

Covid-19 Updates

It is STILL June.

Massachusetts continues to open up as new reported cases and deaths per day keeps dropping. Governor Baker will announce the rules for school openings today and restaurants have reopened for modified indoor dining.

As we have said before, the re-openings do not mean that anyone should change their behavior. The virus is still out there and we still cannot tell who is contagious. Limit your exposure, wear a mask and socially distance yourself from others. Don't fix it if it's not broken. That said... some of us could use a haircut! Wear your mask and make sure your salon is following the rules and best practices.

MetroWest Center has not yet begun to bring staff back into the office. However, we are fully staffed on-line, and ready to work with all consumers. We will resolve as much as possible remotely to protect both our staff and consumers.

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

Paul Spooner,
Executive Director



purple flowers



smiling dragonfly



tiny baby cucumber

In This Issue

Articles:

- [MetroWest Resources](#)
- [MetroWest Test Sites](#)
- [Testing Sites](#)
- [Telehealth](#)
- [Massachusetts Reopening](#)
- [Holyoke Soldiers' Home](#)
- [ADAPT on Congregate Institutions](#)
- [Schools Reopening](#)
- [MA Voting 2020](#)
- [Face Masks for PCAs](#)
- [Local Elections](#)
- [Health Connector Expanded Enrollment](#)
- [Mass.gov](#)
- [Unemployment](#)
- [Food Pantries](#)

- [Housing](#)
- [2020 Census](#)

Information for Activists:

- [National Contact Info](#)
- [State Contact Info](#)
- [National Resources](#)
- [REV UP Massachusetts](#)

[MA Tales of Independence](#)

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

Testing Sites

Visit this interactive, online map to find testing sites statewide:
memamaps.maps.arcgis.com

Senate President Karen Spilka on Telehealth

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought some benefits to people with disabilities. For people who always limit exposure to others, and people who have transportation challenges, the enforcement of social isolating has meant more acceptance of working from home and **telehealth**.

Senate President Karen Spilka and Senator Cindy Friedman wrote an article in Commonwealth Magazine entitled [Telehealth is Working, Let's Keep it That Way](#). Senators Spilka and Friedman describe the senate action below, and we encourage everyone to support the Patients First Act by contacting their legislators. Please read the entire article and learn more about this important service!

"COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our lives, our healthcare system, and our economy, but one silver lining has been the immediate and dramatic expansion of telehealth services. We'd be foolish not to seize this opportunity to ensure that telehealth access remains a part of routine medical care in the Commonwealth long after the pandemic is over."

"The Patients First Act, recently filed in the Massachusetts Senate, requires insurance carriers, including MassHealth, to cover telehealth services in any instance where the equivalent in-person service is covered. The bill also embraces an expansive definition of telehealth services, including care through audio-only telephone calls to assist those patients who may not have access to a smart phone, tablet, or computer.

Audio-only telehealth services are a vital tool to reduce healthcare access disparities among vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, including those with low income, the elderly, communities of color, those with behavioral health conditions, and people living in geographically isolated areas without internet access. The bill further requires that telehealth services be reimbursed at the same level as in-person health care services over the next two years to ensure the continued expansion of these services.

Finally, to address concerns related to the potential cost of telehealth services on our healthcare system, the Patients First Act requires the Health Policy Commission to monitor the impact of telehealth on the system, recommend ways to maintain access, and ensure that it is sustainable for providers, payers, and - most importantly - consumers. "

Massachusetts Reopening

We are in the midst of Governor Baker's Phase 2 of reopening

Massachusetts.

Visit [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) to learn the details of reopening, including workplace protocols, and business safety standards. If you are not comfortable with a salon's cleaning protocols, then do not get your hair cut or find another salon.

Holyoke Soldiers' Home

The [independent state report](#) on the Holyoke Soldier's Home horror was released. Very basic mistakes in infection control were made leading directly to the very large numbers of infection and deaths.

[WBUR.org](https://www.wbur.org) reported on the report as well as Governor Baker's response. We have paraphrased and copied some of the report below.

According to the report, the leadership team failed on several issues:

- Mixing one floor of veterans who had the virus with another floor of veterans without symptoms
- Not isolating patients suspected of having the virus
- Not immediately testing veterans who showed COVID-19 symptoms
- Waiting too long to close common spaces in the home
- Rotating staff among units
- Not having consistent policies for personal protective equipment
- Failing to properly document the problem and keep records

Another key mistake was leaving a position unfilled (budget) which had been created by the legislature to ensure there was someone with healthcare oversight experience.

We mourn the unnecessary pain and deaths the soldiers and their families have experienced. The knowledge that not even the most basic best practices for congregate living were followed is horrific. Unfortunately, this story is probably the tip of the iceberg... many other institutions have also had unnecessarily high infection and death rates.

Independent Living means ending institutions. While we have no hopes of this happening any time soon, we need to use these horrific stories to increase the availability of in-home services and to improve the quality of life in institutions. The way that institutions are run is out in the open now, and is clearly wrong.

National ADAPT Statement on Covid-19 Deaths in Segregated Congregate Institutions

"It is time to recognize the similarities between systemic police violence and systems that imprison people, how race and disability intertwine, and

how all congregate institutions including prisons, institutions for people with developmental disabilities, psychiatric institutions, and immigrant detention camps arise from systems designed to oppress those whom society devalues.

Covid-19 has killed over 32,750 disabled people in substandard nursing homes in the United States, with a disparate number of those being people of color. National ADAPT is compelled to speak out against this widespread and horrifying human rights catastrophe.

ADAPT strongly denounces the ongoing human rights violations committed against disabled people in all congregate care settings, and we reject the notion that age and underlying conditions sufficiently explain the outrageously high rate of death in these institutions. The occurrence of neglect, abuse, terror, and despair that disabled people experience daily in these facilities is well documented. Yet we continue to be socially removed from our families, homes, and communities in the name of cost-effectiveness, efficiency, or worse, for the convenience and comfort of non-disabled society, and the profit of health care professionals and shareholders.

No longer will we excuse or abide the socially accepted biases that dehumanize disabled people...."

Download the entire statement: [National ADAPT Statement on Covid.docx](#).

Or read the statement at [NationalADAPT.org](#).

Schools Reopening

The state's [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) was released on June 25.

Special educators are especially concerned. If you have or are a child with disabilities, we recommend you talk to your school district regarding their re-opening plans.

One educator said: "The biggest concern is how students on IEPs will access the curriculum in the least restrictive environment. How will schools provide these students with FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)?"

Schools are required to create focused plans for serving special student populations across the 3 models of 1. In-person learning with new safety requirements, 2. Hybrid learning and 3. Remote learning. The plans must detail how special populations, including students with disabilities and English learners, will receive necessary services and accommodations.

Additional guidance is expected for students with disabilities. Some immediate concerns for students with disabilities, including learning

disabilities are:

- the Hybrid model - with half in-person and half on-line results in a lot of additional staff preparation for the on-line classes. Simply recording the in-person class does not work for this population
- the outside services such as PT, OT and speech may not work well with social distancing
- One on One aids will find it very difficult to social distance
- Pre-school and kindergartners, especially with developmental and intellectual disabilities, will find it very difficult to wear masks and socially distance
- Deaf students need to lip read. While the deaf child could be provided a cut-out mask, schools are not positioned to supply all students with clear mouthed masks

And of course, there are concerns for all students under the new guidance. Some quick examples:

- The restriction to keep students together in small groups makes recess more difficult. For instance, if there are 4 sixth grade classes, the guidelines suggest each class has it's own recess. The school day is not long enough for 4 recesses just for one grade.
- Schools are advised to keep windows open. Not all schools have windows that open.

Face Masks for PCAs

Thank you to the Disability Policy Consortium for this information:

Consumers of the Massachusetts PCA program can get **free masks and gloves delivered for PCAs** from their union, [1199SEIU](#). PCAs can order the masks online using the [1199SEIU order form](#).

Town Elections

You can help people with disabilities by asking your town clerk about the AutoMark machine. Even if you do not need or want to use it, the law requires that it be available for everyone. With the current Covid-19 environment, we are afraid that the AutoMark machine will not be a priority. If you identify a problem:

- *Contact the state at 800-462-VOTE (8683) (toll free) or 617-727-2828. You may also e-mail them at elections@sec.state.ma.us.*
- *Contact DLC at 800-872-9992 or 617-723-8455. Visit their website www.dlc-ma.org.*

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.

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
- **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

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)

- 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-\(raft\)-](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-dhcd-website#residential-assistance-for-families-in-transition-(raft)-)

- [program-and-covid-19-state-of-emergency-RAFT Policy Changes during COVID-19.php](#)

CHAPA has adapted operations and policy priorities. COVID-19 Affordable Housing Resources: www.chapa.org

Housing Consumer Education Centers - Download the [Covid-19-Housing-Resources.pdf](#) flyer.

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.

Massachusetts residents can use SNAP benefits to purchase groceries online via Walmart and Amazon, with more grocery retailers hopefully joining the program soon. Visit Mass.gov for more information. The state's Online Purchasing Program Outreach Flyers are now available in Spanish.

MassHealth Food Assistance Flyers

- [Food Assistance.php](#) - English
 - [Asistencia alimentaria durante la emergencia por COVID-19.php](#) Spanish
-

2020 Census

Complete your census! This information is completely confidential. Please let us know if you have questions.

Visit the [Revupma.org page](http://Revupma.org) for more information and resources about the Census.

To participate in the upcoming census, visit 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.





2020 Staff (visit the [staff page](#) for more info!)

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