

Dear Colleagues,

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal and local partners on the outbreak of novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and we continue to appreciate the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation. To date, DPH has confirmed a single case of COVID-19 in Boston, on Saturday, February 1 and has identified a presumed case of COVID-19 in Norfolk County on Monday, March 2. The risk to Massachusetts residents continues to remain low at this time.

The purpose of this communication is to inform long term care facilities (LTCFs) of new guidance documents made available by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assist facilities to prepare for the possibility of COVID-19 and prevent its potential spread in LTCFs.

- *Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take Now to Prepare for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/steps-to-prepare.html>
- Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>

DPH asks health care facilities to carefully review the current guidance from the CDC with all healthcare personnel and continue to prepare to care for residents with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 by implementing the following measures:

- Clinicians caring for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should immediately contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health 24/7 at (617) 983-6800 to review the risk assessment and discuss laboratory testing and control measures.
- Review your facility's current policies and procedures to minimize exposures to respiratory pathogens such as COVID-19 and influenza.
- Adhere to current CDC guidelines for healthcare personnel involved in treatment of confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 including standard, contact and airborne precautions, including the use of eye protection.
- Continue to implement the same strategies facilities use every day for detecting and preventing the spread of other respiratory viruses such as influenza. Examples include: posting signs at the facility entrance with instructions for individuals with symptoms of respiratory infection, monitoring and managing ill residents and exposed healthcare personnel, implementing strict infection control measures, ensuring that reporting protocols to public health authorities are adhered to and training and educating facility healthcare personnel.

- Re-educate healthcare personnel on proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE):
<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppe-sequence.pdf>

Thank you for the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation. Please visit DPH's new website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus> as well as the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

DPH will continue to communicate additional guidance as it becomes available.

Thank you,
The Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality