

DEC COVID-19 Update March 16,2020

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Emergency Actions to Address COVID-19

Yesterday, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a three-week suspension of school operations for educational purposes at all public and private elementary and secondary (K-12) schools in the Commonwealth beginning Tuesday, March 17, and a series of new guidance and legislation in response to COVID-19.

If an individual needs to leave home, it is essential to strictly follow social distancing guidelines by avoiding crowds, canceling social gatherings, and maintaining a safe separation of at least 6 feet from others.

- Elementary and Secondary Schools: suspend educational operations from March 17 until April 6.
- Gatherings & Restaurants: Governor Baker issued an emergency order limiting gatherings to 25 individuals and prohibiting on-premises consumption of food or drink at bars and restaurants, beginning on March 17 and effective until April 6.
- Executive Branch Employees: All non-emergency state employees working in Executive Branch agencies should not report to their workplace on Monday, March 16th and Tuesday, March 17th. Employees who are designated by their managers as emergency for the purposes of coronavirus planning should report to work as well.
- Health Care: The Department of Public Health issued guidance today that includes changes to health insurance, assisted living residences, and hospital and pharmacy operations.
- Registry of Motor Vehicles: The Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) will extend the renewal timeline of certain credentials to reduce the need for customers to physically visit an RMV service center for in-person transactions.
- Unemployment Assistance: The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA), in coordination with the US Department of Labor (USDOL), are taking a series of actions to assist workers and employers.
- Municipal Governance Legislation: Governor Baker announced a package of legislation to help address challenges to municipal governance resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, including potential delays in holding Town Meetings and adopting Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) municipal budgets.

The public is also reminded of steps to take to limit the spread of COVID-19:

- Cover your mouth – when you cough or sneeze use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- Wash your hands – with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based sanitizing gel.
- Stay home if you are sick – and avoid close contact with others.

For full details of today's announcement, see: <http://bit.ly/2w97pqV>

The latest information and guidance regarding COVID-19 is always available at [mass.gov/COVID19](https://www.mass.gov/COVID19).

Gov. Baker has issued an Executive Order suspending certain provisions of the state's Open Meeting Law, to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities while adhering to public health recommendations regarding social distancing. [The full text of the Governor's order can be found at this link.](#) Commission staff is exploring ways to hold a virtual public hearing for our March 24th public

hearing date. It is likely to include both live (Vicksburg Conference Room with social distancing) and call in technologies as well as use the Zoom meeting Ap. We are working through the issues to deploy these technologies and will update people as we learning more about our capacity to utilize them.

For Small Businesses and Non-profit Organizations: Many businesses and organizations will experience a loss of revenue during the crisis, due to reduction or suspension of business operations, or other interruptions and uncertainties related to funding sources. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and the Baker-Polito Administration are working closely with the SBA to activate the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, which would provide assistance to eligible businesses and non-profits impacted by COVID-19. The first step in this process is to meet a minimum threshold of affected businesses within Massachusetts. To do this, [affected small businesses and non-profits should download, complete, and submit the SBA EIDL Worksheet and Instructions to expedite activation of the EIDL program \(available online at this link\)](#). Completed forms may be submitted by email to Disaster.Recovery@mass.gov or by fax to 508-820-1401.