



Board Members

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BOARD OF HEALTH

TOWN OF MILFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01757

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To: Milford Residents

From: Milford Board of Health

Date: April 7, 2020

Re: Board of Health Operations During Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

During the global pandemic of COVID-19, the Milford Board of Health (BOH) is working diligently to protect residents' health and manage local needs and concerns. To protect the public's health and safety, the BOH is currently fulfilling the three core functions of public health as they apply to this pandemic: assessment, policy development, and assurance.

Assessment:

Monitor common challenges to solve community health problems

The Board of Health monitors public spaces to prevent transmission of COVID-19. For instance, the Board of Health and Milford Public Schools collaborated to make the difficult decision to close schools *before* Governor Baker closed schools statewide. Similarly, the BOH also informed other departments to close town buildings to visitors *before* the state-level decision was made. At the time of writing, the BOH continues to partner with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Police Department in monitoring socially responsible use of the Upper Charles River Trail, where household members and families may exercise. In all instances, the BOH continuously assesses the risks and benefits of closing these important community spaces.

Diagnose and investigate problems and hazards in the community

The Board of Health monitors all confirmed cases and people who are in mandatory self-isolation or self-quarantine due to diagnosis by a medical professional, close contact with confirmed cases, travel to a level 3 country, or other risk factors. All cases' health status is monitored, and their contacts are traced to prevent and mitigate spread of the virus in the community. The Salmon Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) adds critical capacity to the BOH in performing this contact tracing and monitoring.

Policy development:

Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues related to COVID-19

To date, the Board of Health has communicated with people via press releases, print media, social media, Reverse-911 telephone calls, the radio, television, and by adding a page to the town website: <https://www.milfordma.gov/coronavirus-covid-19-updates>



Source: https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ephli/core_ess.htm

The BOH shares information about the virus, the expected spread, new regulations, and actions individuals, community organizations, and policymakers may take to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve COVID-19 related health challenges

The Board of Health worked with Milford Public Schools to ensure their food distribution would work seamlessly, providing families with nutritious foods while schools are closed, and keeping residents and workers safe and healthy. Also, the BOH has assisted the Senior Center in continuing to organize Meals on Wheels, which delivers to senior citizens while also performing an informal wellness check on them. The BOH also solicited many residents to donate their unopened, unused personal protective equipment (PPE) to be able to funnel to our visiting nurse partners, first responders, and local health care providers. Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical School created and donated 50 face shields to the BOH, which were then shared with first responders and local health care providers. These are only some of the relationships which have promoted and protected health in Milford during the COVID-19 pandemic; the BOH is grateful to all for their dedication.

Develop policies and plans that support community health efforts

The town of Milford began enforcing Governor Baker's State of Emergency and ban on gatherings of 25 people (now 10 people) at 5:00pm on March 16, *earlier than the state required*, to ensure residents were protected. The Board of Health researched consequences of social gatherings and their impact on the trajectory of the spread of COVID-19 to inform this decision. All departments agreed that letting the public gather for one more day before enforcing the ban defeated the purpose of social distancing to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Assurance:

Enforcing regulations to protect health and safety

The Board of Health is working continuously with the Milford Police Department to ensure there are no gatherings of more than ten people and there is no on-premise consumption of food and beverage at town food establishments. The BOH also communicates with restaurants continuously to help them implement changes which protect health of employees and customers. At this time, in accordance with guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), all restaurant inspections are suspended unless they are urgent or pertain to COVID-19. Also in accordance with guidance from the DPH, all housing inspections are suspended unless they are urgent and pose an immediate threat or hazard. Other routine inspections are also suspended, in accordance with orders from the DPH. The BOH remains available to consult decision making as needed to maintain proper functioning of pools, septic systems, and other facilities which are normally inspected.

Linking residents to health care services and health care providers

The BOH has compiled information about test site locations, hours, stipulations for testing, and turnaround time for results to ensure residents may access the tests needed to diagnose COVID-19. This database is critical in fulfilling this essential service. It has been shared with other towns' boards of health to ensure all residents in the area are protected; to control infectious diseases that have no known vaccine or treatment, testing, isolating, and quarantining alongside population-wide social distancing are the only tools.

Assuring a competent workforce

The Board of Health has provided personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand sanitizer to area health care workers, first responders, and essential employees who must continue working. Additionally, the BOH continuously responds to businesses which seek advice about policies, engineering or administrative controls, necessary PPE to protect workers, and isolating and quarantining those who test positive. When the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided, these actions by the BOH assure that all the healthy, competent workers waiting to go back to work are still healthy enough to do so.

Evaluating the effectiveness of area public health services

The Board of Health nimbly evaluates problems and devises solutions. Several times every week, the BOH communicates with state agencies, policy and decision makers to highlight gaps in information infrastructure that could put people at risk. For example, since no policy exists for clinicians to inform the BOH of cases which are diagnosed *without a laboratory test*, we have built relationships with area physicians, requesting they share address information with the Board of Health. In accordance with federal and state regulations, this information is only shared with first responders who must know what personal protective equipment to don prior to helping residents who call for their assistance.

Researching for new insights and innovative solutions to COVID-19 related challenges in the community by communicating with other municipalities and state agencies

As always, the Board of Health iteratively researches for innovative solutions to contemporary challenges through reviewing peer-reviewed literature and best practices and collaborating with nearby towns' boards of health. For instance, the BOH in Milford has ordered all restaurants which have drive-through windows to lock the doors to their dining rooms. This policy has not been widely implemented, yet it is a proven way to allow workers and customers greater distance from each other and improved food safety practices.