



CORONAVIRUS BRIEFING: MARCH 5, 2021

THE CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS BRIEFING FOR THE TOWN OF WELLESLEY

Visit Wellesley's COVID-19 Information Hub at www.wellesleyma.gov/coronavirus

Total confirmed COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts: 556,307

[View the COVID-19 Interactive dashboard.](#)

Total confirmed positive cases in Wellesley: 1089 (109 new cases in past 14 days)

Average Daily Incidence Rate/100,000 for Wellesley: 26.2 (past 14 days)

Percent Positivity of Testing: 0.81% (past 14 days)

[View the Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report.](#) Updated on March 4, 2021

Wellesley is continuing to see a slight increase in COVID-19 cases. Health officials believe that testing in our community is keeping up with disease transmission but we remain in the yellow (moderate) risk level. As we approach the one-year anniversary of the Coronavirus pandemic, COVID fatigue is very real, but we all need to continue to follow precautions - **wear a mask, watch your distance from others, and wash your hands.** These restrictions still apply even to those individuals who have been fully vaccinated.

Vaccine Update

The State is reporting that so far, 650,411 individuals in Massachusetts are fully vaccinated. However, scheduling COVID-19 vaccine appointments is still difficult and newly added appointments are booked very quickly. Beginning on March 11, [educators living or working in Massachusetts are eligible](#) to schedule vaccine appointments through the [Massachusetts vaccine finder](#) website. (A reminder that the clinic at Fenway Park will move to the Hynes Convention Center in Boston on March 18.)

[CVS retail pharmacies, including locations in Wellesley](#), are offering educator appointments now. CVS is receiving vaccines through the Federal retail pharmacy program, not the State, and is following a slightly different timeline. New appointments at CVS clinics are added on a rolling basis so check back frequently.

The Council on Aging continues to provide COVID-19 vaccine scheduling help for any eligible senior citizens living in Wellesley. For assistance, call **781-235-3961**. The Health Department is working with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) on plans for vaccinating any homebound Wellesley residents.

A note about vaccines. There are now three approved COVID-19 vaccines, developed by Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson. They will all protect you from becoming severely ill from Coronavirus. The best vaccine to get is the one that is available to you the soonest!

Wellesley Public Schools Reopening Plans

Today the State Board of Education voted to approve a proposal for school districts to reopen schools full-time. Read the announcement from WPS Superintendent Dr. David Lussier with information on reopening plans for WPS.

Dear Members of the Wellesley Public Schools Community:

I write to share an update on our school reopening plans following important announcements from the state over the past two weeks. Last Tuesday, Education Commissioner Jeff Riley announced his plan to seek authority from the State Board of Education to require full, in-person learning for Grades K-5 beginning in early April. Today, the Board of Education voted to approve that request and districts throughout the state are working to meet this requirement, which should allow for a more unified model of instruction throughout the Commonwealth.

Additionally, Gov. Baker announced on Wednesday that Public School Educators and Staff would be further prioritized to receive COVID-19 vaccinations beginning on March 11th. This was welcomed news for which we and many of our colleagues in the education community have been advocating for some time. (Members of our staff have already had some success signing up for vaccines through the [CVS Website](#), which will help accelerate this process.)

So what does all of this mean for WPS? First, the transition to full schedules at our elementary schools will be more seamless than in many other communities, as our grades K, 1, and 2 students already attend full schedules, four days a week. In order to fold in grades 3, 4, and 5, the District will be expanding our weekly viral testing program to include students in grades 3-5. (All district staff already participate in this program as do students at WMS and WHS.) We will provide training and resources to parents at these grade levels before phasing in this testing program.

WPS will also be working to maintain six-feet of social distancing wherever possible, but allowing a minimum of three-feet of social distancing at school. A minimum of six-feet will be maintained whenever students/staff need to lower their masks, such as during lunches and breaks.

While the district is still working with the Wellesley Educators Association (WEA) to amend our Memorandum of Agreement in light of these state decisions, we expect to make a transition to a full, five-day, in-person schedule for grades K-5 beginning the week of April 5th. (Wednesdays will be a half-day of in-person learning.) We remain grateful for the partnership between the district and the WEA, which has allowed us to collaborate through the many phases of our school reopening plans.

For our students/families in the Remote Learning School (RLS), the Commissioner has stated that an all-remote learning option will be allowed for the remainder of the year for those students in programs such as our RLS.

In order to communicate more details about this next phase of school reopening, WPS will be hosting a webinar for staff and the community on Thursday, March 11th from 7-8:30PM. (<https://wellesleyps.zoom.us/j/89116980611>) During the webinar, we will be joined by experts from the medical community and Board of Health who have been advising the district and can speak to the evolving science related to the virus in schools as well as the vaccines.

Finally, we know that our community is equally interested in next steps for Grades 6-12. The state has provided fewer details at this point on the timing of expanded, in-person learning expectations at the secondary level. Recognizing the challenge of significantly larger student populations at WMS and WHS, along with more restrictive spaces, our team is continuing to work through the many logistical issues that must be solved before phasing in a full return, which we hope to accomplish later this spring.

Tying all of these elements together will be our continued vigilance in following safety protocols both inside and outside of school. We will also have to continue to employ a great deal of flexibility and understanding as we make these complex transitions. Working together as a school community, I am confident that we can move forward safely and successfully in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

*Dr. David Lussier
Superintendent of Schools*

Travel Order Updates

Massachusetts has added three states to the list of lower-risk travel locations. Missouri, Oregon, and Washington State now join Hawaii and Puerto Rico as locations that are exempt from the [Travel Order](#) requiring individuals to fill out a form and undergo testing or quarantine if they are returning from these areas.

In New England, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island are open to visitors from Massachusetts without quarantine restrictions. In Vermont, any visitor who is fully vaccinated does not need to quarantine. However, when returning to Massachusetts from these locations, travelers must follow Travel Order guidelines.

Parking Reminder

Payment for parking is now required at all on-street parking meters, municipal, and commuter lots in Wellesley. Pay for parking using coins or with your phone by using the [PaybyPhone](#) or [Passport Parking](#) app. Detailed information is available on the [Parking Clerk webpages](#).

Congratulations to New Town-wide Officials and Town Meeting Members!

Wellesley residents elected to Town-wide offices were sworn in today via Zoom by Town Clerk KC Kato. New Town Meeting members will be sworn in before the start of Annual Town Meeting on April 26, 2021. Congratulations to everyone and thank you for your service to our Town.



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