



## NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



### Update on COVID-19 From the Town of Needham and Needham Public Health

March 12, 2020 – Beginning today, Needham Public Health will provide daily updates Monday through Friday to the community on the status of our efforts to protect the residents, businesses, employees and visitors to the Town of Needham. We hope that these updates will provide you with confidence that we are doing all we can to keep our community healthy and safe in these challenging and uncertain times.

We understand that this virus is making many people anxious and fearful, and that the steps being taken by local, state and federal officials may significantly disrupt the lives of you and your families. Please know that no decision we make is made lightly. We use the best available information provided to us by state and federal authorities, and we continue to do as much proactive planning as possible.

In Needham, we're lucky to have a robust emergency management team that has been meeting and planning for emergency scenarios on a regular basis long before Coronavirus struck. We have contingency plans in place to help us continue to provide critical services to the community wherever and whenever possible.

Needham Public Health is in regular communication with MA Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is continuing to follow its guidance in decisions and actions we take. We are also in regular communication with Needham Schools to ensure our efforts are coordinated.

The Select Board will meet to receive an update from Needham Public Health on Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 5:15 pm. The public is encouraged to view the meeting on local cable (Channel 9 Comcast, RCN 15, Verizon 29).

As of today, here is the current situation in Needham:

- The Town announced on March 11, 2020 that it was notified by the state of one confirmed case of COVID-19 in a Needham resident. The resident has been quarantined and does not pose a risk to the public. There is currently no evidence of community spread in Needham and there is no evidence of exposure in Town or school buildings. We will not be providing additional public updates on individual cases should they arise, unless there is a risk to the public. Doing so would only serve to create additional fear and anxiety and potentially stigmatize the affected individual. Individuals who are determined to be at risk for contracting the virus because of a specific situation or specific contact with an individual will be notified by Needham Public Health.
- The Center at the Heights (CATH) was shut down for the time being in order to protect individuals most susceptible to contracting the virus. Staff continues to work to provide important services to those seniors who reside in Needham.
- Following the guidance of MA DPH and the CDC, the Town and Needham Public Health have advised that all non-essential meetings both hosted by the Town and hosted by external parties be cancelled or postponed. Examples of non-essential meetings include: neighborhood meetings, public study groups, task forces, meetings of non-permitting boards and committees.



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- Meetings such as board meetings and commission meetings should be cancelled or postponed if scheduled within the next 30 days. If those meetings are necessary for the continued operation of government (or reflect statutory or regulatory obligations) and must take place in the next few weeks, precautions must be taken. Precautions include limiting agendas to critical items (eliminate ceremonial or other non-essential items) and taking extra health measures such as spacing chairs further apart, offering hand sanitizer, and individual pens rather than shared pens.
- Please check with event organizers to determine whether your event has been cancelled. We also advise residents to consider cancelling or postponing any events that have planned in the near future.

We continue to take all efforts to ensure our public buildings are safe. Our public buildings, including our schools, are all regularly cleaned. This includes disinfecting bathrooms and wiping down surfaces. State and federal health officials advise routine cleaning practices are appropriate at this time.

We have developed a list of [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) and are adding to that list regularly. We continue to urge residents to make the personal health decisions they feel are best for themselves and their families. We will continue to use several tools to deliver updates. Please continue to check the Needham Public Health [website](#). We will also post updates on the Town's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages. Subscribe to the Town's Newsflash and sign up for AlertNeedham. Text "Needham" to 67283. For specific questions, residents may email [publichealthnursing@needhamma.gov](mailto:publichealthnursing@needhamma.gov).

We urge everyone in the community to review plans for alternate work schedules, childcare, daytime activities and other impacts of this situation. Also, please continue to practice good hygiene and make the decisions that are best for you and your families. We ask for your flexibility, support and understanding as we work to best address the needs of our entire community at this difficult time. Please continue to visit our website for updated coronavirus information: [www.needhamma.gov/health](http://www.needhamma.gov/health)

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