



## NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH



March 16, 2020

Daycare and Early Education Centers Operating in Needham,

In the Town of Needham, strong measures have been taken to help stop the spread of COVID-19, an infectious disease that spreads quickly person-to-person and which can have significant negative health outcomes for seniors and individuals with high-risk conditions (including those with heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes, people who are immune-compromised, and pregnant women).

The Town and the Needham Public Schools have conducted extensive public information and education efforts about effective infection control practices to stop the spread of COVID-19. Needham has taken steps to promote social distancing by closing or limiting use of schools and public buildings. Evidence shows that social distancing is one of the most effective ways to combat the spread of infectious diseases. Social distancing occurs when people stay away from crowds and large gatherings, and when they maintain a person-to-person distance of at least six feet. Needham's efforts at social distancing included closing the Center at the Heights (3/11), closing the Needham Public Schools (3/13), drastically reducing the staff at all Town Buildings (3/16), and finally closing all Town Buildings to the public (effective tomorrow, 3/17).

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker held a press conference last evening (3/15), where he announced additional state efforts to enforce social distancing to combat the COVID-19 outbreak. Those efforts include having all non-emergency executive branch state employees work from home, prohibiting gatherings of 25 people or more, shutting down all schools statewide until at least April 6th, and prohibiting the on-premise consumption of food or beverages. Additionally, although Governor Baker did not close daycares, he did urge extreme caution from daycare operators and encouraged them to consider whether they are able to operate safely in the current environment.

Many daycares in Needham have chosen to temporarily suspend operations as a means to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Some daycares have chosen to continue their operations during the outbreak.

In a time where the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has declared a state of emergency in response to the spread of a novel infectious disease and when social distancing to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus has been employed at the state and the local level, the operation of a facility that feeds and cares for children in close quarters presents an unacceptable risk of spreading that infectious disease. As such it qualifies as a nuisance that may be injurious to the public health. Therefore, acting as the agent<sup>1</sup> of the Needham Board of Health with the authority granted to it under M.G.L Chapter 111, Section 122, I order that all daycare facilities operating in the Town of Needham shall suspend operations at the end of the day on March 16, 2020 until April 6, 2020 or when advised by this office.

Sincerely,

Timothy Muir McDonald, MPA  
Director of Health & Human Services  
Town of Needham, MA

<sup>1</sup> The Director acts as the agent of the elected Needham Board of Health in accordance with the terms outlined in M.G.L Chapter 111, Section 30.