



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Covid-19 Update

December 17, 2020 – The Town of Needham and Needham Public Health today provided the following update regarding COVID-19.

State DPH COVID-19 Numbers

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports the number of positive cases and deaths daily on the state's COVID-19 [dashboard](#).

Town-specific case numbers are published by the state every Thursday.

- 697 Needham cases to date (12/17/2020). This is an increase of 57 cases since the 12/10/20 report. Needham is in the YELLOW category this week. Read the state's Weekly Public Health Report [here](#).
- 86 Coronavirus deaths in Needham to date (12/03/20).

Questions About the Vaccine? Needham Public Health Has Some Answers

Do you have questions about how or when you might get the Covid vaccine? Is the vaccine safe for you? What are the side effects? Needham Public Health is answering these and many other vaccine-related questions. Front line health care workers across Massachusetts have begun receiving the vaccine, with additional categories of individuals to follow. Find out what you need to know about the vaccine [here](#).

Needham Offering Free Taxi Services to Those In Need

Thanks to an emergency grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the Town is offering free taxi service to residents 18 years and older to travel for work, medical appointments, grocery shopping and other important errands. Service is available for Needham residents to travel within a 20-mile radius from your Needham address. Rides MUST be requested by **12 pm on the business day before** you need a ride. Please complete this [form](#) to request taxi service. If you are unable to complete this form online or have any questions regarding your ride, please call 781-343-1258 Monday-Friday 9 am to 4 pm, excluding weekends and holidays. You can also email taxiride@needhamma.gov. Please note that this service is made possible through a grant from MAPC and does NOT include gratuity. If you are experiencing any possible symptoms of COVID-19 per CDC guidelines, have tested positive for COVID-19, or are awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test we are unable to provide transportation through this program. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Center at the Heights at 781-855-3629.

There is no limit on the number of rides an individual can take. Riders must be 18+. Rides are limited to 2 people per van and must reside in the same household. Rides are available Monday through Friday, 8 am – 6 pm. Rides are not available during the weekend. Masks should be worn while in the vehicle.

Emergency Rental Assistance Still Available to Those in Need

The Town continues to make funding available to help those who need help paying rent due to Covid-related income loss. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Qualified residents may receive assistance covering 50 percent of their rent, up to \$1,500 per month, for up to three months. To qualify, applicants must reside in a private rental unit, including affordable Chapter 40B units, in Needham. Residents must earn at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). Preference will be granted to those earning at or below 50 percent AMI. All participants will be required to document loss of income due to COVID-19. Households living in Needham Housing Authority units, having a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) subsidy, or other housing subsidy, are not eligible for this program as those residents are already entitled to rent reductions if their income is reduced. Residents of nursing homes are also ineligible. To learn more and determine whether you qualify, contact Robyn Rufo at robyn@metrowestcd.org or 617-923-3505 x 5



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State Offers Tips for Those in Quarantine and Isolation

The state has launched a new [website](#) for those seeking information about how to make Covid quarantine and isolation easier. The site includes frequently asked questions and tips for preparing for isolation or quarantine to make sure you have the support you need to get through the period. Those advised to quarantine or isolate may always call Needham Public Health at 781-455-7940 as well.

Commuter Rail Operating at Reduced Services Levels Due to Covid-19

The MBTA this week temporarily reduced commuter rail service due to low employee availability because of COVID-19 absences. Regular train service includes 541 daily trains, but as of December 14, Commuter Rail is operating 246 daily trains. Weekend trains will continue to operate on a regular schedule. The reduced schedule is expected to last at least one more full week but may be extended depending on employee levels. Schedules are posted on MBTA.com and more information on Reduced Service Schedules can be found [here](#).