

## **Lunenburg Board of Health Update**

**March 27, 2020**

The Board of Health would like to report the following actions are being taken to assist the community with the COVID-19 outbreak

- 1.) Our public health nurses are on the front line of this situation as they monitor the State's communicable disease surveillance system – MAVEN for our community. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has advised against reporting on the number of cases in each community; they are concerned with the potential that individual(s) may be identified (particularly in a small community) and subject to bullying. Here is the statement from DPH: *“In order to protect privacy and confidentiality of individuals who test positive for COVID-19, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health only publicly shares positive case numbers and deaths by county. We understand that many boards of health find value in sharing community-specific data as part of a risk communication plan and to keep the public informed about the scope of the local public health effort. If you choose to share numbers of cases or deaths for these purposes, please do so with the highest regard for privacy and confidentiality by not including any information other than the case count.”*
  
- 2.) Here is a brief description of the surveillance work conducted by our public health nurses to address positive cases and close contacts.

*When the Board of Health receives laboratory confirmation that an individual has tested positive for COVID-19 it takes the following actions.*

*A public health nurse contacts the individual who tested positive and directs them to isolate, as required by State regulations; the nurse will monitor them during their isolation period. In addition to providing ongoing support and education about isolation, the nurse will also make an assessment to identify those individuals that have been in close contact with this person (defined as anyone within 6' of the individual for more than 15 minutes).*

*The nurse will then contact those individuals and they will be requested to quarantine for a minimum of 14 days; the Board of Health will establish a monitoring system with these individuals.*

- 3.) The office continues to see new cases. In order to conduct the necessary isolation and quarantine duties we have added a couple of nurses to assist our two public health nurses. In addition, we are working with a former outreach worker to investigate and provide the office with resources in each community which may be necessary for those in isolation and quarantine.

The public is pressing to know the name, address and movements of individuals testing positive. HIPPA prevents us from releasing the information. I'm happy to speak to citizens who have these questions; it gives me the opportunity to explain how someone might get exposed and explain the nurses' job in tracking down those who tested positive and those who are close contacts.

- 4.) Our staff continues to field a wide range of questions regarding this situation helping citizens find the answers they need, including questions regarding Governor's order on essential business and revised assemblage (25 to 10 people). To see all of the Governor's orders click on the following link <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency>.
- 5.) Our Staff regularly participates in conference calls with the DPH.
- 6.) The Nashoba Associated Boards of Health office is closed to the public but the Health Agents, Public Health Nurses and administrative staff are available by phone and email. The office will continue to perform most of their inspectional duties for our Town. We have a drop box at the front door to facilitate the exchange of paperwork.
- 7.) Citizens who want up to date alerts on COVID-19 can sign up for Massachusetts COVID-19 text alerts. To get up-to-date alerts sent directly to your phone, text COVIDMA to 888-777.
- 8.) A copy of the most recent MEMA situational report is attached for your information.
- 9.) We would like to remind the public they can protect themselves and others by taking the following actions.
  - a. If you're sick please **stay home** and take care of yourself!
  - b. Wash your hands, for at least 20 seconds.
  - c. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.
  - d. Practice social distancing

- i. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. Another way to prevent the illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person:
  - 1. Between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6') and,
  - 2. Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person sneezes or coughs.
- e. Additional information on how to protect you and your family can be found at the links below.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

[www.mass.gov/covid19](http://www.mass.gov/covid19)