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Westport Board of Health
COVID-19
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Case Status:

Total number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases of Westport residents on the state's weekly city & town report of January 7, 2021 was **873**. The totals from our last regular weekly report on Dec. 18th stood at **611, with an average of 87+ cases added each week**. Westport remains in the RED zone of higher risk. We continue to see household transmission as the main source of positive cases in town. Two residents are currently hospitalized. Unfortunately we report an additional death due to COVID-19 to bring us to a total of **7 Westport resident deaths since the beginning of the pandemic**. The rolling 14 day incidence rate of cases has risen to **67.4/100,000**. Statewide the toll has reached 12,634 confirmed deaths and 393,188 cases as of January 7th. The state has created an [interactive data dashboard](#), which combines statewide daily and city/town weekly COVID case and testing data, plus many more variables.

Testing Data:

15,945 COVID tests have been performed on Westport residents based on the state's January 7th weekly report. There were **174** positive tests out of 1551 done in the last 14 days for a positivity rate of **11.22%**. This rate has risen steadily over the last few weeks

Latest State Guidance:

As of Dec 26th, temporary public health guidance for lower gathering size and business capacity is in effect and **has been extended an extra two weeks through January 24th**. Read a summary of the restrictions [here](#).

Capacity Limits: Under the current restrictions that are being extended to January 24th, most industries in Massachusetts remain subject to a 25% capacity limit:

- Restaurants (based on permitted seating capacity)
- Close Contact Personal Services
- Theaters and Performance Venues
- Office Spaces
- Places of Worship
- Retail Businesses
- Lodging (for common areas)
- Arcades and Indoor Recreation Businesses
- Fitness Centers and Health Clubs
- Museums, Cultural Facilities and Guided Tours

Workers and staff will not count towards the occupancy count for restaurants, places of worship, close contact personal services, and retail businesses. All other rules and restrictions in each sector-specific guidance will continue to remain in effect.

Gatherings Limit: The current gathering limits in place since December 26 are also being extended. Indoor gatherings will remain limited to 10 people. Outdoor gatherings will remain limited to 25 people outside. The gatherings limit applies to private homes, event venues and public spaces.

Hospital Tier Escalation: In response to the continued rise in hospitalizations, all regions across the state have been escalated to Tier 4 status. In Tier 4, the hospitals in each region will meet at least daily, and will continue to collaborate across regions where necessary, to address growing capacity constraints and continue to load balance as needed.

ICU Nurse Staffing Ratios: To support the health care system's continued response to the surge in cases and hospitalizations, the Commonwealth is allowing the deployment of acute nursing staffing under certain circumstances. Starting today, hospitals with severe capacity constraints may request a temporary exemption from the mandated nurse-to-patient ratios in the ICU.

New Variant of COVID-19:

Rapid spread of this new variant was recognized in the UK in mid-December 2020. We are early in our efforts to understand this new variant and are sharing what is known at this time. At this time, we have no evidence that infections by this variant cause more severe disease, however the variant may spread more easily and quickly than previous strains. Learn more: [New COVID-19 Variants | CDC](#).

CDC's recommendations for slowing the spread—wearing masks, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, avoiding crowds, ventilating indoor spaces, and washing hands often—will also prevent the spread of this variant.

Vaccine Update:

- We are currently in **Phase 1** of the [MA COVID-19 vaccine distribution timeline](#).
- On January 4, the MA vaccine distribution plan has been updated so that individuals age 75+ are included in Phase 2, Group 1, along with individuals of all ages with 2+ comorbidities.
- Vaccinations for first responders will begin January 11. Details can be found at [mass.gov/FirstResponderVaccine](#).
- COVID-19 vaccinations continue for COVID-facing health care workers and residents and staff of long term care facilities through the [Federal Pharmacy Partnership Program](#).
- On December 24, a [new vaccination dashboard](#) was launched with state metrics. The dashboard will be posted every Thursday by 5 p.m. and will include information on vaccine supply distribution, administration, and other data.

Be aware of vaccine scams:

As COVID-19 vaccine distribution begins, be aware that scams are starting to emerge. It's important to know what signs to watch for, including:

- You are asked to pay out-of-pocket to get the vaccine
- You are asked to pay to put your name on a vaccine waiting list or to get early access
- Marketers offering to sell or ship doses of the vaccine for payment

COVID Testing:

Stop the Spread: Has been extended to March 15th. Free testing of asymptomatic individuals. Local sites are in Fall River and New Bedford. The Whale's Tooth parking lot rapid test site in New Bedford, capable of handling 1000 tests a day, is operational. Register at app.beacontesting.com/.

All Test sites: Check the individual test sites for appointment, referral and insurance requirements.

NEW Resources:

Sector-Specific Small Business Relief Grant Program: Targets industries experiencing the most significant economic hardship and a loss of revenue, including restaurants, food trucks, personal services, independent retailers and others for grants up to \$75,000. The online application will close on Friday, January 15. Program details are at: <https://www.empoweringsmallbusiness.org/>

<https://handholdma.org/> It can be hard for parents to tell the difference between when their kid is just having a bad day or when their child might be struggling with a more serious challenge to their mental health. This site exists to help you know the difference and know what steps you can take if your child does need a little extra help.

The Need for Blood Donations Continues and Recovered COVID-19 Donors Can Help Save Lives

In coordination with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Red Cross is seeking people who are fully recovered from the new coronavirus to sign up to donate plasma to help current COVID-19 patients. People who have fully recovered from COVID-19 have antibodies in their plasma that can attack the virus. This convalescent plasma is being evaluated as treatment for patients with serious or immediately life-threatening COVID-19 infections, or those judged by a healthcare provider to be at high risk of progression to severe or life-threatening condition. Interested individuals can visit RedCrossBlood.org/plasma4covid to learn more. The Red Cross follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and volunteer donors are the only source of blood for those in need. To make an appointment to donate, please visit www.RedCrossBlood.org

Town COVID Updates:

- **Westport First Responder Vaccine Clinic:** Westport has partnered with Dartmouth to coordinate a Phase 1 Regional COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic for public safety employees, school nurses and first responders only. The clinic will provide the Moderna vaccine, which is given in two doses 28 days apart. We expect the first doses to be given January 12-14, 2021.
- **Phase II of the vaccine rollout is anticipated for February to April**, and will include individuals with a high risk of COVID complications, teachers (early education, K-12), grocery, utility, food and agriculture, sanitation, public works and public health workers and adults 65+. We anticipate offering future clinics but do not have any details currently. The Board of Health will provide updates as we learn more.
- **Town Hall and Annex** – Open to the public **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY**. Service by phone, mail, outdoor drop box, or online is recommended. Face masks are required for in-person appointments.

- **The Westport Food Pantry is at the Westport Grange, 931 Main Rd.** Next food pantry pick-up will be Monday, January 11 from 9 am to noon. Monetary donations can be sent to the Friends of the Westport Council on Aging (FWCOA) Attn. Food Pantry, PO Box 4228, Westport, MA 02790. Food and grocery gift card donations are accepted on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings.
- **NEW! Pet Food Pantry** – The Westport Animal Control Department is proud to join the efforts of the Westport Food Pantry by providing dog and cat supplies. Donations of dry or canned dog or cat food, (maximum weight 25#), as well as treats, toys, cat litter and puppy training pads are gladly accepted. Please drop off your pet supply donation at the Grange, during its regular donation times.
- **Schools** - The Westport Community Schools now reports weekly updates on COVID cases at <https://westportschools.org/covid-19/>.
- **Flu season:** Regular dose flu vaccines are available from the Town Nurse by appointment only. Note that you must wait 14 days after the flu shot before getting a COVID vaccine, so please plan accordingly. Call 508-636-1030 to make an appointment.

In closing:

Stay safe everyone. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Matthew J. Armendo, Director