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**Westport Board of Health COVID-19 Update**  
**November 13, 2020**

**Case Update:**

Total number of state confirmed COVID-19 positive cases of Westport residents on November 11th was **305, up another 53 cases in the last week and little sign of slowing down yet.** The rolling 14 day incidence rate continued to climb higher, going up from 35.0 to **44.8/100,000**. Statewide the incidence rate is 20.7, so Westport is more than double that.

**Westport has now been in the “red” or higher risk category for four consecutive weeks. The community had to revert back to Step 1 of Phase 3 as of Monday, November 9th.** Indoor performance venues are now closed, outdoor gatherings in public are limited to 50 (vs. 100), and capacity at various facilities is reduced to 40%. Please see the attached chart for a full summary of changes due to the rollback.

Bristol County has the highest incidence rate (30.8/100,000) and positivity rate (4.57%) of all counties in Massachusetts and Westport is above the county average for both measurements. The complete data are available from the [state's weekly community COVID report](#).

We have had to turn all contract tracing over to the state Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) team because the numbers overwhelmed our ability to keep up. The CTC is also having challenges due to the high volume of cases statewide. However, we have worked out a protocol so that when the CTC is unable to reach a person (case or contact), the Board of Health will be notified to make one last attempt to reach them. If we are unsuccessful in reaching that person (case or contact) a wellness check will be conducted. Contact tracing is a key element to breaking chains of transmission, so I urge Westport residents to cooperate with the CTC or Linda Pierce, our town nurse, if you should get a call – it will help the entire community.

Information about [quarantine](#) and [isolation](#) protocols is available on the town's COVID website: <https://www.westport-ma.com/covid-19-corona-virus-information>

I hate to be the Grinch, but we have to step up the vigilance to start bringing the levels of positive cases back down. As we go into the holiday season, I would encourage folks to keep family gatherings limited and wear masks whenever you are with people outside your immediate household, even indoors.

A higher proportion of cases is occurring in younger adults, who are at less risk of serious disease. However, the more cases in the community the greater the chance of transmission to more vulnerable populations, especially within households and through small social gatherings. Massachusetts has reached a grim milestone of over 10,000 COVID related deaths during this pandemic. So it remains critical for our community to follow the Governor's new orders and advisories (summarized below) to protect

everyone. If you know of a household in quarantine, please offer to help with groceries and other essentials so they don't have to risk exposure of others.

### **Testing Data:**

**9164 COVID tests have been performed** on Westport residents up through November 11th. There were **122 positive tests** out of 1466 done in the last 14 days for a positivity rate of **8.32%**, behind only Norfolk (due to an outbreak in the prison there), Lawrence and Fall River. The statewide 14-day average is trending up again to 2.29% positive.

**Extended through January 15th:** The state's **Stop the Spread** free testing initiative in certain communities has been extended. The sites in these communities are open to all. To find a site visit [www.mass.gov/stophespread](http://www.mass.gov/stophespread).

### **Other COVID-related news:**

**NEW ORDERS:** These took effect on Friday, Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> and are summarized below. More details are available on <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information>

These statewide orders include:

1. Updated "Stay at Home Advisory" to refrain from going out except for essential activities from 10 pm to 5 am.
  2. Indoor recreation, theatres, casinos etc. must close at 9:30 pm
  3. Restaurant table service must stop at 9:30 pm, though takeout is still allowed later.
  4. No alcohol/cannabis sales in any venue after 9:30 pm
  5. Gatherings will be more restricted: private home no more than 10, indoor gatherings at event or public venues will be limited to 25, outdoor gatherings are also restricted to 50 in higher risk communities including Westport, and in all cases gatherings must end at 9:30 pm
  6. Updated face coverings order – Everyone older than 5 must wear a face covering at all times when in a public location, whether indoors or outdoors and when carpooling with non household members.
- [\*\*GATHERINGS: Governor's COVID-19 Order #54\*\*](#) (effective November 6).  
Reduced gathering size limit for gatherings at private residences: **indoor gatherings at private residences are limited to 10 people and outdoor gatherings at private residences are limited to 25 people**. Requires that all gatherings (regardless of size or location) must end and disperse by 9:30 PM. Note that the limit on gatherings held in public spaces and at event venues has been further reduced in Westport due to our 'red' risk level status.  
  
Also requires that organizers of gatherings report known positive COVID-19 cases to the local health department in that community and requires organizers to cooperate with contact tracing. The gatherings order authorizes continued enforcement by local health and police departments and specifies that fines for violating the gathering order will be \$500 for each person above the limit at a particular gathering.
  - [\*\*FACE COVERINGS: Governor's COVID-19 Order #55\*\*](#) (effective November 6).  
**Revised order requiring all persons to wear face-coverings in all public places, even where they are able to maintain 6 feet of distance from others.** Allows for

an exception for residents who cannot wear a face-covering due to a medical or disabling condition, but allows employers to require employees to provide proof of such a condition. Allows schools to require that students participating in in-person learning provide proof of such a medical or disabling condition.

- **BUSINESS EARLY CLOSING: Governor's COVID-19 Order #53** (effective November 6). **Requires the early closure of certain businesses and activities each night at 9:30 PM.** The 9:30 PM closure requirement is aligned with the [Stay At Home Advisory](#) and together the two new initiatives are designed to further limit activities that could lead to COVID-19 transmission.
- **STAY AT HOME ADVISORY** (<https://www.mass.gov/news/stay-at-home-advisory>)

In order to comply with this advisory, **between the hours of 10pm and 5am, you must:**

- **Only leave home to go to work or school, or for essential needs** such as seeking emergency medical care, going to the grocery store or pharmacy, picking up take-out food, or receiving deliveries. If you do leave home, practice social distancing by staying 6 feet away from others and wearing a face covering.
- **Not have gatherings in your home with anybody outside of your household.**
- Comply with all Governor's Orders, including orders requiring face coverings, limiting gatherings, and mandating early closure of businesses.
- Practice social distancing and avoid touching surfaces frequently touched by others if you go outside to get fresh air.
- Use remote modes of communication like phone or video chat instead of visiting friends or family.

**Updated Youth and Adult Amateur Sports Guidance:** Latest guidance can be found [HERE](#). Also, the New England states plus New Jersey will suspend interstate youth hockey competitions for public and private schools effective Saturday, November 14, 2020 through at minimum December 31, 2020.

**Travel Order:** No change since last week in the low risk states: **WA, HI, DC, NY, and the New England states, except RI & CT.** Detailed travel order instructions and the travel risk map can be found [here](#). In summary, all visitors entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, must:

1. Complete the online Massachusetts Travel Form prior to arrival, unless they are visiting from a lower-risk state.
2. Quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72-hours prior to arrival in Massachusetts.

**COVID-19 Eviction Diversion:** The state has launched a new website with information on resources available to help residents impacted by COVID-19 to cover rent and mortgage payments at <http://www.mass.gov/CovidHousingHelp>. Residents can also call 2-1-1, which features a language line and trained staff.

#### **Town COVID Updates:**

- **Town Hall and Annex** – Open to the public **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY as of NOV. 16<sup>th</sup>**. Service by phone, mail, outdoor drop box, or online is recommended. Face masks are required for in-person appointments.

- **Thanksgiving:** As Westport residents plan for the Thanksgiving holiday, we offer the following considerations to help keep our friends, families, and communities safe during COVID-19:
  - ✓ Wear a mask when not eating or drinking
  - ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water
  - ✓ Stay at least six feet apart from others
  - ✓ Consider if those around you may be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as older adults or those with certain medical conditions, and take extra precautions
  - ✓ If gathering indoors, improve ventilation by opening windows and doors

To view the full Thanksgiving guidance, please visit the Board of Health [website](#).

- **The Westport Food Pantry is at the Westport Grange, 931 Main Rd and is now partnering with the nonprofit Friends of the Westport Council on Aging (FWCOA).** The next food pantry pick-up is scheduled for Monday, November 16th from 9 am to noon at the Grange. Monetary donations can be sent to the FWCOA, Attn. Food Pantry, PO Box 4228, Westport, MA 02790. Food and grocery gift card donations are accepted on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings at the Grange.
- **Schools** - The Westport Community Schools [website](#) has the latest on what is happening locally. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has begun issuing weekly updates on positive COVID-19 cases in schools every Thursday: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/positive-cases/#weekly-report> You can also find FAQs for families with information from the state at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/backtoschool/>

#### **Other BOH announcements:**

- **Transfer Station schedule for Thanksgiving week:** Half day on Monday; closed Thanksgiving Day and Friday.
- **Flu season:** Flu vaccines are available from the Town Nurse by appointment only. We no longer have any high dose (for over 65) vaccine in our supply. Please call 508-636-1030 to make an appointment. Thursday evening appointments are also available.
- **Blood drive success:** Our second blood drive of the year on Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> was went very well. The next drive will be scheduled for April 2021.
- **Septic Regulation public hearing held:** Approximately 70 people signed in for the public hearing on October 29<sup>th</sup> and over 61 written comments were received. The Board is considering modifications based on the feedback.

Stay safe everyone. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

*Matthew J. Armendo, Director*