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PUBLIC HEALTH WEEKLY UPDATE:
COVID-19
June 19, 2020

Below is a summary related to the Town of Belmont's response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The Town of Belmont is committed to providing information including this weekly update on the COVID-19 situation. Numbers related to COVID-19 and other pertinent information are updated daily on the Town's website.

The Town of Belmont currently has 230 *cumulative* confirmed cases of COVID-19. There are now a total of 60 COVID-19 related deaths in the Town of Belmont, 57 of which are confirmed by filed death certificates with the Town Clerk's Office and 3 are *unconfirmed*.

Daily updates on COVID-19 and local cases will continue to be posted on the Town of Belmont's COVID-19 webpage.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is providing weekly reports of COVID-19 data by city or town as part of its Dashboard for COVID-19 Cases, Quarantine and Monitoring. MDPH will update this list once a week on Wednesdays.

Belmont's Annual Local Election – June 23, 2020
Voting Hours Limited to 10 AM – 2 PM
Vote at Your Precinct

Belmont's Annual Town Election will be held June 23rd, postponed from April 7th 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Hours are limited to 10 AM – 2 PM at all eight Belmont voting Precincts. On Election Day, in-person voting is ONLY available at the eight voting precincts, as assigned. Only voters who live in Precinct 2 will vote at Town Hall. For further details check https://www.belmont-ma.gov/town-clerk/pages/elections-information-for-residents-media

Town Clerk, Ellen O'Brien Cushman, says Voting in person will be different with social distancing protocols and other safety measures in place to protect Belmont's election workers and voters. Ideally most people who want to vote in the local election will do so by mail to limit exposure. Voters choosing absentee voting must submit a written signed request to receive ballots by mail.

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The polls will be open for in-person voting on Election Day from 10 AM to 2 PM only, although approximately 2000 voters have received Absentee and Early Voting ballots. All ballots must be received by the Town Clerk by 2 PM, the close of polls on June 23rd. To ensure your ballot gets counted, we ask you to deposit your voted ballot in our Town Clerk drop box, located at the base of the steps to Town Hall (parking lot level).

For those who have not yet filed an application to receive an Absentee or Early Voting ballot, time is running out to apply for and receive a ballot. Though the legal deadline to submit an application is Monday, June 22nd at Noon, per Mass General Laws, the likelihood that a ballot will reach the voter by US Mail on June 23rd is slim.

- Requests for absentee ballots must be in writing and signed
- Link to application: http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/absentee/English-Absentee-Ballot-Application.pdf
- Completed, signed requests may be submitted to the drop box outside of Town Hall (parking lot level), US Mail (Town Clerk, P.O. Box 56, Belmont, MA 02478), fax (617-993-2601), or email (mpiccione@belmont-ma.gov).
- You may request ballots for all elections remaining in 2020: 6/23 Belmont Local Election, 9/1 Massachusetts State Primary and 11/3 Presidential Election.
- Apply early. All absentee ballots received by the close of polls are counted
- Town Clerk's webpage with more details: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/town-clerk/pages/elections-absentee-voting-early-voting
- Questions? Email to townclerk@belmont-ma.gov or leave a voicemail at 617-993-2603.

Belmont Parks & Playgrounds

Belmont's public parks reopened for *passive* use on June 2nd. This means walking, jogging, and other *passive* activities are now permitted in the parks. No pick-up games, practices, or contact sports allowed at this time. Do not share equipment with anyone other than those of the same household.

Belmont's playground equipment reopened on June 15th.

- When at the playgrounds, adhere to all posted signage
- Maintain social distance of at least 6-feet from non-household members
- Wear face masks in the playground area
- Stay home if you feel sick
- If a playground is crowded, seek out an alternative facility to take your child to
- Wash and sanitize hands frequently
  **Please remember that the town does not have the ability to clean and disinfect equipment after use.*

Please note at this time:

- Permits will only be issued to groups that are identified in current guidance by the state.
- No pick-up games, practices, or contact sports are allowed.
- *The use of face coverings/masks is required at any indoor or outdoor setting where it may be difficult to socially distance from individuals from other households.*
- Given the continued risk from COVID-19, the Town may need to reconsider closing these facilities if the public does not comply with the requirements set forth below.

Before visiting one of Belmont's parks, please review the Recreation Department's *passive* field use rules below or for the most up-to-date information visit the following link: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/recreation-department/pages/belmont-parks-re-accessing-plan

Track
Will be open for jogging/running/walking.

Basketball Courts
Closed at this time.

Tennis Courts and Pickleball Courts
No equipment to be left at the courts. All equipment must be carried in and out by those using the court. Those waiting to use a court should wait outside the court area. Please be respectful to one another.

Athletic Fields
In general, walking, jogging, and other passive activities are allowed. No pick-up games, practices or contact sports allowed at this time.

Off-Leash Program
No off-leash dogs allowed at this time.

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Playground Equipment
Please follow proper hand hygiene before and after visiting the playgrounds. Maintain proper distancing and avoid use if you are unable to maintain proper distancing. Please adhere to all signage at the playground.

Please contact the Belmont Recreation Department at (617) 993-2760 with any questions about use of the parks.

Outdoor Dining

The Select Board approved a plan to close Leonard Street (between Moore Street and Alexander Avenue) to increase outdoor seating areas for Belmont Center restaurants adversely impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown. Leonard Street will remain closed to all through traffic, with the exception of a 15-foot center lane to allow for the passage of emergency vehicles, delivery trucks, and MBTA buses, from June 11th until September 7th. No parking will be allowed on Moore Street during this time.

Please review a map of the temporary dining area before enjoying a meal on Leonard Street.

Below is a list of basic safety standards that restaurants must comply with in order to provide dining services at *outdoor* seating areas:

- Tables must be positioned to maintain at least a 6-foot distance from all other tables and any high foot traffic areas.
    - Tables may be positioned closer together if they are separated by protective/non-porous barriers (i.e. structural walls or plexiglass dividers).
- The size of a party seated at a table cannot exceed 6 people.
- Customers are encouraged to call ahead to make dining reservations before arriving to a restaurant.
- All customers and workers are required to wear face coverings at all times, except when eating or if an individual is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability.
- All workers must wash hands frequently, and table servers must wash their hands or apply hand sanitizer between each table interaction.
- Condiments and similar products (i.e. salt, pepper, ketchup, etc.) should not be pre-set on tables and should instead be provided upon request either in single-serving portions (i.e. individual packets) or in serving containers that are sanitized between each use.
- Menus must be one of the following: 1) paper, single-use menus disposed of after each use, 2) displayed menu (i.e. digital, whiteboard, chalkboard, etc.), or 3) electronic menus viewed on customers' phones/mobile devices.
- Utensils and place settings must be either single-use or sanitized after each use; utensils should be rolled or packaged. Tables should not be pre-set to reduce opportunity for exposure.
- Tables and chairs must be cleaned and sanitized thoroughly between each seating.

Governor Baker's reopening plan: Phase 2

On June 6th Governor Baker announced that the first part of Phase 2 of the state's plan to *Reopening Massachusetts* businesses and industries would begin on June 8th. This update included specific information about which businesses will be allowed to re-open and when

under the different phases of the Reopening Plan. Below is a summary of industries permitted to reopen during the first part of Phase 2:

- Retail, with occupancy limits;
- Childcare facilities and day camps, with detailed guidance;
- Restaurants, outdoor table service only;
- Hotels and other lodgings, no events, functions or meetings;
- Warehouses and distribution centers;
- Personal services without close physical contact, such as home cleaning, photography, window washing, career coaching and education tutoring;
- Post-secondary, higher education, vocational-tech and occupation schools for the purpose of completing graduation requirements;
- Youth and adult amateur sports, with detailed guidance;
- Outdoor recreation facilities
- Professional sports practices, no games or public admissions;
- Non-athletic youth instructional classes in arts, education or life skills and in **groups of less than 10**;
- Driving and flight schools
- Outdoor historical spaces, no functions, gatherings or guided tours;
- Funeral homes, with occupancy limits
- Non-urgent health care procedures, like routine dental care and in-person check-ups, are also included in the first part of Phase 2.

If you would like more information on the Massachusetts Reopening, please see the attached Reopening Massachusetts Plan document, or visit the Reopening Massachusetts website here: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts

Please note at this time Town buildings will remain closed to the public, but staff can be reached by phone or email during normal business hours.

Belmont Farmers' Market

On June 4th the Belmont Farmers' Market opened for the 2020 season. This year's market will operate more like an outdoor supermarket without the typical social events that residents have grown accustomed to in the past. The social and community aspects of the Market have been canceled for this season, and safety measures have been developed and will be implemented in consultation with the Belmont Health Department. The shopping area will be limited to 40 shoppers, and there will be a one-way flow through the area, with a single entrance and a single exit. Vendor tents will be spaced six feet apart instead of being adjacent to each other, and there is a limit of three people standing at any tent. The entrance and vendor areas will have markings to ensure that shoppers stand six feet from each other. Face masks and gloves will be required for vendors and Market staff. Shoppers must wear face masks, and are asked to shop alone. Shoppers may not touch products until they are paid for, and they will be encouraged to preorder or use credit/debit cards when they pay at the Market. Vendors may not handle reusable bags, and must provide extra space or a screen between themselves and shoppers. Hand washing stations will be provided, and a portable toilet will be available for Market staff and volunteers. Extra volunteers will be on hand to manage the flow of shoppers. Vendors must check the health of themselves and their staff, and the Market managers will monitor the health of their staff. Questions about the Belmont Farmers' Market can be directed to: belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com

Belmont's Annual Local Election – June 23, 2020 – Vote By Mail

The Select Board voted to postpone Belmont's annual local election from April 7th to June 23rd, 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Massachusetts Legislature and Governor have temporarily expanded the acceptable reasons for voting absentee to include any person taking precaution related to Covid-19.

Town Clerk, Ellen O'Brien Cushman, encourages people who want to vote in the local election to consider doing so by mail. Voting in person will be different with social distancing protocols and other safety measures in place to protect Belmont's election workers and voters. Ideally most people who want to vote in the local election will do so by mail to limit exposure. Voters choosing absentee voting must submit a written signed request to receive ballots by mail.

It is easy to sign up for ballots to be mailed to you by using the application form or writing a letter.

- Requests for absentee ballots must be in writing and signed
- Link to application: http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/absentee/English-Absentee-Ballot-Application.pdf
- Completed, signed requests may be submitted to the drop box outside of Town Hall (parking lot level), US Mail (Town Clerk, P.O. Box 56, Belmont, MA 02478), fax (617-993-2601), or email (mpiccione@belmont-ma.gov).
- You may request ballots for all elections remaining in 2020: 6/23 Belmont Local Election, 9/1 Massachusetts State Primary and 11/3 Presidential Election.
- Apply early. All absentee ballots are counted every election.
- Town Clerk's webpage with more details: https://www.belmont-ma.gov/town-clerk/pages/elections-absentee-voting-early-voting
- Questions? Email to townclerk@belmont-ma.gov or leave a voicemail at 617-993-2603.

Belmont Food Pantry

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Belmont Food Pantry Hours

The Food Pantry will be **OPEN** on a limited basis for **June** & **July** from **8:30–10:00 am** for Belmont residents to receive food or to drop off donations. The pantry will **NOT** be open on any other days.

Saturday, June 6th
Saturday, June 20th
Saturday, July 11th
Saturday, July 25th

Go to our website/Facebook page for continued updates
https://sites.google.com/site/thebelmontfoodpantry/
https://www.facebook.com/BFPantry/

The Belmont Food Pantry will be open to distribute food from 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. on the dates listed above. The distribution will still be a drive-thru with everyone remaining in their car, pulling up to the volunteer to check in and another volunteer will put the bag(s), per family, into the car. Walkers PLEASE keep a distance from each other and Food Pantry volunteers WILL COME to you. Belmont residents who are coming to receive food, please remember to bring your ID and have it ready before you get to the check in. Click here for the application and instructions: https://sites.google.com/…/thebelmont…/home/new-client-forms

COVID-19 Testing

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) originally restricted the availability of COVID-19 testing to individuals with symptoms (i.e. cough, sore throat, fever, chills, fatigue, headache, recent loss of sense of taste or smell, shortness of breath) consistent with the virus. As more test kits have been made available to providers, MDPH is now expanding its COVID-19 testing categories to now include those who are close contacts to someone that has recently tested positive and those that work with individuals that have tested positive. Close contacts,

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with or without symptoms, should be tested as soon as possible after they are notified of their exposure to COVID-19.

Community wide testing
Cambridge and Somerville have gained attention for announcing plans for community wide COVID-19 testing, which has been made possible because of their preexisting partnership with the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA). CHA is an academic community healthcare system that specifically serves the medical needs of Cambridge, Somerville, Everett, Malden, and Revere. Residents that live within CHA's service area have access to community testing.

Drive-through testing events have been held in other nearby communities, these events are conducted by for-profit entities. At this time the Town of Belmont does not have the resources to hold a community wide testing event on its own.

Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is only recommending community wide testing for densely populated municipalities such as the ones listed above.

MDPH has informed local health officials throughout the state that COVID-19 testing is available to anyone, without prior approval from a medical provider, at a number of different Community Health Centers located throughout the state.

The Community Health Center closest to Belmont is:

Cambridge Health Alliance – East Cambridge Care Center
163 Gore Street
Cambridge, MA 02141
(617) 665-3000

Free COVID-19 testing is available to individuals that are either underinsured or do not have insurance at:

Tufts Medical Center COVID-19 Testing Site
Josiah Quincy School
885 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 636-0019

Please note: It is recommended that you call any Community Health Center ahead of time to learn more about their testing capabilities before visiting.

A list of testing site located throughout the state can be found here:
https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-testing#testing-sites

Antibody testing
MDPH does not recommend antibody (serology) testing for the general public at this time. Questions remain about the quality of individual test types, as well as the timing of COVID antibody development and duration. MDPH recommends that individuals who do decide to get an antibody (serology) test, get a PCR test at the same time, unless they have results available from previous PCR testing. Residents who pursue antibody (serology) testing should understand that a positive serology result without an accompanying PCR test will lead to the individual being isolated, and their contacts

being quarantined, even if the individual had symptoms weeks or months in the past but was not able to be tested.

Face Coverings: Now required per Order of the Governor

Governor Baker's *COVID-19 Order No. 31* went into effect throughout the Commonwealth on May 6th and requires all individuals over the age of 2 to wear face coverings in public places where physical distancing is not possible. This applies to both indoor and outdoor spaces such as, but not limited to, grocery stores, pharmacies, laundromats, home improvement stores, banks, government buildings, and restaurant pick-up sites. However, it should be noted that there are exceptions to this Order, as it does not apply to children under the age of two (2) and those unable to wear a mask or face covering due to a medical condition*.

On May 11th, the Belmont Board of Health and the Belmont Select Board updated Temporary Emergency Regulation #2 to include language for fines in line with the Governor's Order.

A violation of this Order and local Regulation may result in a fine of up to $300.

*Please note: There are many disabilities that are invisible and you may not know why someone is not wearing a face covering. The Town asks that you do not confront people about wearing masks. If you are uncomfortable about being near someone who does not have a mask on, please consider walking away or around them from a safe distance.

This is a challenging time for everyone and we appreciate your continued compliance as we all work together to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and look forward to safely reopening businesses.

Please visit the CDC's website to learn more about its recommendation for face coverings.
The CDC has also posted information on how to make your own face covering.

You may also contact Belmont Helps to request a mask.

Face Coverings for Senior Citizens

The Beech Street Center has a limited supply of face coverings available to provide to senior citizens in Belmont. Senior citizens may contact the Beech Street Center to request either handmade washable cloth masks, or disposable masks.

Please be advised that as of Tuesday, April 28th, the Town has mandated use of masks at essential business; please further be advised that any contactless transitions occurring outside the center, including meals, also require you to wear a mask.

Please note that your call will be answered and Beech Street Center staff will respond to your request within 48 hours. To make your mask requests, please call the main number at 617-993-2970 or email dleavitt@belmont-ma.gov .

Beech Street Center

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Nava Niv-Vogel, Director of the Council on Aging, wishes to remind the community that staff at the Beech Street Center are available to help residents of all ages to access essential services during the pandemic.

Due to growing national concern that people are waiting too long to seek out medical treatment over fears of catching COVID-19, potentially contributing to poor health outcomes, all residents are reminded to always call their primary care physicians and/or other medical specialists for advice regarding ANY medical issue, even if it is not related to COVID-19.

Staff at the Beech Street Center can be reached at (617) 993-2970.

Emotional Health Resources

During stressful times it is common to have worries about yourself or a loved one. If you have questions about the types of treatment available, please contact Health Department Social Worker Janet Amdur at jamdur@belmont-ma.gov or (617) 993-2983.

Please remember to take care of your emotional health and help others to do the same. If you need emotional help please also consider making use of the following resources:

- Call 2-1-1 and choose the "**CALL2TALK**" option. (Please note that 2-1-1 call center has recently been operating on approximately a 90-minute delay for responses.)
- The **Samaritans** helpline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call or text their helpline any time at 1-877-870-4673.
- The **Disaster Distress Helpline**, 1-800-985-5990, is a national hotline, which also operates 24/7, to provide immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human caused disaster, including disease outbreaks like COVID-19. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories.
- The **Beech Street Center** is a local resource in Belmont that can help senior citizens address a variety of needs and access to social services.

Belmont Helps: Ways to Help Our Community

Donate | Volunteer | Ask for Help | Find Resources | Request or Help Sew Masks

Belmont Helps, a Winn Brook Parent Teacher Association Committee, is a 100% volunteer organization founded on March 14, 2020 to connect Belmont area community members in need during the COVID-19 outbreak to resources and volunteers. More information can be found at www.belmonthelps.org. Contact belmonthelps@gmail.com or leave a message at (617) 993-0162 for a call back from a team member.

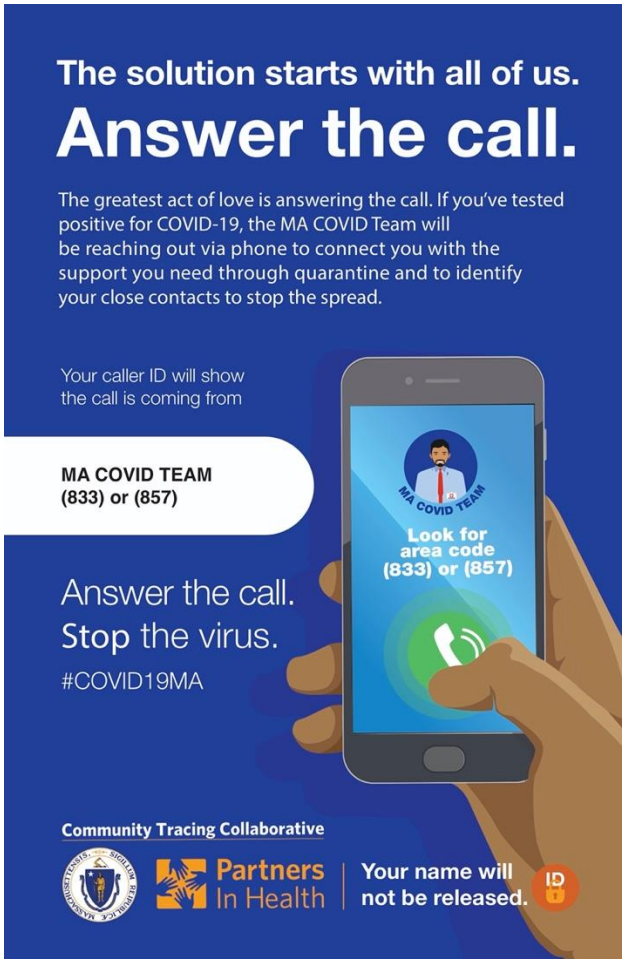
Medical Reserve Corps: *A Call for Volunteers*

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), is a national network of volunteers under the US Department of Health and Human Services. The Metro East MRC is the regional unit based out of the Arlington Health Department that is charged with serving 18 communities, including Belmont. There is currently a high demand for Metro East MRC volunteers to help with the local and regional response

to the COVID-19 crisis. Volunteers have been activated to assist with delivering food and medications, staffing call centers, and providing backflow to medical facilities in the region. Interested volunteers should sign up at www.MAResponds.org by selecting "Metro East MRC" as their organization. Medical volunteers are also encouraged to join the "COVID-19 Response" team via MA Responds. Please contact **Mia Nardini**, Metro East MRC Coordinator, at 781-316-3177 or MetroEastMRC@Town.Arlington.MA.US with any questions.

Contact Tracing: Answer the Call

To help reduce the spread of the virus, Belmont is participating in the Massachusetts COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) program.



What is contact tracing?

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is collaborating with Partners in Health (PIH) to contact every resident that tests positive for COVID-19. Public health officials from PIH and/or the local board of health will speak with infected individuals and help identify a list of **close contacts*** that they may have had an interaction with in the 48-hour period before their start of symptoms, or the two days prior to the test that led to a positive result for individuals who do not have symptoms.

Once close contacts are identified, public health officials will begin reaching out to individuals on the list of contacts to notify them about the exposure to an infected individual (who will not be identified) and to also provide them with direction about a 14-day quarantine period and instruction on self-monitoring for symptoms. Contact tracers or local board of health officials then will check

in with individuals to monitor symptoms and needs throughout the duration of the quarantine period.

If an individual develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while in quarantine, they will need to notify public health staff, and remain in isolation until symptoms resolve. Contact tracing will then begin on behalf of this individual as well.

*MDPH defines a **close contact** as someone that has being within approximately 6-feet of a known COVID-19 case for about 15 minutes.

Why is contact tracing important?
People in close contact with someone infected with a virus such as COVID-19 are at higher risk for becoming infected themselves and of potentially infecting others. Contract tracing finds possible new cases quickly so that they can be isolated to help stop further spread of the virus.

Sign up to work as a contact tracer for the state
Partners in Health (PIH) is hiring Contact Tracers, Resource Coordinators, and Case Investigators for outreach to all Massachusetts contacts of COVID-19 patients. These positions are essential for providing COVID-19 contacts with critical information about testing and quarantine, referrals for testing, and to provide support resources during the quarantine period.

Learn more about contact tracing opportunities by visiting the PIH website.

Grocery stores

On April 7th, the Department of Public Health released further guidance to promote social distancing at grocery stores. The new guidance requires that each grocery store limit occupancy to 40% of its maximum permitted occupancy level. It also sets out procedures by which staff should monitor occupancy levels. You can find the new guidance here: https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-grocery-stores-40-percent/download

Things to keep in mind when you go to the grocery store:

- Follow guidance posted in store and instructions from grocery store staff on social distancing
- Only send one person per family, leave children and other families members at home if at all possible
- Buy enough to extend how long you can go until your next trip, but don't buy up too many of one
- particular item
- Shop at an off-peak time if possible. In the morning before 10 or 11 am tends to be the busiest time in many area stores at the moment
- **Wear a face covering!**

Remember that it is possible that you may be contagious even if you don't feel sick. Your fellow shoppers and hardworking grocery store employees are depending on you to make the best possible choices to keep them safe.

Belmont COVID-19 Informational Call Center and Email

For general COVID-19 questions not specific to the Town of Belmont, all Massachusetts residents encouraged to call the state's 2-1-1 hotline that is staffed by operators 24/7 and with translators available in multiple languages. Residents with questions can dial 2-1-1 from any landline or cellphone or use the live chat option on the on the Mass 2-1-1 website.

The Town of Belmont has also established a call center to allow residents to ask non-medical questions specific to COVID-19 in Belmont. The call center will be staffed Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm the number for the call center is (617) 993-2222. Questions can also be emailed to: belmonteoc@belmont-ma.gov .

Please call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency. Calls should not be made to 9-1-1 to obtain information about COVID-19

Belmont Public Schools

The Superintendent will post regular updates for parents and students in the Belmont Public Schools News section of its webpage.

What's open and what's closed

Statewide:

- All **public and private elementary and secondary schools** throughout the Commonwealth will be closed for the remainder of this school year with distancing learning continuing through the last day of school in June.
- To learn more about what types of businesses are allowed to continue operations during this time, please refer to the Commonwealth's COVID-19 Essential Services FAQs

Belmont:

- **Public meetings and hearings** will be limited to allow for essential business to be conducted.
- **Town Hall Offices, the Belmont Public Library,** and the **Beech Street Center buildings** are closed to the public until further notice. Staff in these offices are available to assist residents with questions and/or concerns. Residents in need of assistance are encouraged to contact respective Town departments by phone and/or email www.belmont-ma.gov .
- Important updates about COVID-19 and its impact on the Town will be posted at www.belmont-ma.gov .

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