

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

DECEMBER 14, 2021

1. BAKER-POLITO ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES 2.1 MILLION AT-HOME COVID TESTS FOR 102 HIGH-NEED COMMUNITIES

State also announces initiative to make purchasing tests easier for municipalities

Dennis will receive Covid-19 at home test kits for families living below the poverty level. We have not yet received the tests which will be coming from MEMA and or the National Guard.

The Health Director informs me, there are several calls with DPH today, and Kristen and I will be meeting with the Covid team as well as the school Superintendent this afternoon. It is very likely we will work with schools and their lists for low income families which are already in place and actively utilized for other assistance programs. In addition, we will work with our Dennis Center for Active Living (COA) who maintains a list of are most in need seniors. Again, more information to come.

BOH has a meeting tomorrow night and will also be briefed.

We are reviewing and we will update the Board and the Community on the process of distribution of the at home test kits, as soon as we are able.

Here is the full media release from the State on this announcement:

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced plans to increase access to at home COVID-19 test kits for residents across the Commonwealth. The Administration has secured 2.1 million iHealth Labs over-the-counter (OTC) at-home rapid antigen tests that will be delivered to 102 towns with the highest percentage of families below the poverty level. These free tests will be available for distribution to the public by each municipality, with an emphasis on increasing access for individuals and families who are facing financial hardship.

“With the holidays approaching, we encourage residents to utilize rapid tests as a convenient way to keep family members and friends safe at gatherings,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “While these tests are widely available at many pharmacies and retail locations across the Commonwealth, we are making it even easier for residents to get free rapid testing through these initiatives.”

“Massachusetts has developed a nation-leading testing infrastructure, with free testing available across the Commonwealth,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito**. “Increasing access to these free OTC rapid antigen test kits will serve as another tool to combat COVID-19.”

While the initial 2.1 million OTC rapid antigen tests will be distributed to 102 high-need communities across the Commonwealth, the Administration is finalizing plans to allow municipalities and other public entities to directly purchase tests from test manufacturers at fixed, state-negotiated prices. The Administration posted a procurement opportunity on Friday, December 10 for manufacturers, and municipalities will be able to order in January 2022. The Administration will provide more details on how municipalities can procure these tests later in the coming weeks. Municipalities are able to utilize

American Rescue Plan Act funding, as well as Federal COVID-19 Relief funding to purchase the rapid antigen test kits.

At-home COVID-19 rapid antigen test kits are a fast, easy and convenient way to test for COVID-19. In addition to the Administration providing iHealth Labs OTC at-home rapid antigen test kits and allowing municipalities to directly purchase tests, residents can visit local pharmacies or order online to purchase rapid test kits on their own, as needed.

Massachusetts performs more COVID tests than almost any other state in the country thanks to the hundreds of existing testing locations across the Commonwealth, including 38 free state sponsored Stop the Spread testing sites. Residents can continue to access these COVID testing sites during the holidays. All testing sites are listed here: [//Mass.gov/gettested](https://Mass.gov/gettested).

How these [communities](#) were selected:

The 102 municipalities in the Commonwealth with the highest proportion of families at or below the poverty level are receiving iHealth Labs OTC at-home rapid antigen test kits in this initial distribution. All twenty of the Commonwealth's most disproportionately impacted equity communities were included by these criteria. In total, the 102 municipalities account for nearly 3.7 million Massachusetts residents.

iHealth Labs OTC at-home rapid antigen test kits will start to be delivered to the eligible communities this week by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, in partnership with the Massachusetts National Guard. Tests will be distributed proportionally across the 102 communities based on the proportion of families living at or below the poverty level within their respective communities.

While each city or town will be able to determine how best to distribute tests within their community municipalities are asked to prioritize those most in need, allocating equitably and at locations accessible to individuals and families who are determined to be in high need and as quickly as possible during the holiday season.

The Commonwealth is paying \$5 per test. All tests come in packs of two. The tests can be completed in 15 minutes without the need to send a sample to a laboratory; a mobile phone or computer is not needed for any part of the test. Individuals 2 years of age and up can use the tests regardless of vaccination status or whether or not they have symptoms.

CDC last week issued guidance on self-tests like the iHealth tests, with information on when to consider self-testing, how to complete the tests, and how to react to a positive or negative result. Visit here to view the [guidance](#).

COVID-19 rapid tests are one of many risk-reduction measures, along with vaccination, that can protect individuals by reducing the chances of spreading COVID-19.

2. WASTEWATER WEDNESDAY OUTREACH UPDATE

In just the last 60 days, more than 20,000 people in the Dennis area have seen the content from Wastewater Wednesday's educational outreach on social media. And during that same period, over 40,000 social media ads have been served to people in Dennis. Many Dennis residents have volunteered to receive additional content from Wastewater Wednesday in their feeds, and the overwhelming response has been positive. This targeted outreach is effectively being targeted to a demographic of younger residents and newer families in Dennis.

We are presently reaching 375+ Dennis residents each day on social media with clear, direct and factual information about wastewater terminology and the importance of water infrastructure to our health and economy. The education includes concept areas related to wastewater treatment methodology, effluent vs. influent recharge, hydrogeology, cyanobacteria, biodiversity, habitat restoration, ocean toxicity, EPA water quality standards, and the town's comprehensive wastewater management plan (CWMP) to name a few.

On the whole, the campaign is growing in reach and has been well-received, and now with the addition of video content this month for use on the town website as well as Youtube and other outlets, and the appointing of a Dennis High School Student to the WIC, Wastewater Wednesday's audience will continue to grow as we move into 2022.

3. DENNIS POLICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES CREATION OF MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

In an effort to enhance the department's efforts towards responding to the growing number of calls for service related to mental health issues, the Dennis Police Department has created an in-house Mental Health Task Force (MHTF).

The MHTF is comprised of four civilian mental health practitioners, the department's Family Services Officer, and five members of the department's Community Crisis Intervention team. The mission of the MHTF is to address the needs of people in the community who call for immediate assistance and conduct follow-up visits to offer available services or referrals to outside agencies.

The department was awarded grant funding which enabled the hiring of three of the civilian mental health practitioners, with the fourth being the department's Victim Services Coordinator, Kathy Pedini. Each of these practitioners bring specialized training and experience in the areas of substance use disorders, children with mental health issues and jail diversion, to the task force.

4. EVERSOURCE IS ENCOURAGING CUSTOMERS TO TAKE STEPS NOW TO LOWER THEIR ENERGY USE AND BILL THIS WINTER

These steps include:

- Whether you own or rent, keep your home comfortable while saving energy and money with a no-cost [Home Energy Assessment](#). Customers can receive money-saving rebates, expert home improvement advice, and energy-saving tips. Cape Cod residents should visit capelightcompact.org.

- Seeing how the weather impacts their bill and how small adjustments to their thermostat can help them save with our [Heating Cost Calculator](#). Cape Cod residents should visit capelightcompact.org.
- Equalizing monthly energy bills to avoid seasonal spikes with [Budget Billing](#).
- Even if customers have never needed help before, they may now qualify for [special programs](#) to help lower their monthly bill, reduce a past due balance, or extended payment plans.

Thank you for your consideration, and please contact me if you have any questions.

5. DENNIS TOWN OFFICES HOLIDAY HOURS

All Town office buildings and facilities will be closed on Friday, December 24, 2021 in observance of the Christmas holiday except as noted below;

The Dennis Public Library will be open on Friday, December 24 and Friday, December 31, 2021. **The Dennis Public Library will be closed on Saturday, December 25, 2021 and Saturday, January 1, 2022.** Please visit <https://www.town.dennis.ma.us/libraries> for more information and hours on the other Dennis Libraries.

The Dennis Transfer Station will be closed on Monday, December 20th and Tuesday, December 21st per their winter schedule. They will be open Wednesday, December 22nd from 7am to 4pm and Thursday, December 23rd from 8am to 4pm. **The Transfer Station will be closed on Friday, December 24, 2021. The Transfer station will be closed on Saturday, December 25th** and will reopen on Sunday, December 26th from 8am to 5pm

The Dennis Town Offices will be closed on Friday, December 31, 2021 in observance of the New Year holiday.

The Transfer Station will be closed Monday, December 27th and Tuesday, December 28th per their winter schedule. They will be open Wednesday, December 29th from 7am to 4pm and Thursday, December 30th from 8am to 4pm. **The Transfer Station will be closed on Friday, December 31, 2021.** The Transfer Station will resume their normal winter schedule on Saturday, January 1, 2021.

Have a great holiday!

Respectfully,

Elizabeth C. Sullivan, Town Administrator