



# TOWN OF DOUGLAS

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**Public Notice #12**  
**2020 Coronavirus Response**

**April 8, 2020 10:00 A.M.**

With the predicted “surge” in COVID-19 cases approaching at the end of this week, the Selectmen have agreed on the following statement to Town residents:

Our country as a whole, and particularly our State, approaches an anticipated surge in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths over the next two weeks. We want you to be assured that your local government is actively partnered with the federal and state governments in addressing the public health crisis and its associated economic slowdown.

These next two weeks could present an overwhelming experience for many people.

Some will deal directly with the impact of coronavirus infection, either on the personal level or within a close set of family members or friends. For those who do not have a close encounter with the illness, there is the emotional drain of 24/7 news coverage of sickness and death, which is unusual for Americans. The uncertainty of the economy adds to the malaise and stress, especially as time marches on.

The predicted surge of cases and resulting societal stress has driven federal and state planning. The federal government has put an economic relief package together for businesses and working families. The Commonwealth has put into place health and safety policies such as social distancing and the shutdown of many public and private activities. Massachusetts has also been building health care capacity, opening temporary facilities and gathering people and supplies.

The Town of Douglas has a local role to play in responding to the surge.

First and foremost, the Town continues to support actively the policy of social distancing. Town volunteers are working with congregate living facilities to educate residents on social distancing, honoring quarantine requirements if there is a positive

COVID-19 test in the neighborhood, and the importance of aggressive hygiene management. Qualified Town volunteers are working with the Fire Department and residential facilities to manage washing of clothing exposed to COVID-19 cases.

In the event you generate a positive test result for the illness, Town Nurse Agnieszka Podstawka receives notice from the state Department of Public Health. Her role is then to check in on your condition regularly and to learn from you the contact information for those you have been in contact with from 48 hours before you started with symptoms to the point where you quarantined. Cooperation with this outreach effort is vital to the effort to limit the spread of COVID-19, and to date has been excellent.

If the caseload begins to grow beyond the Town Nurse's ability to handle on her own, she is authorized to delegate some outreach activities to other Town employees who have been assigned to her. Town employees will identify themselves by name and are bound by rules of confidentiality.

People who develop symptoms should interact with a medical professional. Many primary care physicians and other urgent care providers are using tele-medicine via phone or video conference to provide people with guidance. It is not appropriate to call for an ambulance or to drive yourself to an emergency room. Being in the hospital setting is no guarantee that you will be tested and/or treated for COVID-19.

In the event that you become ill and believe that medical intervention is needed (shortness of breath is the key symptom to watch for), then you should call 9-1-1. Dispatchers have a series of questions to ask callers, and every effort should be made to provide as much information about the person needing help so that first responders can protect themselves and you as they assess your condition. Douglas EMTs will interact with medical control to determine whether and where you should be transported.

The Douglas Fire and Ambulance Department typically has one ambulance at the ready twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. During this time, the Department is doing its best to staff two ambulances around the clock, depending on the availability of call personnel. If all of our ambulances are out on calls, mutual aid will provide assistance and response time will be longer.

Residents should remember that all of the typical ambulance calls – such as cardiac arrests, broken bones, accidents, etc. are still occurring. Our resources can be supplemented, but at any given time we hope residents will carefully determine whether an ambulance is needed so that those in highest need can still get one quickly.

Because of the current situation, you will not be able to ride in the ambulance with a loved one and you will not be able to accompany your loved one into an emergency room. People should have a photo ID, insurance cards if they have them, contact information for their emergency contact person, and their primary care physician(s), as well as a list of medications being used and a medical history, at the ready. EMTs can gather this information for the proper person at a hospital to follow up on after a

patient has been dealt with. Seniors who have the so-called “file of life” already have this information gathered, and EMTs are familiar with using that file for patients.

With respect to emotional health, residents should be aware that there are numerous ways to protect themselves and get help if it is needed.

Each individual knows how much information he/she can take in before it starts to become hard to manage. For its part, the Town will provide, as it has for the last two weeks, an update each Monday morning on the number of cases and other Douglas-specific COVID-19 related news. During the week, the emergency operations center (EOC) may put out a statement on specific incidents or concerns as the need arises.

People who want to reach out and ask for help dealing with stress can call 2-1-1 and press the “CALL2TALK” option. There is also a national helpline called the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 that is available 24/7 to provide immediate crisis counseling.

Finally, we all know that in the background of the public health emergency, we have significant economic disturbance that have led businesses to shut and people to lose their jobs. Fear of the pandemic may motivate people, especially our most vulnerable citizens, to avoid going out to get needed supplies. With schools out, kids who normally got a good meal at least once a day may not be getting that opportunity now.

Regardless of the underlying cause of distress, the Town is coordinating a response for those who have a need for stop-gap food supplies and assistance with other important supplies. A combination of donations, volunteer efforts and some emergency spending, the Town can help the needy get basic food supplies. If you want to add your name to the list of people receiving temporary food supplies, you can sign up online at [tinyurl.com/DouglasFood](https://tinyurl.com/DouglasFood) or by calling the Adult Social Center at 508-476-2283.

The current crisis will test the fabric of our community. We have worked with the Town’s day to day emergency managers and staff, and many volunteers, to make sure we close ranks around sound policies and pass the test. Douglas is a proud town of self-reliant, hardy people. But the current crisis is completely out of the normal pattern of snowstorms or economic cycles. Our extraordinary character will prove itself out by our ability to work together to come to extraordinary solutions.

Be safe, Douglas. Ask for help if you need it. Help each other if you can. We will get through this.