

Resources for People with Disabilities

Updated February 23, 2021

People with disabilities (PwD) and/or certain ongoing health problems, especially people who have problems with their lungs or with fighting off illness, are at a higher risk of getting very sick if they get COVID-19. The Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) has put together this list of resources to help you get your basic needs met during this public health crisis.

Together we can keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy, both physically and mentally, by taking specific steps. The Cambridge Public Health Department has listed information about COVID-19 prevention, symptoms, testing, and care at www.cambridgema.gov/covid19/publichealth

- If you or a loved one have a fever of 100.4°F or higher, cough or shortness of breath, it is very important that you contact your doctor or primary healthcare provider for guidance.
- If you do not have a primary healthcare provider or you have general questions about COVID-19, you can also call the Massachusetts COVID-19 Information Line at 2-1-1.
- If you are having a medical or mental health emergency, **call or text** 9-1-1 immediately.

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the CCPD office is closed to in-person visits until further notice. You can contact them with general disability-related questions by leaving a voicemail at (617) 349-4692 or emailing at ccpd@cambridgema.gov. Please remember that CCPD staff are unable to give any medical or legal advice.

NOTE: We regret that we are unable to respond to requests from other entities to add their information to this page.

Finding Information on COVID-19 in a Format that is Accessible to You

- See the next section, **Vaccination**, to learn how to find information on getting vaccinated.
- Live captioning of Cambridge City Council meetings is available through CART (communication access realtime translation) online in order to provide communication access for viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing. The captions will be streamed on a dedicated webpage, separate from the video feed of the meeting. Unfortunately, due to technical limitations, CART will only be available online. See cambridgema.gov/StreamCART for instructions for viewing the meetings with CART.
 - City Council meetings are generally held every Monday at 5:30 p.m., excluding holidays and Council recesses.
 - The meeting agenda and video feed, as well as transcripts of past meetings, can be found on the City's Open Meeting Portal.
- Green Mountain Self Advocates has developed [A Self-Advocate's Guide to COVID-19](#), using plain language that is easy to understand.
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has a series of videos with ASL and closed captioning on information regarding COVID-19, including how you can stay safe, how parents can support children, suggested coping strategies, and more. Visit their YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/CDCStreamingHealth>.
- The National Association for the Deaf has numerous informational videos about COVID-19 in ASL and with captions: <https://www.nad.org/2020/03/12/coronavirus/>.

- The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) has created a [Coronavirus Visual Tool](#) to assist medical professionals and Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in communicating better during medical appointments. The tool is available in large print and screen-reader accessible versions. It is also provided in numerous languages other than English.
- Information for people who are at higher risk for COVID-19 can be found on the [CDC's website](#).
- The Administration for Community Living (ACL) has [helpful information](#) on what older adults and PwD need to know regarding COVID-19, planning, preventing illness, and more.

Vaccination

- ONLINE: For updated information regarding COVID-19 vaccination, including eligibility, please visit the City's vaccination page at www.cambridgema.gov/vaccine.
- The state's mass vaccination sites are all accessible to people with disabilities. Accessibility information specific to each site can be found on the City's website at <https://www.cambridgema.gov/covid19/News/2021/02/massvaccinationsiteaccessibility>
- BY PHONE: The Massachusetts Vaccine Scheduling Resource Line at 2-1-1 is now available in English and Spanish and will have translators available to support residents in approximately 100 additional languages. Please call 2-1-1 and follow prompts to reach The Massachusetts Vaccine Scheduling Resource Line.
- TRANSPORTATION: [MassHealth](#) is providing free transportation to vaccine appointments to any individual that has any type of MassHealth coverage or the Health Safety Net.
 - This includes people with MassHealth Limited, Children's Medical Security Program (CMSP) and MassHealth Family Assistance (FA).
 - In addition, members can request transportation services directly through MassHealth's Customer Service, rather than needing to request services through a health care provider.
 - If an individual has MassHealth or the Health Safety Net, they (or a caregiver) are encouraged to call their health plan or MassHealth directly to schedule free transportation at 800-841-2900 (TTY: 800-497-4648).

Civil Rights & Non-Discrimination During COVID-19

- MA Attorney General Healey has issued [Guidance on Disability Rights During COVID-19 Pandemic](#), including on the following topics:
 - Workplace rights
 - Healthcare rights
 - Public accommodations (grocery stores, retail establishments, restaurants, etc.)
 - Reasonable accommodations
 - The AG's Civil Rights Division urges individuals with disabilities who feel their rights have been violated to call the hotline at (617) 963-2917 or [file a complaint online](#).

- The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued a [notice](#) reminding entities such as state and local governments and healthcare facilities that they cannot discriminate against people with disabilities. For example:
 - People with disabilities cannot be denied medical care on the basis of assumptions about their quality of life or how worthy their lives are of saving.
 - Government officials, healthcare providers and other covered entities must provide effective communication for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or who have other disabilities affecting communication.
 - The needs of PwD must be included in emergency planning.
- This notice also provides information on HIPAA healthcare privacy rules during this public health emergency
- If you believe that a covered entity violated your civil rights, conscience and religious freedom, or health information privacy rights, you may file a complaint at <https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/complaints>.

Food Resources & Special Grocery Store Hours

Cambridge residents who are over 60, immunocompromised, or have a disability and do not have a friend or relative that can go to a food pantry on their behalf, should apply to Food for Free's Home Delivery Program: <http://foodforfree.org/home-delivery/>

Grocery stores in Massachusetts are required to provide alternative hours for people over 60 in order to limit their potential exposure to COVID 19. Several local grocery stores are also providing special hours to people who are immunocompromised, who have disabilities, or who are otherwise at high risk for COVID-19, even if they are under the age of 60:

- [Brothers Market](#), located at 1 Broadway, is dedicating 7:00-8:00 a.m. every day as a shopping hour for senior citizens and people with disabilities.
- [Stop & Shop](#), which has locations on McGrath Highway and Alewife Brook Parkway, will open exclusively for people over 60 and anyone with a weakened immune system each day from 6:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.
- [Star Market](#), which has locations in Porter Square, on Mt. Auburn St., and on McGrath Highway, is open exclusively for senior citizens and other at-risk populations each day from 6:00 a.m. – 7:00 a.m. and Tuesdays & Thursdays from 6:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
- [Trader Joe's](#), which has locations at 211 Alewife Brook Parkway and 748 Memorial Drive, will open every day from 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. to anyone 60 or over and customers who with disabilities or who are immunocompromised. Regular hours begin at 9:00 a.m.
- [Whole Foods](#), which has three locations in Cambridge, is open for people 60 and older, as well as those who are at high risk or are disabled each day from 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Additionally, these guests can shop online with Amazon Prime with pick-up available on Fridays between 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. Regular shopping hours are 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Personal Care Attendants/Assistants (PCAs)

- If you or a loved one is a MassHealth member who receives services from a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) but are short PCAs during the COVID-19 outbreak, call the [MassOptions](#) hotline at 1-844-422-6277 for help getting home services.
- If your PCA is worried about being stopped and questioned as to whether or not they are an essential worker, have them keep a copy of this letter from MassHealth for PCAs designating them as essential workers: <https://bostoncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19-PCA-Essential-Letter.pdf>
- For detailed guidance and updates on PCA services during the health crisis, see <https://www.mass.gov/doc/pca-consumer-guidance-482020/download>
- If you are a MassHealth member receiving in-home services from a PCA, nurse or other direct care worker and you are diagnosed or presumed positive for COVID-19, you may be eligible to get a supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), like gloves and face masks, delivered to your home to allow you to continue receiving services in the home and to keep your direct care worker safe. See more information at:
 - [English: https://www.mass.gov/doc/masshealth-ppe-program-for-covid-19-positive-members/download](https://www.mass.gov/doc/masshealth-ppe-program-for-covid-19-positive-members/download)
 - [Spanish: https://www.mass.gov/doc/masshealth-ppe-program-for-covid-19-positive-members-spanish-0/download](https://www.mass.gov/doc/masshealth-ppe-program-for-covid-19-positive-members-spanish-0/download)

Information for MassHealth Members

Mass Health is a provider for many people with disabilities and is providing extra coverage for members [during the COVID-19 crisis](#). Here is important information to be aware of:

- You will not lose your MassHealth coverage during the COVID-19 national emergency, even if you received a letter in the mail stating that your coverage is ending on or after March 18, 2020. You do not need to send in any additional paperwork to keep your coverage. However, please remember that your coverage will end if you are no longer a Massachusetts resident.
 - If you are having trouble paying your MassHealth deductible or premium, or have another change in circumstance, waivers are available. You can apply for a waiver to cover your MassHealth expenses online at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-emergency-related-waivers-for-members-and-applicants> or by calling the MassHealth Customer Service Center at (800) 841-2900 or TTY: (800) 497-4648.
 - Be sure to report any change in your income to MassHealth as soon as possible by calling the Customer Service Center (see numbers above), as you may be eligible for a different level of benefits.
- MassHealth covers testing and treatment for all coverage types and health plans, and once you are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, it will be provided to you for free.
- [MassHealth](#) is providing free transportation to vaccine appointments to any individual that has any type of MassHealth coverage or the Health Safety Net. Members can request transportation services directly through MassHealth's Customer Service. Individuals who have MassHealth or the Health Safety Net (or a caregiver) are

encouraged to call their health plan or MassHealth directly at **800-841-2900 (TTY: 800-497-4648)** to schedule free transportation.

- During the COVID-19 outbreak, MassHealth is covering telehealth services for both physical and behavioral health when appropriate, including services delivered over the phone, via live video, or other telehealth platforms.
 - If you are worried about having limited phone or internet access during the COVID-19 emergency, or don't think you have enough minutes or data to use telehealth services, MassHealth has created guidance on what resources are available to you:
 - English: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/faq-for-masshealth-members-about-telephone-and-internet-service-during-covid-19-english/download>
 - Spanish: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/faq-for-masshealth-members-about-telephone-and-internet-service-during-covid-19-spanish/download>
- MassHealth is also allowing early refills and 90-day supplies of medications, as well as medication delivery, during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- If you are a MassHealth member and need help getting or understanding your benefits or services, you may reach out to the My Ombudsman program at:
 - Phone: (855) 781-9898
 - Video relay for the Deaf and hard of hearing: (339) 224-6831
 - Email: info@myombudsman.org

Mental Health Resources

- Emergency Resources:
 - If you are experiencing a crisis, the [National Disaster Distress Helpline](#) is available with 24/7 emotional support and crisis counseling for anyone experiencing distress or other mental health concerns. Calls (1-800-985-5990) and texts (text TalkWithUs to 66746) are answered by trained counselors who will listen to your concerns, explore coping and other available supports, and offer referrals to community resources for follow-up care and support
 - Cambridge residents may also reach out to the Boston Medical Center/Cambridge Somerville Emergency Services Program (CSESP) 24-hours a day at 1-800-981-4357
 - When you call CSESP, you will always speak to a live Master's level clinician. When you call, you will be asked for some basic demographic and insurance information as well as questions about the situation at hand. From that point, they can assist you in determining next steps. If needed, the clinician will set you up with a telehealth evaluation from wherever you're able to access the internet, or they can see you in-person (observing social distancing and utilizing PPE).
 - See <https://www.bmc.org/emergency-services-program> for more information.
 - Please do not hesitate to call or text 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency.
- Information on maintaining Emotional Health & Well-Being During the COVID-19 Outbreak is [available on the State's website](#).

- Many health insurers, including MassHealth, are covering both mental and medical appointments that are done by phone or a video platform. If you have private health insurance, check to see if they are providing this coverage. If you already have mental health providers, reach out to them to see if they are providing phone appointments.
- If you need help finding a mental health provider in your area, visit the [Network of Care](#).
- McLean Hospital has a number of [online resources](#) to help community members practice good self-care and maintain their mental health, including on combatting loneliness; how to speak with children on what's going on; reducing anxiety; working for home; and a lot more.
- You can also access remote support through [Recovery Learning Communities](#) (RLCs), which provide 1-on-1 peer support and peer groups.
- If you or a loved one is struggling with a substance use disorder, you can call the Department of Public Health's helpline at (800) 327-5050 or visit www.helplinema.org.

The Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) Resources

- BCIL is a non-profit organization that provides individual services and systemic advocacy across a number of areas critical to people with disabilities, including housing, healthcare, employment, long-term care, transportation, adaptive technology, communications, civil rights law, and education.
- BCIL has many COVID-19 resources for PwD. If you are in need of services you can visit BCIL's website at <https://www.bostoncil.org/> or call BCIL at 617-338-6665 or 617-338-6662 TTY. You can also email BCIL directly at contactBCIL@boston.org.

Abuse, Neglect, Domestic Violence, & Sexual Assault Resources for PwD

This information is provided by the [Boston Center for Independent Living \(BCIL\)](#):

The COVID pandemic has altered how people are living—less interaction with others, more isolation, less income, and more stresses in some cases. Such situations can result in neglect, abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault. If this is happening to you or a friend or neighbor or a family member, you can contact the resources below or BCIL, and they will assist you to get the support you may need from one of these resources.

- If you suspect abuse or neglect of a person with disabilities, please contact the following agency for their age group:
 - Ages birth-17: The [Department of Children and Families](#) (for all children, not just those with disabilities), 24 hours a day at 1-800-792-5200.
 - Ages 18-59: The [Disabled Persons Protection Commission](#) (DPPC) hotline, available 24 hours a day at 1-800-426-9009 (voice) or 1-888-822-0350 (TTY)
 - Ages 60+: The Executive Office of Elder Affairs, 24 hours a day at 1-800-922-2275 or online at <https://www.mass.gov/reporting-elder-abuse-neglect>

- For people with disabilities of all ages who are residing in long term care facilities: The Department of Public Health (DPH):
 - DPH prefers written complaints via either fax or U.S. Mail
 - See <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/file-a-complaint-regarding-a-nursing-home-or-other-health-care-facility> to download their complaint form
 - Fax or Mail the form to DPH at:
 - Fax: 617-753-8165
 - Mail:
Division of Health Care Facility Licensure and Certification
Complaint Intake Unit
67 Forest Street
 - Marlborough, MA 01752 If you are unable to provide a written report, call the 24-hour consumer complaint line at 1-800-462-5540.
- The [Boston Area Rape Crisis Center](#) provides support to survivors of sexual violence, their families and friends, and providers. For assistance 24 hours a day, call their hotline at 800-841-8371
- Additionally, web chat is available at <https://barcc.org/help/services/hotline> every day from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- The [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)
- [SafeLink](#) at 877-521-2601
- For resources for survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault, visit [Futures Without Violence](#).

You are not alone. Please reach out if you need help. You can call BCIL at 617-338-6665 or send an email to contactBCIL@bostoncil.org.

Stimulus Funds

- People receiving Social Security benefits (SSI or SSDI) who do not usually file a tax return will automatically receive the stimulus money that the government is providing for individuals who meet the income guidelines.
- For more information on Economic Impact Payments (stimulus checks), visit <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment-frequently-asked-questions>.