



Office of
Representative Carole Fiola
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

March 26, 2020

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Federal Disaster Request and Other COVID-19 Response Efforts

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced a new request to the federal government for a Major Disaster Declaration, in addition to other actions to sustain the Commonwealth’s response to COVID-19.

Major Disaster Declaration Request: Governor Baker today submitted a request to the federal government for a Major Disaster Declaration for Massachusetts. If approved, this declaration would provide the Commonwealth additional federal assistance beyond what was included in the Emergency Declaration declared by President Trump on March 13, 2020. The disaster declaration request includes a request for FEMA’s Public Assistance Program, which would make financial assistance available to cities and towns, state agencies, and certain non-profits statewide. The disaster declaration request also requests FEMA’s Individual Assistance Program including Disaster Unemployment Assistance and Crisis Counseling Assistance to help support residents in need during this unprecedented incident.

[Read the Letter.](#)

New Public Health Orders: The Department of Public health has issued three emergency orders to support the health care system’s response to COVID-19:

- **Pharmacy Practice:** To ensure pharmacists are able to fully support the health care system’s response to COVID-19, this emergency order makes several changes regarding pharmacy practice, including expedited approval for pharmacists licensed in other states to practice in Massachusetts, and allowing the remote processing of prescriptions by pharmacy technicians. [Read the Order](#)
- **Determination of Need:** This emergency order exempts health care facilities from the requirement that they submit a Notice of Determination of Need for certain activities that will support their response to COVID-19. [Read the Order](#) | [Read the Guidance](#)
- **Nurse Staffing:** To ensure hospitals have the flexibility they need to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, this emergency order exempts hospitals from certain nurse-staffing requirements, while requiring that they must ensure that staffing levels remain adequate to meet patients’ needs, and staff is trained and competent to meet the needs of their patients. [Read the Order](#)

Permit Order: Governor Baker today is issuing an emergency order that provides that a permit will not expire or lapse during the state of emergency for most permits issued by agencies within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. The order also pauses deadlines for these agencies to decide or hold hearings on permit applications. The clock on those deadlines will resume 45 days after the end of the emergency. It also ensures that no permit is automatically issued because an agency is unable to make a decision on a permit application during the emergency.

Ensuring Access to Personal Care Attendant Services: The Administration worked with the advocacy community and union partners to implement solutions to ensure access to Personal Care Attendant (PCA) services for individuals with disabilities and older adults during this public health emergency. MassHealth created a hotline through MassOptions for MassHealth members to call if they are in need of services, and updated its policies to streamline the hiring process and allow more flexibility for PCAs to work more hours.

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