

CITY OF PEABODY

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR EDWARD A. BETTENCOURT, JR.

City Responds Swiftly to Higher Case Count

*Small Events, Household Exposures, Informal Social Gatherings Driving Increase
Schools to Continue with Hybrid Learning Model*

(October 29, 2020) – The Peabody Health Department announced that the City’s average daily COVID-19 case rate has risen to a level of approximately 12 cases per 100,000 population, which is expected to prompt the state to move Peabody from the Yellow Moderate Risk level for COVID-19 transmission to the Red Higher Risk level for transmission.

“Although this increase in cases is not entirely unexpected based on public health forecasts for a resurgence of COVID-19 this Fall, and based on similar increases nationwide and across many other cities and towns in Massachusetts, it does serve to remind us of the importance of remaining vigilant,” said Mayor Edward A. Bettencourt, Jr. “We need to redouble our efforts to follow CDC guidelines, particularly regarding physical distancing and face masks, so that we can reverse this troubling trend and keep our residents safe and healthy.”

SCHOOLS

Peabody Public Schools will remain in our current hybrid learning model. Any changes to the model will be based on multiple weeks of data and evidence of increased risk of transmission to students and/or staff in the school setting, as determined by collaboration with the Peabody Health Department.

During preparations to open schools, the School Department worked with the Health Department to establish rapid response protocols whenever a member of the school community tested positive for the coronavirus. Rigorous contact tracing and quarantine procedures, coupled with a comprehensive air-quality assessment and enhanced cleaning efforts at each school, have helped reassure students, parents, teachers, and staff. Daily communication among city officials, including Mayor Bettencourt, Superintendent Josh Vadala and Public Health Director Sharon Cameron, has been instrumental in the school district’s ability to continue offering the hybrid model.

“Thanks to the aggressive safety protocols we have in place at the Peabody Public Schools as well as outstanding cooperation from students, parents, teachers, and staff, we are able to continue our hybrid learning model at this time,” Mayor Bettencourt said. “We will continue to monitor circumstances closely and adhere to all state guidelines relative to the safety and well-being of our school community. It is critically important in our efforts to control the spread of this disease for our residents to share information if contacted by a Public Health Nurse as part of a contact tracing effort.”

According to public health data, small events, household exposures, and informal social gatherings are driving the increase in Peabody's transmission rate. With the holiday season approaching, public health officials join Mayor Bettencourt in encouraging residents to guard against complacency and to continue to wear masks, maintain six feet of physical distance from others, and limit gatherings with those outside of your household.

Stopping the Spread

According to the CDC:

- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**
- The virus is thought to [spread mainly from person-to-person](#).
 - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
 - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
 - COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.
- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoid close contact
 - **Inside your home:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - If possible, maintain 6 feet between the person who is sick and other household members.
 - **Outside your home:** Put 6 feet of distance between yourself and people who don't live in your household.
 - Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
 - [Stay at least 6 feet \(about 2 arms' length\) from other people.](#)
 - Keeping distance from others is especially important for [people who are at higher risk of getting very sick](#).
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others
 - You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. The mask is meant to protect other people in case you are infected, and also helps minimize the risk of droplets from another person reaching you.
 - Everyone should wear a [mask](#) in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household, especially when other [social distancing](#) measures are difficult to maintain.

- Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The mask is not a substitute for social distancing.
- **Always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Do not spit.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- After coughing, sneezing, touching your face, or using the restroom, immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Be alert for symptoms.** Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19. **Symptoms of COVID may be mild; if you are not feeling well, be safe and stay home until you are better.**
 - This monitoring is especially important if you are [running essential errands](#), going into the office or workplace, and in settings where it may be difficult to keep a [physical distance of 6 feet](#).

For the latest news, case counts, and lab testing results, visit the state's COVID-19 website at www.mass.gov/covid19. Residents can also call 2-1-1 with questions, or text the keyword COVIDMA to 888-777 to receive notifications via their smartphone.

Peabody residents can stay up-to-date on COVID-19 news as it relates to the City by visiting www.peabody-ma.gov.

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