

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 3:00 PM

MAYOR WALSH ANNOUNCES BOSTON TO TEMPORARILY RETURN TO MODIFIED PHASE TWO, STEP TWO OF REOPENING PLAN

New measures taken to mitigate spread of COVID-19 and protect hospital capacity

COVID-19 RESPONSE



**TESTING
ACCESS**



**DATA
INFORMED**



**COMMUNITY
OUTREACH**



**ADDITIONAL
RESTRICTIONS AND
ENFORCEMENT**



**SAFE
ISOLATION**



**HEALTHCARE
INFRASTRUCTURE**



**CONTACT
TRACING**

CITY of BOSTON



Mayor Martin J. Walsh

BOSTON - Monday, December 14, 2020 - In an effort to reduce the further spread of COVID-19 and its impact on Boston's health care system and essential services, Mayor Martin J. Walsh today announced that effective Wednesday, December 16, the City of Boston will return back to a modified Phase Two, Step Two of the [Reopening Massachusetts](#) plan. Mayors and city leaders from Massachusetts are joining Boston in announcing similar restrictions in their cities and towns, including Arlington, Brockton, Lynn, Melrose, Newton, Somerville, and Winthrop.

"Unfortunately, we are at the point where we need to take stronger action to control COVID-19 in Boston, and urgently, to ensure our health care workers have the capacity to care for everyone in need," said Mayor Walsh. "We are hopeful that by reducing opportunities for transmission throughout the region, we will reduce the spread of this deadly virus and maintain our ability to keep critical services open. We continue to urge everyone to take personal responsibility and follow the public health guidelines while visiting any public space or business, and employers to allow their employees to work from home as much as possible. Together, we will be able to get this virus under control, save lives, and ultimately come back stronger."

[Read the Boston Public Health Commission's "Order Establishing Supplemental COVID-19 Restrictions in the City of Boston."](#)

The City of Boston had been in Step One of Phase Three of the Reopening Massachusetts plan since July 6, 2020. Boston has been experiencing a steady increase in COVID-19 cases among its residents since Thanksgiving, with the citywide positive test rate at 7.2 percent for the week ending on December 6, 2020, up from 5.2 percent for the prior week. The percentage of occupied adult non-surge ICU beds at Boston hospitals is at 90 percent as of December 10, 2020. Returning to a modified Phase Two, Step Two requires the closure of certain businesses designated as Phase Three. Gatherings in private and public settings are required to have no more than 10 people for indoor settings and 25 people for outdoor settings.

The following industries in the City of Boston are required to close starting Wednesday, December 16 for at least three weeks:

- Indoor fitness centers and health clubs, including gyms using alternative spaces. One-on-one personal training sessions are allowed.
- Movie theaters
- Museums
- Aquariums
- Indoor recreational and athletic facilities (except for youth 18 and under)
 - This does not apply to collegiate or professional sports. Collegiate sports teams in the City of Boston may continue to use indoor recreational facilities and fitness centers.
 - Indoor pools may remain open for all ages under pre-registration format structure limited to one person per swim lane.
- Indoor recreational venues with potential for low-contact (batting cages, driving ranges, bowling alleys, rock-climbing)
- Sightseeing and other organized tours (bus tours, duck tours, harbor cruises, whale watching)
- Indoor historical spaces & sites
- Indoor event spaces (meeting rooms, ballrooms, private party rooms, social clubs)
 - Private social clubs may continue to operate, if they serve food, [consistent with restaurant guidance](#).
- Indoor and outdoor gaming arcades associated with gaming devices

The following industries in the City of Boston may remain in operation with the following restrictions in place starting Wednesday, December 16 for at least three weeks:

- [Office spaces](#) may remain open at 40 percent capacity. Employers are strongly encouraged to allow employees to work from home as much as possible.
- Indoor dining in restaurants may remain in operation with restricted bar seating. The 90 minute limit on seatings to reduce crowding and prevent the spread of COVID-19 will be strictly enforced. No member of any dining party may remain in a restaurant for more than 90 minutes in any calendar day. Ancillary activities such as pool tables, darts, trivia, etc. are prohibited.
 - Bar seating is prohibited unless express written approval is issued by Boston's Licensing Board, after licensees [submit a Bar Seating Plan](#) for review and approval.
- Indoor non-athletic instructional classes in arts, education & life sciences for persons 18 years and older may continue to operate within the 10-person capacity limit.
- Outdoor event spaces used for gatherings and celebrations within the 25-person capacity limit, including those in parks, reservations, and other outdoor spaces not designated in Phase Four.
- Outdoor theaters and outdoor performance venues may continue to operate within the 25-person capacity limit.
- Motion picture, television and streaming production may continue to operate.

“Right now, we need to use every tool in our public health and healthcare toolboxes to mitigate the spread of COVID-19,” said Manny Lopes, President and Chief Executive Officer of the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center. “The vaccine is the light at the end of the tunnel, but just because help is on the way does not mean the fight is over. For ten months, Mayor Walsh and his team have followed the data and acted in the best interest of the residents of the City of Boston. I applaud him for continuing this strategy and look forward to mobilizing in support of our shared battle against COVID-19.”

As a reminder, the following State orders remain in effect to reduce the transmission of the virus:

- [Face coverings order](#): face masks or cloth face coverings are required in all public places, whether indoors or outdoors, even where they are able to maintain 6 feet of distance from others.
- [Travel order](#): all visitors entering Massachusetts, including returning residents are required to:
 - Complete the [Massachusetts Travel Form](#) prior to arrival, unless visiting from a [lower-risk state](#) designated by the Department of Public Health.

- Quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72-hours prior to arrival in Massachusetts.
- [Stay-at-Home Advisory](#): residents of Massachusetts are advised to stay home between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Boston has been steadfast in its commitment to supporting the small business community. The [Reopen Boston Fund](#), still accepting applications, has issued \$3.1 million to more than 1,700 businesses to help with the expenses of safely opening and operating businesses, and is still accepting applications. In total, nearly \$6.7 million in debt-free grants have been distributed to over 1,850 small businesses in every neighborhood across the City of Boston through the Office of Economic Development's [Small Business Relief Fund](#). Last month, the City [launched three new funds totaling \\$6.3 million](#) that will support small businesses in Boston that have been affected by COVID-19, focusing on commercial rent relief, supporting certified women, minority, and veteran owned small businesses, and restaurant relief. And to further assist the City's small businesses, the City of Boston has [created a list of suppliers](#) to help businesses source the personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies required to ensure the safety of employees and customers as industries reopen.

The City of Boston will be hosting webinars on Tuesday, December 15 to provide guidance and answer questions from business owners. All of the webinars will be available live on the [Office of Economic Development's Facebook page](#).

- 9 a.m. General Guidance Overview: [register here](#).
- 10 a.m. Restaurant Guidance Overview: [register here](#).
- 11 a.m. Fitness Centers & Health Clubs Guidance Overview: [register here](#).
- 12 p.m. Tourism, Arts & Culture Guidance Overview: [register here](#).

To better support arts organizations facing financial losses, canceled programming, and closures caused by COVID-19, the City of Boston established a \$1 million Arts and Culture COVID-19 Fund, which awarded grants to 146 small and mid-sized arts and culture nonprofits to adapt their programs, spaces, and operating models. Throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, the City of Boston in partnership with Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) have also awarded grants totaling over \$330,000 to over 600 artists as part of the Boston Artist Relief Fund, which was established to support artists whose creative practices and incomes were adversely impacted by the pandemic.

Starting today, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) welcomed an additional 1,700 high needs students for in-person learning across 28 schools. Students prioritized for in-person learning include students in special education programs and students with limited or interrupted formal education. For more information, please visit bostonpublicschools.org

For more information about Boston's reopening, please visit boston.gov/reopening. For additional questions or programs, please visit our [coronavirus website](#) or call 3-1-1, Boston's

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24-hour constituent hotline. Text BOSCOVID to 888-777 to receive text alerts on a regular basis, available in 11 languages.

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