

SUMMARY:

1. New Cases: DPH new cases reported yesterday:

Barnstable County: 45 new cases
Martha's Vineyard: 0 new cases.
Nantucket: 0 new cases.

2. Hospitalizations and Fatalities: 3-day avg. hospitalizations fell to 19 over the weekend (were in the mid-60s four weeks ago). ICU patient numbers have fallen as well; 6 patients were in the ICUs last night. There have been 4 COVID fatalities reported since Saturday (inclusive).

Recent data on COVID fatalities in Barnstable County suggest that residents of **Long Term Care/Skilled Nursing Facilities/Rest Homes** represent 45% of all fatalities (166 of 368 fatalities, as of 2/11/21). This is a **lower** percentage than that seen during phase 1 of the pandemic last spring (over 65%), and **this percentage continues to fall. Indeed, between 1/5/21 and 2/11/21 only 24% (27) of the County's 112 fatalities occurred among LTC residents.**

3. Schools and Childcare Centers: Due to the mildness of the flu season the DPH has **removed the requirement** that all school children receive a flu vaccination on or before 2/28/21. **School districts remain in a hybrid learning model.**

4. Testing; Test Positivity Rates (14-day, as of 2/16/21):

Barnstable County: 3.68%
Dukes & Nantucket Counties: 3.38%

A test percent positivity rate below 5% suggests that an outbreak is on the way to **containment.**

5. Weekly Town Risk, and Statewide Cluster Analyses: See charts below.

6. Vaccination:

-Groups eligible for vaccination now are those in Phase 1, and Phase 2/Group 1 (persons aged 75+), and Phase 2/Group 2 (65+, 2+ comorbidities, residents and staff of low-income senior housing) depending upon availability of vaccine.

Caregivers (regardless of age) accompanying a 75+ person to their vaccination appointment remain eligible for vaccination.

-Planning for 4-5 sub-regional mass vaccination sites on Cape Cod, for operation during Phase 2, is in place. The DPH discussions with the County Health Dept. regarding opening a DPH-operated mass vaccination site on Cape Cod during Phase 2 of the vaccination plan are **stalled at this time.**

-Phase 2 of the State Vaccination Plan began on February 1. Vaccination at local clinics during Phase 2 are by appointment only and **appointments are announced and able to be scheduled once County and local health authorities are sure of vaccine availability from the DPH.** The public is being given notice of planned vaccination clinics for eligible persons in Phase 2.

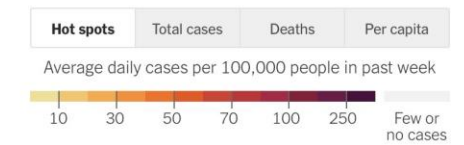
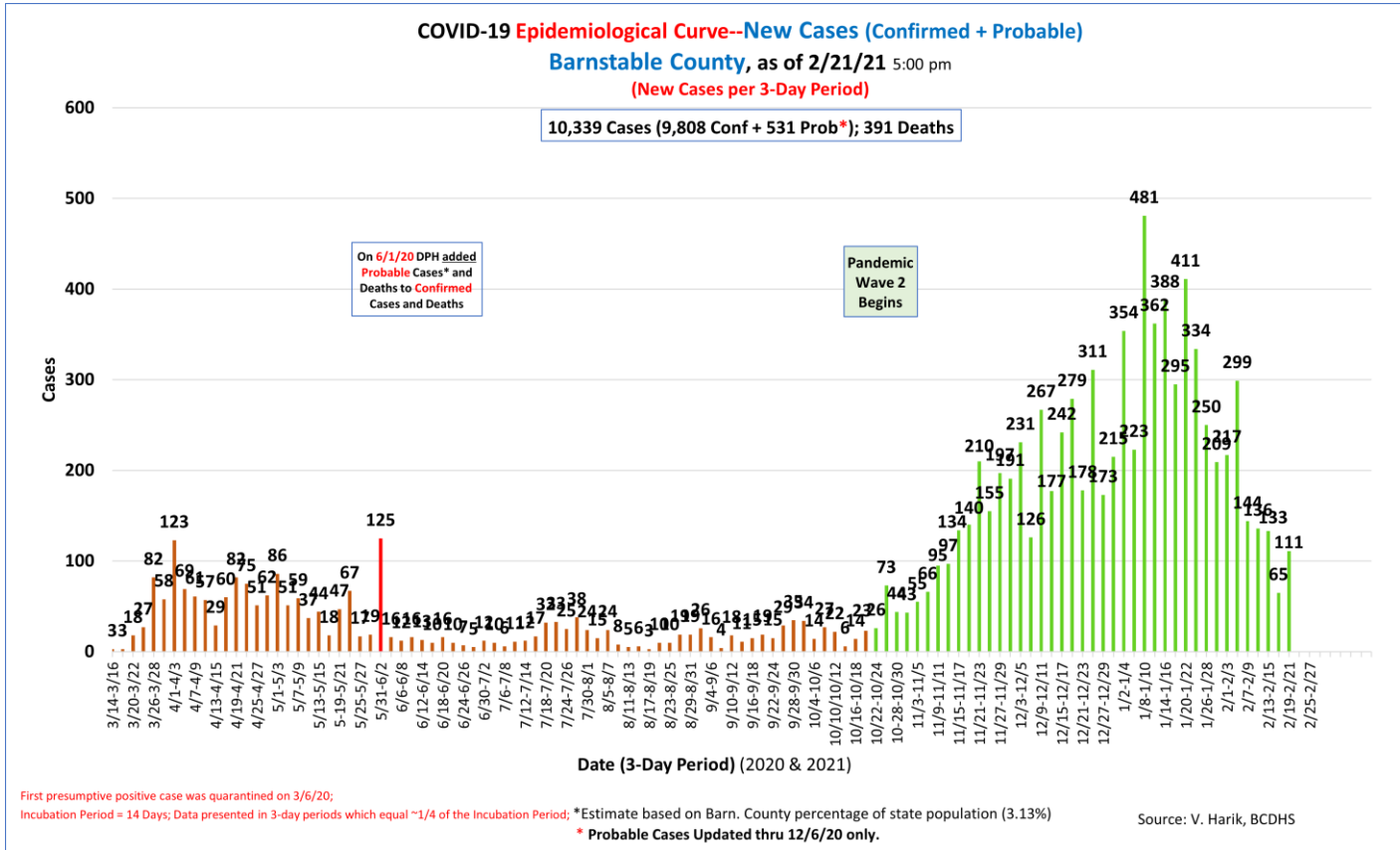
7. COVID Mutation and Changes in Transmissibility/Virulence/Other: **There are three variants of concern: B117 (UK), B1351 (S. Africa), and P1 (Brazil).** All three appear to be equally virulent but at least 50% more transmissible. Within two months of the B117 variant being identified in the UK (October) it became the dominant strain circulating there. The CDC is now posting surveillance information on the emergence of the B117 variant in the US: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant-cases.html>. Existing vaccines may be less effective against these new strains. The degree to which this may be so is being investigated. Moderna and Pfizer are working on a booster shot to counter these new strains.

-B117 and B1351 have been identified in Massachusetts.

DETAIL:

1. New Cases

Daily new case numbers in Barnstable County remain in a downward trend following the holiday season surge. **45 cases** were reported yesterday. The 7-day average new cases per 100,000 (now **14/100K**) continued to fall last week, with Barnstable County acquiring an **average of 30 cases per day over the past 7 days**.



Sources: State and local health agencies, Population and demographic data from Census Bureau.
 ▶ About this data



Nantucket's 7-day average cases per 100,000 population (now **16/100K**) continues trending lower; Nantucket is picking up approximately **2** new cases per day. No new cases were reported yesterday.

Martha's Vineyard's 7-day average cases per 100,000 population (now **16/100K**) continues trending lower. Dukes County is gaining approximately **3** new cases per day. No new cases were reported yesterday.

Trailing 14-Day Testing and Cases by County:

In the context of adequate availability of testing and contact tracing, which our three counties appear to have achieved, **a test percent positivity rate below 5% suggests that an outbreak is on the way to containment.** Rates below 3% and 1% are further important containment milestones.

Test Positivity Rates (14-day, as of 2/16/21):

Barnstable County: 3.68%

Dukes & Nantucket Counties: 3.38%

2. Hospitalizations and Fatalities

Hospitalizations and **acuity of illness** have increased very significantly since the second week of November and remain elevated. Cape Cod Hospital and Falmouth Hospital have **suspended visitation** of inpatients except under very limited circumstances (end-of-life, etc.) and have **stopped non-essential surgeries and other elective procedures.**

Hospitalizations, Last Report:		Not Cumulative		Cumulative		3-Day Avg. of Persons in Hosp. (Med/Surg + ICU)	ICU Percent of Beds Occupied
		Hospital Beds Occupied (Last Report)	ICU Beds Occupied (Last Report)	Barnstable County Cases (Confirmed)	Barnstable County Deaths		
2/21/2021	Cape Cod Hospital	10	4				
	Falmouth Hospital	4	1				
		14	5	9,808	391	19.7	26%

Since DPH reporting of hospitalizations has a 2-day lag Tina Shaw of CCHC is providing me with more recent information (thank you Tina). Yesterday evening CCHC reported that there were **27 COVID patients in hospital, 6** of which were in the **ICUs.**

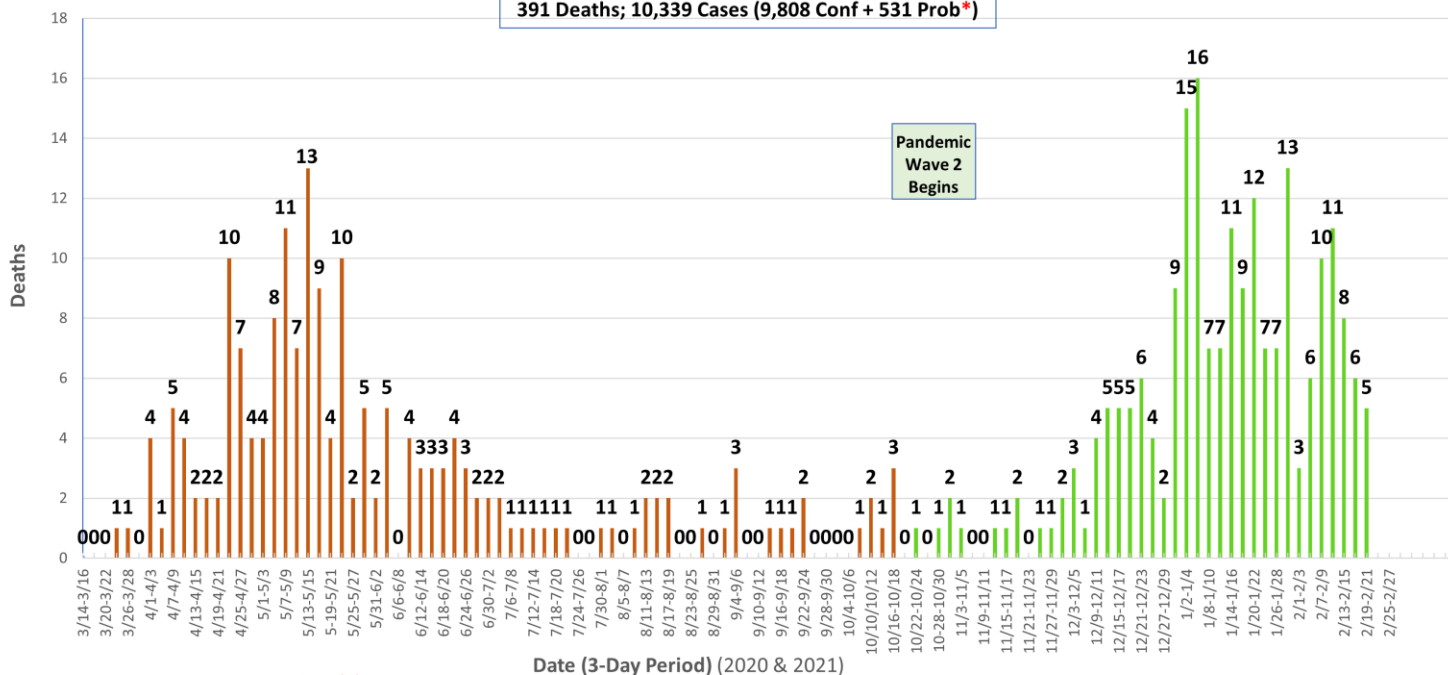
Fatalities: 4 additional fatalities were reported over the weekend. The total is now **391.**

COVID-19 Epidemiological Curve--New Deaths (Confirmed + Probable)

Barnstable County, as of 2/21/21 5:00 pm

(New Deaths per 3-Day Period)

391 Deaths; 10,339 Cases (9,808 Conf + 531 Prob*)



First presumptive positive case was quarantined on 3/6/20;

Incubation Period = 14 Days; Data presented in 3-day periods which equal ~1/4 of the Incubation Period

* Probable Cases Updated thru 12/6/20 only.

Source: V. Harik, BCDHS; Using data provided by the MA Department of Public Health

Recent data on COVID fatalities in Barnstable County suggest that residents of **Long Term Care/Skilled Nursing Facilities/Rest Homes** represent **45%** of all fatalities (166 of 368 fatalities, as of 2/11/21). This is a **lower** percentage than that seen during phase 1 of the pandemic last spring (over 65%), and **this percentage continues to fall**. Indeed, **between 1/5/21 and 2/11/21 only 24% of the County's 106 fatalities occurred among LTC residents.**

3. Schools and Childcare Centers

School districts are staying vigilant and reacting well to new cases. Most school districts on the Cape and Islands are in a hybrid learning status.

DESE and the DPH (memo of 1/8/21) announced that they are seeking to introduce COVID-19 screening testing using a pooled strategy in the school setting. Schools may elect to participate by responding to a survey that DESE/DPH have posted. The status of this initiative is unclear at this time.

~~For the 2020-2021 school year the DPH has mandated that all school children be vaccinated for seasonal influenza. This week the DPH extended the deadline for doing so from 12/31/20 to 2/28/21. This mandate has been canceled by the DPH.~~

During Phase 2 of the state vaccination rollout **childcare center** staff are to be vaccinated alongside school staff.

4. Testing

Additional testing locations in Barnstable County for both symptomatic and asymptomatic persons remain open in **Falmouth** at the Fairgrounds and in **Hyannis** at Cape Cod Hospital (the Melody Tent site has been given over to vaccination clinics). Daily testing capacity is 50 at the Falmouth site and 350 at the Hyannis site. Neither site is open daily and persons must call ahead for an appointment. Details: <https://www.capecodhealth.org/medical-services/infectious-disease/coronavirus/covid-19-testing-process/>.

In late December additional testing by **Outer Cape Community Health Services** began and continues at its 3 locations in Wellfleet, Harwich Port, and Provincetown (<https://outercape.org/2020/12/23/outer-cape-health-services-to-offer-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-beginning-december-23/>). The **Community Health Center of Cape Cod** is also offering testing at its locations. These sites may not open be daily and persons must call ahead for an appointment.

Eligibility criteria for the testing include residency in Barnstable County. Testing is done by appointment only. Tests cost \$75, \$110 for travel-related tests, and no one will be turned away if unable to pay for a test.

DPH-mandated **routine testing** in skilled nursing facilities/long term care settings (SNF/LTC) continues. This provides critical surveillance and allows these facilities to stay ahead of asymptomatic spread amongst staff and residents. Routine testing in SNF/LTC settings is conducted weekly for staff.

In addition, the State's **BinaxNOW rapid testing program** (available to **schools**) has been extended to visitors of **nursing homes** and rest home residents (LTC settings) to allow visitation of residents while limiting the risk of infection from visitors. DPH has published guidance on this. The program has also been extended to **childcare centers and homeless shelters** and management of these facilities may apply to the EEC and DPH for testing kits.

5. Weekly Town Risk and Statewide Cluster Analyses

6. Vaccination

Groups eligible for vaccination now are those in Phase 1, Phase 2/Group 1 (persons aged 75+), and Phase 2/Group 2 (65+, 2+ comorbidities, and residents and staff of low-income senior housing) depending upon availability of vaccine. **Caregivers (regardless of age) accompanying a 75+ person to their vaccination appointment remain eligible for vaccination.**

Appointments (<https://www.cic-health.com/vaccines-location>) may not be immediately available due to overwhelming demand and still-limited supply of vaccine from the manufacturers. **Appointments for local vaccination clinics are only being scheduled once County and local health authorities can be sure of vaccine availability from the DPH.** The public is being given notice of planned vaccination clinics for eligible persons in Phase 2.

Vaccination is available at several **State-run mass vaccination sites** around Massachusetts. The closest ones to Cape Cod are at **Gillette Stadium in Foxboro and in Dartmouth**. Appointments can be scheduled by visiting <https://www.cic-health.com/vaccines-location>, or calling **2-1-1** and following the prompts.

Plans for **regional vaccination clinics on Cape Cod** are ready and a few clinics have already been advertised and held. County Planners are awaiting sufficient vaccine supply before expanding local clinics. **The public receives 24-hour advance notice before appointments for local clinics are made available online.**

DPH discussions with the County Health Dept. to open a **DPH-operated mass vaccination site on Cape Cod** during Phase 2 of the vaccination plan have **stalled.**

Childcare staff will be eligible for vaccination alongside school staff in Phase 2.

The State has contracted with **CVS and Walgreens** to arrange vaccination of **older adults in SNFs/congregate care**. **CVS, Walgreens, and Stop & Shop pharmacies** are also scheduling vaccinations for the groups in Phase 2, again depending upon vaccine supply.

7. COVID Mutation and Changes in Transmissibility/Virulence/Other

The emergence of a variant of the COVID-19 virus in the UK, classified as **B.1.1.7**, was identified in September and publicized in early December. Reports hold that B117 is 50% - 70% more contagious than our predominant variant now circulating (D614G). Within three months of the variant being identified in the UK it became dominant strain circulating there. Additional variants of concern have emerged internationally: **B1351** (South Africa) and Brazil (**P1**) which are also highly transmissible.

These three variants are spreading globally and have been detected in the US.

The B117 and B1351 variants have been identified by the DPH as being in circulation in MA.

Researchers are working to determine if the variants differ from D614G in terms of: **1.** How sick people become, **2.** If natural immunity is different following infection with D614G, and **3.** If immunity from vaccination differs since the vaccine was developed during the period that D614G has been predominant. **The existing vaccines may be less effective against the new strains. Moderna and Pfizer are working on booster shots to counter these new strains.**

The CDC is posting surveillance information on the emergence of the variants in the US: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant-cases.html>.

According to an article by Andrew Joseph from StatNews, "Coronaviruses evolve more slowly than viruses like flu, but they do pick up mutations as they spread. **SARS-CoV-2 has been adding one or two changes a month to its RNA genome since it emerged late last year in China**, and different versions of the virus have been continuously circulating throughout the course of the pandemic. **But this variant (B.1.1.7 or VUI-202012/01) showed up with at least 17 mutations**, according to one genetic analysis." (Source: https://www.statnews.com/2020/12/21/looming-questions-new-variant-coronavirus/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=1a74bda2ca-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-1a74bda2ca-150158417).

Vaira Harik, M.S.

Deputy Director

Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services

Email: vharik@barnstablecounty.org