



TOWN OF LANCASTER

BOARD OF HEALTH

701 Main Street Suite 6
Lancaster, MA 01523

Tel: (978) 365-3326 ext. 1310
Fax: (978) 368-4009

COVID-19 Pandemic: Statement of Purpose and Plan

Relationship of Lancaster to the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health (NBOH)

For many years, the Town of Lancaster has been a member community of the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health (NBOH), a regional public health district. As a member of NBOH, Lancaster shares the staff of the District, unlike some neighboring towns such as Clinton and Sterling, it doesn't have its own public health department and infrastructure, and therefore relies on the District to provide health services to the town. Our membership in the District provides the Board with access to a variety of staff including Health Agents and Nurses to provide these services. We rely on and receive the latest current information and thinking that is placed into practice by our NBOH affiliation.

The role of NBOH

Lancaster receives both Nursing and Environmental services from NBOH. As an example, on October 8, 2020, your local Board of Health, in collaboration with the Lancaster Community Center, volunteers and NBOH, held a very successful flu clinic in Lancaster, which was also held in 2019.

NBOH has been holding COVID-19 vaccination clinics to the extent they have been able to secure vaccine and supplies from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). These clinics have served Lancaster and its other member towns well, though due to limited vaccine, not to an ideal extent. Recently, the MDPH, in an effort to make the best use of the limited supply of vaccine it is receiving, has decided to focus the vaccine supply to high volume Mass Vax centers. Policies regarding supplies to towns, local boards of health like NBOH, hospitals, and physician offices have been changing based on vaccine availability and other variables.

Regarding contact tracing, nursing services and availability for consultation, the NBOH staff have been working extremely hard and diligently. When vaccines become available in sufficient supply, we hope the MDPH will again issue vaccine to NBOH, and the Lancaster BOH will continue to assist and collaborate with them.

NBOH is also a close partner with our Lancaster Fire/Rescue/EMS and is in close communication with the Board of Health, the Town Administrator, and Community Center.

The role of Lancaster Board of Health (LBOH)

The Lancaster Board of Health (LBOH) is comprised of three elected, unpaid residents, with a very modest budget, the NBOH Environmental Agent who we share with other communities but who is an extremely dedicated individual, and an Administrator whose time is shared between the BOH, Building Department, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and Conservation Commission.

The LBOH members spend a great deal of time holding public meetings, attending educational and informational programs, and gathering information to provide the best possible services to the town. LBOH members volunteer at the area vaccination clinics as much as four days a week, make inspections to business and facilities for which we have received complaints from residents, and respond to a variety of calls and concerns, most within 24 hours of receiving notice.

The LBOH address seasonal infectious disease and health concerns such as tick or mosquito borne illnesses (Lyme Disease, Eastern Equine Encephalitis), Influenza, Avian flu, Ebola, Swine flu and other issues including but not

limited to water and food safety, tobacco and vaping concerns, substance abuse, environment quality and preparedness, and childhood immunization.

The LBOH would be remiss if we failed to recognize the incredible job our Lancaster Fire/Rescue/EMS provides to the community. Our close collaboration with the Chief and his Department assures seamless and efficient Emergency Services planning.

Lancaster's Fire Department is not a large station nor is it overly funded. Yet in the night, weekends, holidays, in bad weather, when called they come. The Board of Health is proud of its relationship with the Fire Department and our Public Safety partners.

What the Lancaster Board of Health is asking Residents to do

The LBOH, under directives from the MDPH and the Governor's Office, has been asked to plan and prepare. The LBOH and NBOH have been doing that for months.

[Get Vaccinated!](#) Those that are able are encouraged to go to the Mass Vax sites and get vaccinated.
[Vaccination locations](#)

- [Create a profile and sign-up for COVID-19 alerts](#) by text, email, or phone call in your preferred language.
- [Call 2-1-1](#) or use [live chat](#) for non-emergency questions and help
- Call [Crisis Counseling Assistance Program](#) | (888) 215-4920
- [Email](#) the Governor's Office or call (617) 725-4005

The LBOH's immediate concern is focused on our senior housing, seniors in general, our homebound, town employees, teachers, getting kids back in school, have a safe town meeting, our next election and residents experiencing heating and food insecurities in addition to the LBOH's non-pandemic ongoing issues.

The Board of Health is an advocate for resilience. We are asking residents to be open to change, keep things in perspective, take care, be kind to yourself, be kind to others and please ask for help if you need it.

We're asking residents to be ready. When the time presents and the call goes out, we hope that the good people of Lancaster will volunteer in force and continue to keep Lancaster the amazing place it is.

Why Lancaster is different from Clinton, Sterling, and other towns with regard to provision of health services

Lancaster's health services differ from Clinton, Sterling, Leominster and other local cities and towns in that they have full-time staffed public health departments and are able and obligated to provide services. Lancaster, like Bolton, Berlin, Stow, Lunenburg, Harvard and 10 other towns belong to the NBOH and have no facilities, staff or supplies to provide public health services, and therefore rely on NBOH for these.

The Role of the Lancaster Community Center (LCC) and Council on Aging (COA)

The full role of the LCC and COA is outside the context of this document, as they provide a wide variety of critical and vital services to the Town. In the context of the pandemic, it is important to point out that the LCC has worked extremely hard to assure that as many seniors were registered for NBOH and other immunization clinics, and in many cases provided transportation for these residents to receive their vaccinations.

The LBOH seeks to collaborate and cooperate with the LCC and COA on a wide variety of issues, in particularly assuring that our seniors are well cared for and get vaccinated in as timely a way as possible.

We are currently working together to gather information on our homebound residents to assure they get vaccinated.

The need for accurate and factual information

2/28/2021

We are in a time of extremely high stress, uncertainty, and danger. Truth and accuracy must be the basis of our dialogue. Questions should be directed to the LBOH at 978-365-3326 ext 1310 or <https://www.ci.lancaster.ma.us/user/1503/contact>. We will answer your questions or address your concerns as soon as possible.

“Nashoba has had Clinics but no one from Lancaster has been served”. This is among a number of false or misleading statements that have circulated recently. Lancaster has had no less than 3 registered nurses volunteering at the NBOH clinics vaccinating and servicing residents. Many of those receiving vaccines were Lancaster residents, some transported to the clinic by the Community Center.

“The Board of Health, Fire Department and Town Administrator aren’t doing anything”. This is another false and inflammatory statement. In fact, these town agencies and persons are working quite diligently to assure the best possible provision and coordination of health services, in collaboration with the MDPH, NBOH, and local pharmacies. If you disagree, contact us to discuss your thoughts!

The need for patience, tolerance and use of safety practices

The United States has suffered over 500,000 deaths from COVID-19, and many more will yet occur. In spite of remarkably effective vaccines, it will take many months for the population to again be safe. We must all practice patience, tolerance, perseverance, and kindness to ourselves and each other.

When vaccinations opened to 65 to 75 year candidates, 1-million additional eligible persons were added to the pool. If Massachusetts is receiving 100,000 doses per week, by the numbers with no complications, a full 10-weeks would be required to vaccinate the new group alone.

Continued vigilance with safe practices is critical! Even after you are vaccinated. Correct wearing of a face covering (not simply a face shield), maintaining six-foot social distancing, staying home whenever possible, hand washing and use of hand sanitizer, are among the critical ways to protect yourself and others from spreading the virus. When you are out in the community and you encounter someone wearing a mask correctly and their demeanor, their body language, suggests they’re uncomfortable, afraid Calmly give them a good morning, how are you today ... you don’t have to take your wallet out, you don’t have to give-up your place in line and if you’re wearing a mask correctly, they’ll have no idea who you are, but the response is remarkable.

If you encounter people that are not wearing masks or wearing them incorrectly or failing to sanitize, simply avoid them. If you are comfortable, a friendly and gentle reminder about safe practices would be appropriate. The LBOH knows that the vast majority of our residents are good, kind folks that deserve good things to happen. Predicting the devastating effects of the pandemic would have been very difficult, but alas, we’ll hope these devastating diseases continue to visit but once in each 100-years.

The difference between your Board of Health versus State and Federal Governments is seeing the population as real people, our neighbors, and friends. Your local Board of Health is not going to promise you things that can’t be delivered.

Understand that an appointment or getting a 1st vaccine does not mean the pandemic has ended. Even after getting a 2nd vaccine and allowing time for your immune system to build antibodies, one must still follow the safe practices listed above.