



September 2, 2020 COVID-19 Webinar – Q&A

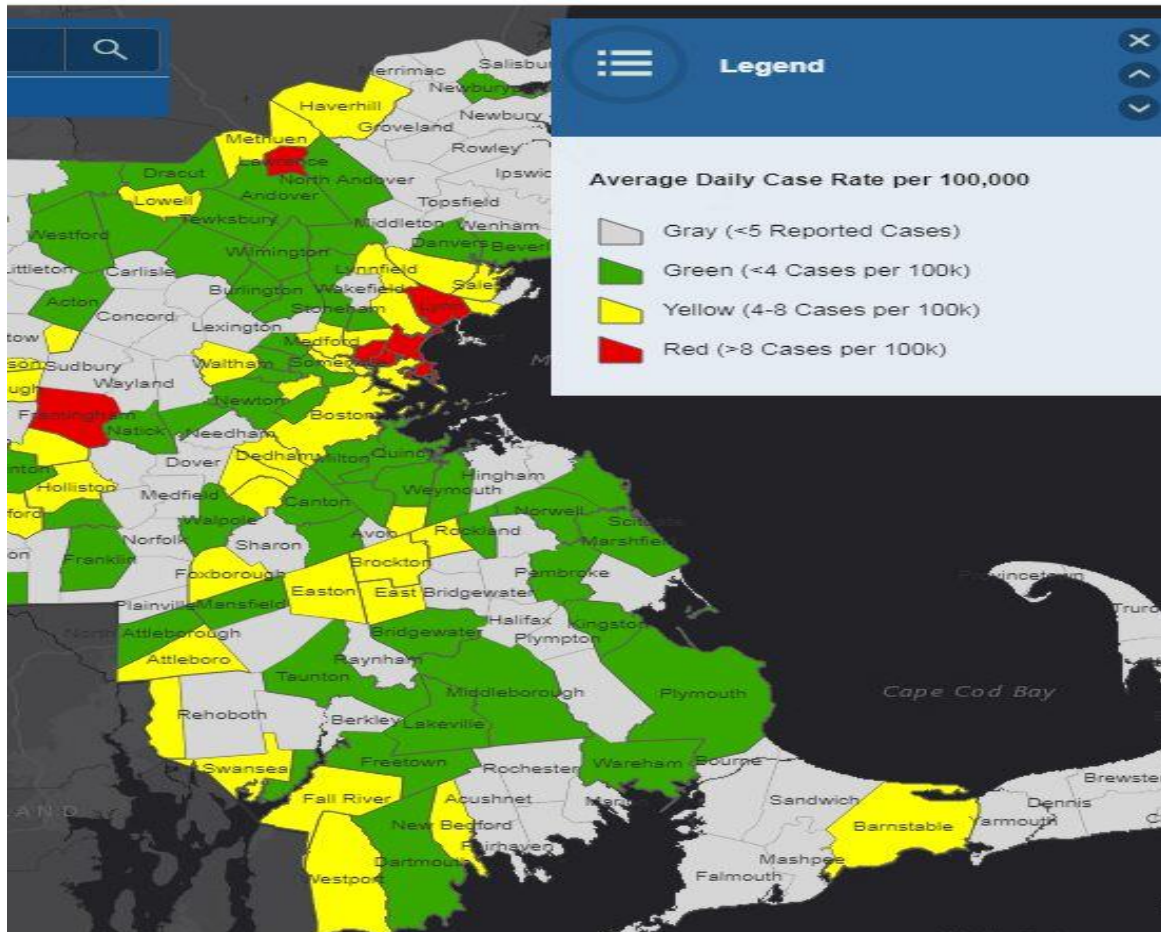
Agenda

- I. Welcome and opening statement –Chief Doody
- II. Introduction of Panelists – Chief Doody
- III. COVID response overview – Lisa Lopez (Select Board)
- IV. COVID response overview – Barbara Reardon (Board of Health)
- V. COVID response overview – Dr. Daniel Muse (Health Care)
- VI. COVID response overview – Kristin Mirliani (Schools)
- VII. COVID response overview – Chief Doody (Emergency Services)
- VIII. Response to Questions – Panel
- IX. Poll Request and closing remarks – Chief Doody

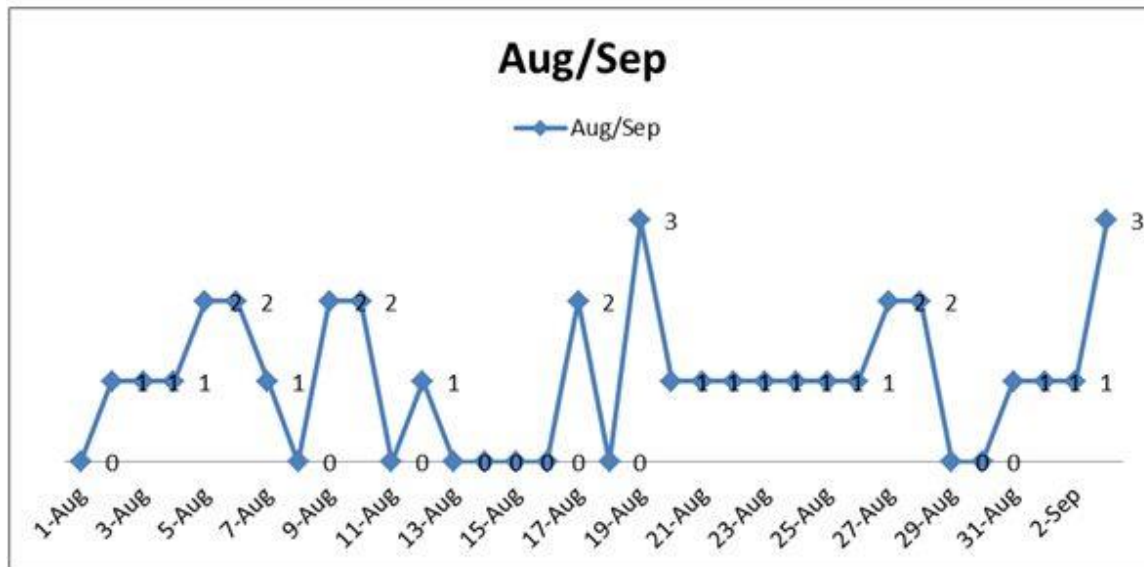
Q & A

1. **What does it mean that Canton is a "Yellow" community? What determines that designation? What will be the significance if Canton becomes Red - or Green?**





The colors green, yellow and red are an easy way to compare cities and towns that are covid hot spots (red) to those that are seeing very few cases (gray), based on the average daily covid case rate, over a rolling 14 day average, per 100,000 people. (Because many towns have fewer than 100,000 residents, the case rate is a calculation adjusted for population). Canton's green designation means that for the prior 14 days, it had an average daily case rate, adjusted for its population, of less than 4. It's important to note that Canton had been yellow and only recently changed to green. Any spike in cases could easily change the color designation.



Current Positivity Rate: 1.40%

The line graph indicates how many new positive cases of Covid were reported each day in August. As you see, we were seeing 0-3 new cases every day. Though these are relatively few, we'd prefer to see a flat line of 0-1 new cases per day.

The Testing Positivity Rate is another important measure. The above chart indicates, for Canton, the percentage of Canton residents who have tested positive over a 14 day period. Two weeks ago, Canton's Positivity Rate was higher than the state average. Now, we are closer to the state average.

2. Is it safe to eat indoors in local restaurants?

Yes, the State believes it is safe to eat indoors when we and the restaurant follow all prescribed safety protocols. These including social distancing, wearing masks, and complying with required disinfecting procedures. Unlike for office space or entertainment venues, there is no set occupancy limit for indoor dining in restaurants. Instead of focusing on the absolute number of people in a space, the requirements focus on how to keep people apart. The requirement is that indoor dining tables be 6' apart and there can be no more than 6 persons to a table. This usually results in restaurants being at about 25% capacity for indoor dining, assuming all the tables are occupied. It's worth noting that prior to each local restaurant re-opening for indoor dining, they were inspected on behalf of our Canton Board of Health to assure they were following the state required protocols.

3. What should I do if I am outside in a public space wearing a mask, and encounter a group of people not wearing masks?

If you feel safe doing so, politely ask the others to put on masks. If that is uncomfortable for you or if they refuse, continue to wear your own mask and socially distance from the individual(s).

4. How can we get the public to be more compliant about wearing masks outside in public places?

Many people who are not wearing masks in public places are not aware of the effect that they are having on others, even making others anxious about going outside at all, which is a shame. Most people benefit from outdoor exercise and should not feel inhibited or at risk because of the actions of others. It is okay to be without a mask when outside and six or more feet away from others. HOWEVER, it is always safer to wear a mask because sometimes we unintentionally end up within six feet of others. So it can really help our neighbors if we wear a mask when we are in public places. A comparison may be when walking one's dog off leash in a very private area where it is permitted – it's still respectful to carry the leash and leash one's dog when other people or dogs approach as we never know about how other people or dogs may react. Similarly, even when walking or hiking alone, it's best to carry a mask with you so that you can put it on when others approach.

5. Should (extended) families be wearing masks when gathering outside for family events? (Labor Day parties, birthday day parties, family barbecues?)

ABSOLUTELY, when you are together with anyone that does not live full time in the same house as you, you should practice all safety protocol including wearing masks and social distancing. The virus knows no blood relations. If your college student returns home after a weekend of partying on campus, you are just as much at risk as if a stranger enters your house.

Similarly, the virus does not know geographic boundaries. Whether you are in your backyard or a public beach, the same precautions should apply.

The State's guidance prohibits the gathering of more than 25 people indoors and 50 people outside. The Town cannot control what residents do on their private property – but it is clearly not a good idea to gather in large numbers during the pandemic.

Bottom line, attending a private party with friends or extended family, without masks, is putting yourself and others at risk.

6. How will the community be notified if public schools, once opened, have to close again because of a positive case? What will be the protocol for re-opening?

Canton schools use “Blackboard Connect” to send messages to all parents/guardians who sign up for school alerts. If the public schools close for any reason, parents/guardians will be notified via this system. There is a 23 page, detailed protocol for re-opening the schools in the event of an unanticipated closure. A copy of the full protocol is on the School website.

7. Once a vaccine is available, how will it be distributed locally?

It's expected that vaccine will be available through various channels including doctors offices and clinics. But there will also be a big role for mobile units organized by local departments of health. In Canton, various Town agencies including but not limited to Police, Fire, School, Council on Aging, DPW, Information Technology, Building Department and the Health Department will all work together. Weather permitting, we will most likely organize drive through vaccination clinics.

It's also important to note that as a public health initiative, front line workers and highest health risk individuals will have access to vaccine before much lower risk populations such as most of our kids.

8. Are the positive cases we have seen locally resulting from community spread limited to clusters in a very few private residences, or are they spread out among many private residences throughout Canton?

Unlike the start of the pandemic, when we were seeing clusters of positive cases in group living situations such as nursing homes and over 55 residential communities, we are currently seeing positive cases distributed throughout our community. This is because the nursing homes and over 55 residential communities did an excellent job of adopting recommended protocols and managing the spread. It also makes sense that when one member of a family living in a private residence gets Covid, it's likely that others in the same living space will contract Covid because contagion is a function of closeness of contact and time of exposure. So we are likely going to see multiple members of a family test positive after the first family member does, UNLESS all other family members wear masks and practice social distancing.

9. What can the Town do to assure that more people who live in multi unit dwellings are wearing masks?

It is not possible to police the entire community for COVID compliance. The Town simply does not have enough staff to “police” compliance everywhere. (And unlike in the case of motor vehicle violations, people do not have visible “identification.” They would have to cooperatively provide their names in order to be written a ticket!). Moreover, people are exempt from the requirement to wear a mask if they have a medical condition that prevents one being worn. This is not an appropriate discussion for a town official to have with members of the public as it could invade personal privacy.

From the beginning the Town has tried to educate and encourage people to work together to control the virus.

Many people believe they will be able to stay 6' away from others when they are in common areas inside or even outdoors going for a walk. Unfortunately I don't think that people realize that by not wearing a mask they are making their neighbors uncomfortable- to the point of rushing down hallways or not enjoying outdoor recreation at all. By informational events like this webinar we are hoping that people will recognize that we should do better with masks so that others can feel safe in their own buildings and comfortably enjoy the outdoors. You never know who may be medically compromised.

10. Can the Town be more pro active on enforcement, additional testing sites, improved contact tracing and mask distribution?

We are not deploying “mask patrols.” We have no legal authority to force mask wearing. Instead, we are trying to create a culture of compliance through education and concern for our friends and neighbors. In addition to being unable to force compliance, we believe this strategy works better over time than fines and penalties. (As an example, during the summer the Town's police officers distributed coupons for ice cream to kids playing outside *with* masks – to reward and reinforce that behavior).

The State has set up COVID testing sites in several communities that are being hit very hard by the virus. Similarly, the State provided COVID testing in long-term care facilities with high COVID rates early on in the pandemic. Fortunately the COVID rate in Canton has not warranted a State-run testing site. There are State-run sites available in Brockton and Randolph that are available to Canton citizens. The information about how to access these sites is available on the

Town's website. There is also information on the State's website at Mass.gov that permits you to enter your zip code and find testing sites within a reasonable distance from your home.

It is important to remember, however, that the testing available today is not perfect because most cannot obtain rapid results. So though although testing is important, the best way to protect yourself and others is to take the recommended precautions, including mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing. If you do, the chances of you getting sick are pretty low.

Contact tracing is key. And we are really doing a great job at it. Canton public health nurses are working seven days per week to reach the close contacts of positive cases and get those contacts into quarantine. But I'd like to take this time to stress the importance of following quarantining protocol.

1. People who test positive need to be forthright with their list of close contacts. We can only quarantine the people that we know about.
2. People in quarantine should **not** have guests at their homes.
3. People in quarantine should continue quarantining even after they receive a negative COVID test result.

Masks are now readily available. I believe that the reason that people are not always wearing masks is not because they do not have any. It is because they have become complacent.

11. If people with breathing issues or underlying conditions won't wear a mask can the Town's Task Force or Board of Health require that they wear a face shield?

The Task Force and Board of Health do not have the legal authority to force any person to wear a mask. Even private employers and retailers that have the right to require facemasks in their spaces cannot deny entry or service to those who cannot wear a mask for medical reasons. That said, a face shield is a "fall back" protection that is better than nothing. A mask is always better.

12. Would Canton consider providing a local testing site for asymptomatic residents?

Not unless Canton were identified as a hot spot. There is not an unlimited supply of testing supplies and equipment. They are best utilized for stopping the spread in areas where case loads are high, like Chelsea, Springfield and Brockton to name a few.

13. Why do the rules seem to be different between students' safe access to schools and those same kids' safe access to the Ice House?

Because the rules are different. The guidance for recreational facilities like ice rinks have very different rules than schools due to the **number** of people who can occupy the space(s) at one time, and the **duration** of the time people are expected to occupy the spaces. Moreover, the State's guidance on sports differs according to the risk level of a particular sport. For example, hockey is considered a high risk sport, and is allowed under Phase 3, Step 1 with certain restrictions. There can be no more than 25 players and coaches in the ice rink at any time, fans are limited to 50, teams must have staggered start times, no tournament play is allowed, and all attendees other than players should be wearing a face covering.

There is a strong partnership between Canton's Rec Department, Board of Health and the High School Athletic Director to translate the State guidance as to each sport into local requirements based on what sports our kids play. In all cases, we have complied with State guidance versus

making our “own” rules. The Athletic Director received School Committee approval to move forward with all safety protocols during sports practices and events, as recommended by MIAA and our HOCOMOC League.

14. Will the town offer COVID vaccine to residents?

The Town’s drive through and walk up flu clinics planned for October will be a good dry-run for mass distribution of the COVID vaccine for those who cannot get vaccinated through traditional places like primary care physicians, Urgent Care Centers and Pharmacies. Initially the vaccine would go to emergency workers and essential workers before availability to the general public.

15. If you live in a multi-family condo or apartment building, how do you find about residents who test positive for covid 19 so you can take precautions?

Due to HIPPA laws which protect patient privacy, unless you were identified as a close contact and therefore notified by the Town’s contact tracing personnel, you cannot be notified of another person’s testing status. However, if you were not a close contact, you theoretically were not exposed and thus in no danger. The person who is confirmed positive will have to isolate throughout his/her infectious period and thus, be unable to spread the virus. If you take the recommended precautions you should not get sick even if someone tests positive in your building.

16. How is someone who has tested positive ultimately able to leave their quarantine status? Is there one or two negative tests required?

Isolation is for people who **test positive** for COVID19 and are considered infectious. They will remain in isolation (think “Solitary Confinement” with no interaction with others) on average for 10 days from symptom onset or test date AND they are fever free (without the use of fever reducing medication) and improvement of symptoms for a minimum of 24 hours.

Quarantine is for people who have **been exposed** to COVID-19. (ie, close contact). They should have minimal contact with others and monitor their symptoms for 14 days from the date of last exposure to the positive case. COVID19 has an incubation period of 2-14 days. Which means you can develop the illness for up to 14 days from last exposure.

Importantly, negative tests results **cannot** be used alone to determine the end of an isolation or the end of a quarantine period.

17. Does the Canton Board of Health require condo or apartment buildings to prepare an Emergency Operations Plan, per CDC?

No. This is not a requirement of the Canton Board of Health.

18. There are many young teens in Town who do not wear masks. Will there be targeted education for this group?

When school starts, all students will be required to wear masks in the building, and they will be hearing a lot about mask safety whether in school or out. For example, they must wear masks at all school sporting events and extra curricula activities. So, they will be getting a consistent, across the board message about the importance of wearing masks.

It's also hoped that parents will both provide masks to their children, and encourage them to wear them.

19. Will the District be testing students prior to entering schools like some colleges are doing?

We are not permitted to require testing the way colleges can. However, we have adopted self screening questionnaires that require students to answer questions regarding for example, their temperature and what building they are entering so that we can continue to monitor who is in the buildings.

20. Will vaccine priority be given to women and women of color, which are groups that have been sickened at higher rates than others?

We do not know. That is a decision that will be made by state authorities.

21. How will Canton continue to monitor the financial, emotional and social needs of its residents?

Canton is a kind and generous community. The tremendous work of the Canton Area Helpline and the Canton Food Pantry to support families with all kinds of needs resulting from Covid, have been ongoing and will continue. Also, the Council on Aging is really Canton's own social service agency which has been working with people and families of ALL ages both before and after Covid, to make sure all residents have access to programs and services they need.

22. Will the schools be routinely opening classroom windows and/or be using outside tents for instruction?

Classroom windows will be opened whenever the weather allows. Since most students will be going back into the classroom on September 29, and given the vagaries of New England weather, we have no plans to use outdoor tents. Rather, we've been focused on our school HVAC systems to make sure our buildings are safe for students and staff.