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PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE: NEW MEASURES TO SLOW SPREAD OF COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
March 16, 2020

On March 15, 2020 Governor Charlie Baker announced additional measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Governor's Order includes the following restrictions throughout the **Commonwealth** that will go into effect on **March 17, 2020**:

- All **public and private schools** throughout the Commonwealth will be closed through April 6, 2020.
- All **restaurants and bars** will be prohibited from on-premise consumption of food. However, restaurants may remain open for now to provide food through take-out or delivery service. These restrictions extend through April 17, 2020, but may be extended based on the spread of COVID-19.
- **Gatherings** of 25 or more people are also banned. This includes all community, civic, public, leisure, and faith-based events. It also applies to gyms, private clubs, and theatres.

The **Town of Belmont** is taking additional precautions and instituting the following actions that will be effective on **March 16, 2020**:

- All Town of Belmont **public playgrounds** (specifically playground equipment) are closed. At this time, open spaces such as fields remain open. However, the Belmont Board of Health and its staff ask all residents to engage in the social distancing practices detailed below.
- **Field use** permits are suspended to discourage social gatherings. We are strongly discouraging activities that promote the gathering of people.
- **Public meetings and hearings** will be limited to those that are considered necessary for the purposes of maintaining essential Town of Belmont government functions and that are mandated under federal, state, or local law/regulation.
- **Town Hall Offices** are closed to the public. At this time access to these facilities will be limited to staff only. Residents in need of assistance are encouraged to contact respective Town departments by phone and/or email www.belmont-ma.gov.
- **Important updates** about COVID-19 and its impact on the Town will be posted at www.belmont-ma.gov.

The **Belmont Board of Health and its staff** ask all residents to *immediately* and *seriously* engage in the practice of **social distancing***

This means:

- **NO small gatherings** (even though the Governor has capped gatherings at 25 people).
- **NO play dates** (for individuals of any age).
- **NO sharing of childcare** responsibilities with other families, unless you have been deemed an essential worker (i.e. Police, Fire, EMS, medical professional).
 - Essential workers should make every attempt to stagger their schedules with partners to allow for coverage of childcare.

Please:

- Stay home.
- Minimize the number of trips you take to the store for food and medicine.
- Avoid close contact with people who do not live with you.
- Show compassion for your neighbors.
 - Make a plan with your elderly neighbors to check in with them on a daily basis via phone or email to help monitor their health and to see if you can help them obtain any food, prescriptions, or other basic needs.

Help save lives:

- It is important that we all take social isolation seriously to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Transmission of this virus grows exponentially and will soon overtake our healthcare system. We must all work together for the common good of society. This is our chance to come together as a community to stem the spread of this virus. If we are all successful at social distancing, we will slow the spread of COVID-19, and this will give our healthcare providers and hospitals a chance to prepare to be able to treat people who may need scarce medical resources to survive the pandemic.

***Social distancing helps slow down the spread of disease.** Social distancing means staying out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining a distance of 6 feet (minimum) or at least an arm's length away from others when possible.