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COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update, August 12, 2020

"Nothing can stop the power of a committed and determined people to make a difference in our society. "

John Lewis

February 21, 1940 - July 17, 2020

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It remains an incredibly emotional and difficult time. So many in our communities have worked hard to curb the spread of COVID-19 over the past several months, but we have started to see an uptick in virus cases across our region.

Last week I was proud to speak at a [press conference](#) convened by **Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo** to support his steady leadership to keep Revere safe in the pandemic - over the last two weeks more than 6% of tests have returned positive. I reiterated CHA's unwavering support to the people of Revere and all our communities. We continue to provide healthcare and to address the social determinants of health that have been amplified by this pandemic - food, housing and employment.

Despite the hardship facing so many, our communities continue to come together to support health, social and racial justice. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on health disparities among low-income and minority populations, many of whom make up our "essential" workforce and have kept this country going in such an arduous time. At CHA, we care for all and are reflecting on ways to support racial and social justice both internally and in our communities. We are excited to share that our **CEO Assaad Sayah, MD**, has been appointed to the Massachusetts Legislature's Health Disparities Task Force along with 12 other experts and state legislators. This is a huge honor that acknowledges the key role CHA plays in our region and gives us an opportunity to contribute toward advancing health equity in Massachusetts.

Right now one of the best things we can do for our community is to encourage **ALL to VOTE** and **complete their census**. Filling out the census is safe and helps our communities receive more funding for health, education and housing. We need to spread the word to respond to the significant gaps in voter participation, which over the past decade have occurred along racial, educational, and socioeconomic divides.

"I have said this before, and I will say it again," the late **Congressman John Lewis** said in June 2019, "the vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democracy." Join us in getting the word out. Let's make good trouble. Let's make our voices count!

Mary Cassesso



Chief Community Officer
Cambridge Health Alliance



GO VOTE!

WHEN WE ALL RESPOND, WE ALL BENEFIT.

It's safe to be counted.
Help your community get
funding for health care,
education, emergency
care and more!

2020CENSUS.GOV

 **CHA** Cambridge
Health Alliance



Food for all!

The economic devastation resulting from the pandemic has led to a significant increase in the number of people who are now food insecure in Massachusetts. The financial needs of many have placed a spotlight on the structural inequities in this country and early into this pandemic the downstream impacts on access to affordable and healthy food have been exacerbated. In Eastern Massachusetts, **one in eight people** is projected to experience food insecurity in 2020 as compared to one in 13 people before the pandemic. In response to this increased need, CHA teams in primary care, the Department of Community Health Improvement, our Accountable Care Organization and the Cambridge Public Health Department have scaled up or designed new programs to help our patients and communities.

CHA's Revere Care Center Mobile Market has continued operating throughout the pandemic and as of July 2020, **the number of households attending the market has increased by 101%**. Thanks to the amazing group of volunteers, staff, and providers bags of fresh produce and vegetables are packaged ahead of time so customers can practice social distancing.

In addition, the CHA Primary Care team rapidly **built a robust system** to manage COVID positive/presumptive positive patients in the community by connecting them to food insecurity community-based organizations. With the new system, COVID-19 positive patients experiencing food insecurity are flagged (with consent) and connected to the appropriate nonprofit to provide two weeks of free food aid to cover the quarantine period.



Pictured are staff and volunteers at the Revere Mobile Market.

COVID-19 Community Testing

CHA recently moved its COVID-19 testing site from the CHA Somerville Campus to 77 Middlesex Avenue (Assembly Square). People must call to set up an appointment using the hotline number **617-665-2928**. Tests are provided at no charge to the patient. CHA does bill insurance for the test and patients may get a statement showing this. But there should be no out-of-pocket costs.

Testing is open to all CHA patients, people who live in CHA's service area and other members of the community. CHA patients with symptoms or **who have been in contact with someone that has COVID-19** should call their primary care provider to schedule a test.

The service accommodates people in cars (drive-thru) and on foot or bike. Everyone tested will receive guidance on how to protect themselves and family members while test results are pending. This is available in multiple languages. The testing tent is open Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Each community's Department of Public Health will contact people with results (if they are not CHA patients).

With Massachusetts businesses reopening, people may have questions about their health care. Please find some key information below about services at CHA. Patients can now get a telehealth visit (video or phone) in many service areas. This includes three-way visits with an interpreter if needed.

We are gradually reopening for face-to-face visits, starting with pressing needs. If people are coming in person, here is what they can expect:

- Everyone needs to **wear a mask** (without valves or vent holes).

- We will ask people **questions about COVID-19** before their visit and when they arrive.
- **Temperatures will be taken** when people arrive (must be under 100° degrees F.)
- Patients are asked to come alone if they are able. No more than one parent/caregiver is allowed.
- There are plexiglass dividers at check-in and new seating arrangements.
- We are cleaning and disinfecting our clinics all day, every day.

Most surgeries and procedures were postponed because of COVID-19. We are now calling to reschedule these visits, starting with the most time-sensitive health concerns.

Our Emergency Department is the safest place people can be in a serious or life-threatening situation. Call 911 or go to Cambridge Hospital or Everett Hospital. If it's urgent, but not an emergency, try the new CHA Urgent Care. It is open every day, from 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. at 33 Tower Street, Somerville. Urgent Care does not offer COVID testing.



Mental Health Matters

Please join us for Mental Health Matters, a youth-led event, hosted by the 2020 Summer Youth Mental Wellness Internship team at CHA! The event, hosted via Zoom, will be held on **Tuesday, August 18, from 4 - 5:30 p.m.** Participants will have the opportunity to meet peers and mental health experts from the Greater Boston area while raising awareness for mental health with the help of psychology professionals and teen voices. Please [register here](#) in advance before attending. A link to the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you prior to the event. People can also watch and [share this video](#) about the event too.



Stop by CHA Somerville Campus to see the new community mural.

Mural at CHA Somerville Campus

If you are near the CHA Somerville Campus, take a peek at the beautiful new "Care to the People" mural on the Highland Building. Local artist Amanda Hill, Gregory Jenkins of the Somerville Arts Council, Steve Callahan Jr. of Callahan Construction, United Rentals, and Mary Cassesso brought this idea to life. "Care to the people" is CHA's rallying cry that demonstrates the organization's passion for reducing barriers to care, advocating for change, and partnering with the community. The heart represents CHA's dedication to caring and compassion.

We will be holding a small, socially distanced celebration on Thursday, August 13, at 10:45 a.m. with **Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone** to commemorate the mural's completion and hope you can join us by tuning in to the [Facebook Live broadcast!](#)



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