



BERKSHIRE REGION
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

NEWSLETTER

December SPECIAL UPDATE # 3

DHILS Viability Staff Updates

A letter of farewell...

I am writing to everyone to let you know that I have decided to not return after my maternity leave. It was not an easy decision. So much has changed because of COVID-19, so I needed to do what is the best for my family.

However, I was very grateful to be able to come back to DHILS and work with you all for a while.

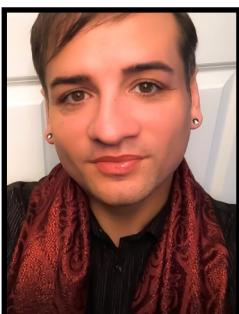
I have really enjoyed it. I am very sad to be leaving Viability.

Always remember, no matter how things seems... always keep a positive attitude and faith.

Always remember that Viability staff is there for you and to support you in whatever you need! I wish I could be one of the staff to be there for you! Hugs to everyone and Farewell. - Andrea Davis



If you need help with anything, please contact Marlene or Anthony and they will assist you.



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Lead IL Specialist
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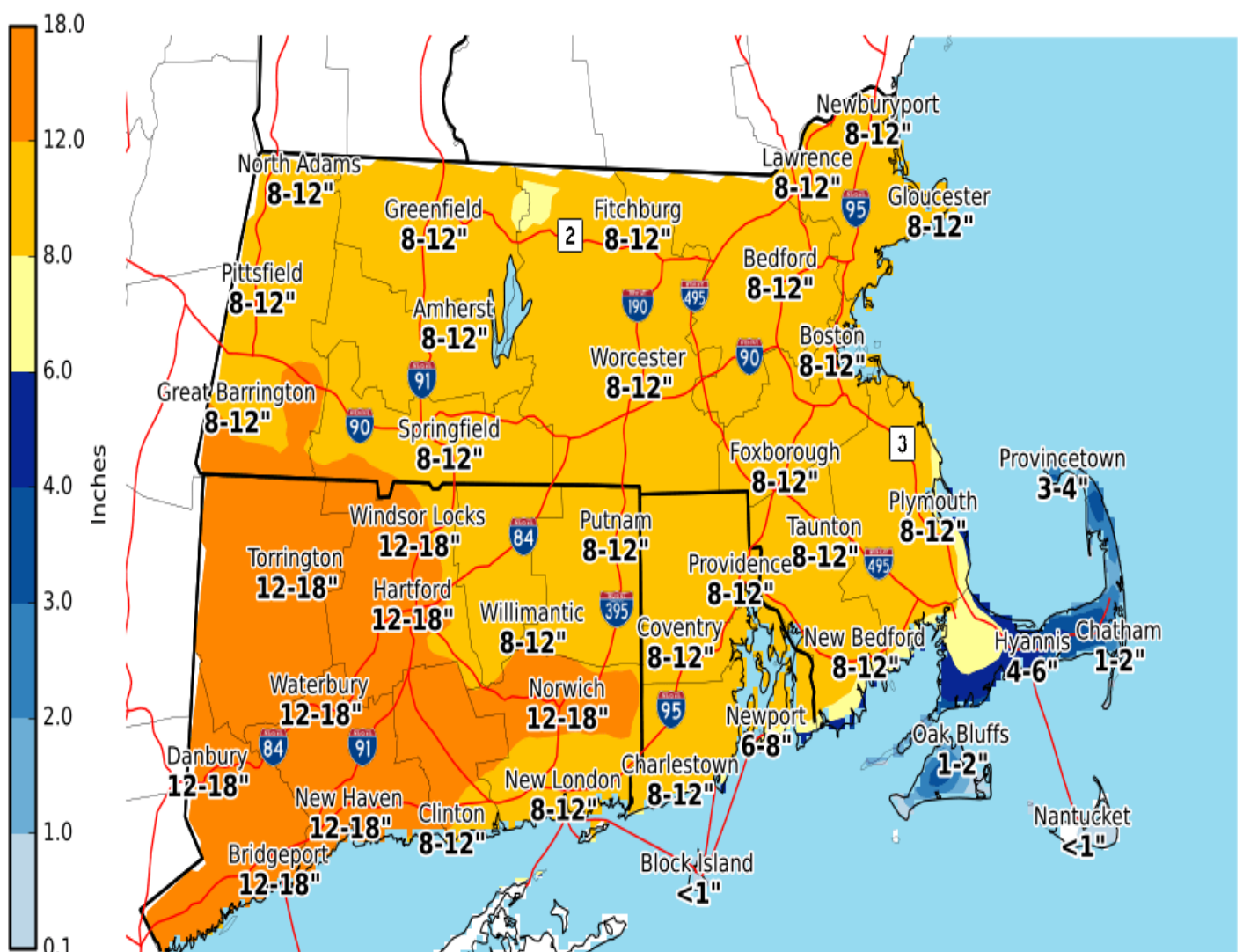
Prepare Your Vehicle for SNOW

#MASnow

- Check tire wear and vehicle fluid levels
- Keep gas tank at least half full
- Assemble a winter emergency car kit

Mass.gov

<https://www.mass.gov/winter-weather-driving>





BREAKING NEWS
STATEWIDE ROLLBACK
TO PHASE 3 STEP 1

- ▶ RETAIL, RESTAURANTS, GYMS, LIBRARIES, THEATERS
- ▶ HOUSES OF WORSHIP
- ▶ INDOOR CAPACITY: REDUCED TO 40%
- ▶ OUTDOOR GATHERINGS: 25 PERSON LIMIT, 50 WITH PERMIT



Business sector guidance for Phase 3, Steps 1 & 2

A community that has been classified as Lower Risk must revert back to Phase 3, Step 1 if it becomes classified and remains a High Risk/Red community for 3 consecutive weeks.

	Phase 3, Step 1	Phase 3, Step 2
Indoor Theaters and Performance Venues	Closed	Open - 50% capacity but no more than 250 people
Outdoor gatherings at event venues and in public settings	50 person limit	100 person limit
Outdoor Theater and Performance Venues	Open - 25% capacity but no more than 50 people	Open - 50% capacity but no more than 250 people
Roller Skating Rinks, Trampolines, Obstacle Courses, Laser Tag, and Escape Rooms	Closed	Open, 50% capacity
Arcades, Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Businesses - lower contact activities	Open, 40% capacity	Open, 50% capacity
Driving/Flight Schools	Open, 40% capacity	Open, 50% capacity
Gyms	Open, 40% capacity	Open, 50% capacity
Libraries	Open, 40% capacity	Open, 50% capacity
Museums	Open, 40% capacity	Open, 50% capacity
Restaurants	Music performances allowed indoors but no wind or brass instruments or singing	Music performances allowed indoors but no singing
Retail - fitting rooms	Open for businesses where operation is necessary	Open for all retail stores

For additional details and information visit mass.gov/reopening-protocols



MASS. COVID-19 VACCINE PLAN:

PHASE 1: DEC. - FEB.
**HEALTHCARE WORKERS,
LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES,
POLICE, FIRE, EMS AND MORE**

PHASE 2: FEB. - APR.
**HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS, TEACHERS,
GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEES,
TRANSIT WORKERS, PUBLIC
WORKS AND MORE**

PHASE 3: APR. - JUN.
GENERAL PUBLIC



PHASE ONE

In order of priority

- Clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers doing direct and COVID-facing care
- Long term care facilities, rest homes and assisted living facilities
- Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services
- Congregate care settings (including corrections and shelters)
- Home-based healthcare workers
- Healthcare workers doing non-COVID-facing care



PHASE TWO

In order of priority

- Individuals with 2+ comorbidities (high risk for COVID-19 complications)
- Early education, K-12, transit, grocery, utility, food and agriculture, sanitation, public works and public health workers
- Adults 65+
- Individuals with one comorbidity



PHASE THREE

Vaccine available to general public

December - February

Estimated timeframes

February - April

April - June



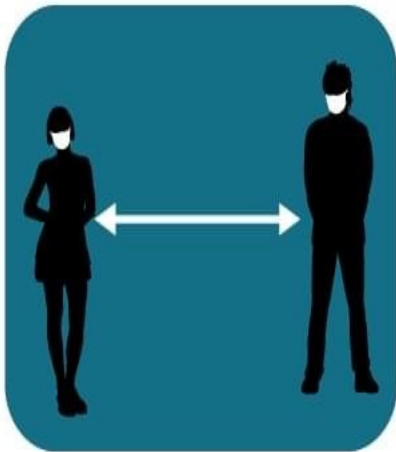
ALERT: COVID-19 Cases Are Rising



Stay home when possible.



**Wear a mask over
your mouth AND nose.**



**Avoid crowds. Stay 6 feet
away from others.**



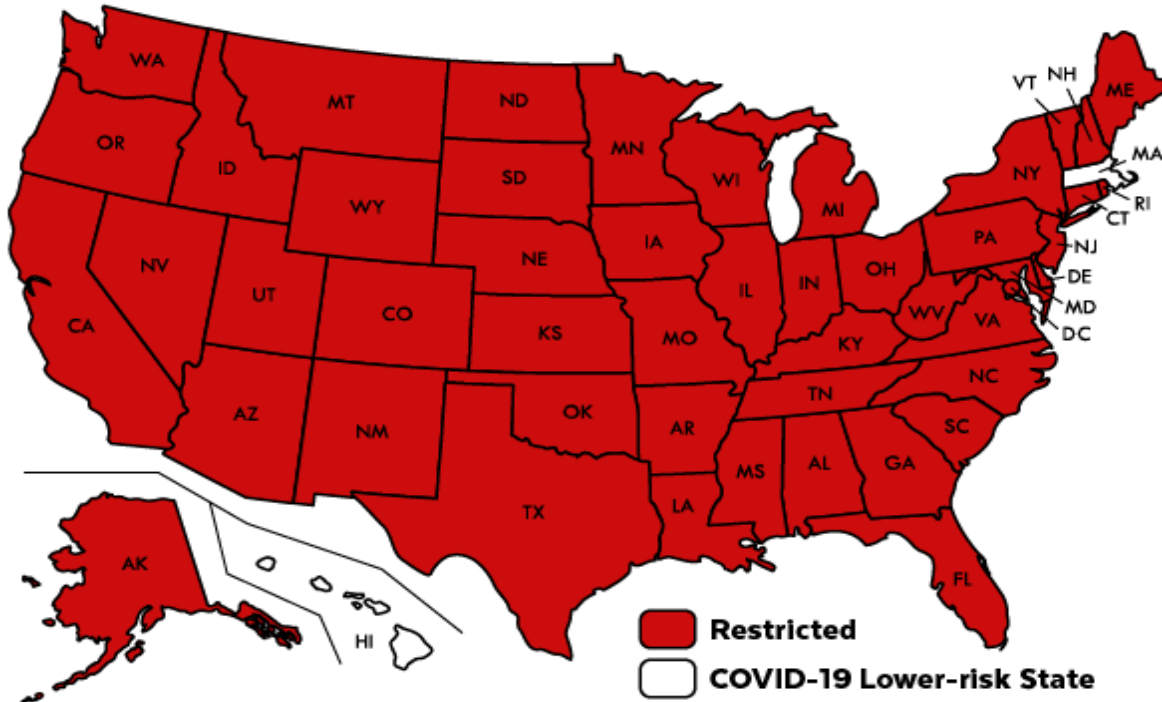
Wash your hands often.



CS321421-A

cdc.gov/coronavirus

Vermont have been added to the list of red states due to an increase of COVID cases.
Pay attention to the map and follow the travel order!



The white colored states are COVID19 Lower-Risk. You can travel to those white states without having to quarantine for 14 days or do the travel order form.

If you want to know more about the Travel Order Form for the state of Massachusetts click this link:

<http://bit.ly/LowerStatesTravelInfo>

STOP THE SPREAD - EXTENDED TO THE END OF DECEMBER



**FREE COVID-19
testing.**

Continued testing in: Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Framingham, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lynn, Marlborough, Methuen, New Bedford, Randolph, Revere, Salem, Saugus, Springfield, Winthrop, or Worcester

Sick or not sick - everyone is encouraged to get tested.

Want to know more ? Go to this link: <http://bit.ly/COVIDInfo7>



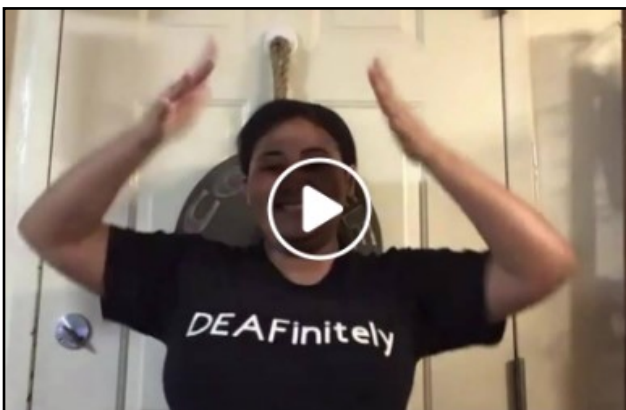
How will you celebrate your holidays this year? Doing anything special at home to make it memorable?

<https://bit.ly/HolidayASL>



Dr. IV Mirus, an ER resident at the University of Rochester Medical Center, says the Covid-19 vaccine is a game changer that will end the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://bit.ly/DrMirusASL>



DEAFinitely Deaf Youth Council made a vlog from Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf, Inc.

<https://bit.ly/Deafinitely>



Deaf Senior Citizens Ruth and Win discuss strategies they have used for reducing stress, getting exercise and socializing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://bit.ly/SelfCareASL>



FAMILY FRIENDLY
AN EXCITING SNEAK PEEK SHORT FILM

VOCA is proud to PRESENT
its first film production with Deaf cast

ON CHRISTMAS EVE
A RAISIN
IN THE *Sun*

By Lorraine Hansberry
CO-DIRECTED BY MICHELLE BANKS
& NAYTE PAXTON



FEATURING

KOJO AMISSAH

EVON BLACK

WADE GREEN

TANISHA RUSSELL

DORIAN FLETCHER



'Walter Lee Younger'



'Lena Younger'



'Joseph Asagai'



'Beneatha Younger'



'Bobo'

ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TO DEVELOPMENT &
TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR DEAF BIPOC ARTISTS

\$20 TICKET PURCHASE

(The link will be provided with access code)

Ticket Info:

www.visionariesofthecreativearts.org

<https://voca.eventbrite.com>

DECEMBER 24 *thru* DECEMBER 27, 2020

This film screening is presented in American Sign Language (ASL) and
spoken English. Closed Captioning is also provided.

*'A Raisin in the Sun' is presented by special arrangements
with Samuel French, Inc., a Concord Theatricals Company.*

BUY NOW
QR CODE SCAN



FOR MORE INFO, Please email: info@visionariesofthecreativearts.org

Holiday Shopping

In addition to observing store capacity limits, wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, and following directions and place markings at stores, consider the following when holiday shopping:

Higher Risk: High-risk activities include in-person promotions or holiday activities that encourage large crowds. When shopping with a non-household member, make sure to wear a mask, including while driving together.

Medium Risk: If you choose to shop in-person, wear your mask and maintain 6 feet of distance from others. Try to shop at off-peak times when there are fewer shoppers.

Lower Risk: Shop online. Many retailers have options for online shopping and in-person, contactless curbside or drive-up pick-up. If using in-person pick-up, you and the retail personnel should wear masks.



Want to get your loved ones great gifts AND support the deaf ecosystem? Check out this blog for a list of amazing deaf businesses!

<https://bit.ly/DeafShops>



THE SALVATION ARMY

Christmas Distribution:

***NO Pre-registration Required**

Dates: December 14 through December 18

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Documents Required: Valid Photo ID, Birth Certificate for all children (0-12 years old) and Proof of Address

COVID Restrictions in Effect: Face masks required. Social distancing must be observed at all times.

Food Pantry:

-Monday through Friday | 9:00am - 12:00pm

-Our emergency food pantry serves the cities of Holyoke, South Hadley and Chicopee with food bags once every 30 days.

-To apply, please supply an ID and proof of residence.

Utilities Assistance:

-Monday through Friday | 9:00am - 3:00pm

-We help the families of Holyoke, South Hadley and Chicopee with fuel assistance and other utilities when funds are available.

-A shutoff notice, proof of income, proof of residency and a form of ID must be presented.

Hot Meals Program:

-Available the **last full week**, Monday through Friday of each month from 3:00pm-4:00pm.

-Our hot meal program is run by volunteers who prepare and serve a hot meal during the last full week of every month.

Want to find the Salvation Army location near you? Go to the link and find "Find A Location" - <https://bit.ly/HolidaySArmY>



COVID-19 Resource Page

mental health and substance use
online/call-in peer & family support options
options for clinical support
state and federal guidance
other information and resources

General Resources

Mass 2-1-1 for COVID-19 info and resources to help meet your basic needs. <https://mass211.org/>

Massachusetts Mutual Aid Networks <https://bit.ly/MACovid19Link>

Food and Groceries

Use Your SNAP Benefits (including P-EBT benefits) Online! <https://bit.ly/SNAPLink>

Food Source Hotline for help finding food resources. <https://www.projectbread.org/get-help>

COVID-19: Hunger & Food Resources for Households. <https://bit.ly/FoodHelp1>

Grocery Delivery Options - <https://bit.ly/PDFList>

Project Driveway – grocery delivery for people at high risk. <https://projectdriveway.org/>

Housing Resources and Information

Hello Landlord tools for renters who cannot pay rent - <https://hellolandlord.org/>

Don't Get Kicked Out info for renters - <https://www.dontgetkickedout.com/>

Resources for Renters and Homeowners from the Housing and Community Development

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-dhcd-website>

Other Information

Legal Resources Related to COVID 19 - <https://bit.ly/PDFLink3>

Working from Home During the COVID-19 - <https://bit.ly/PDFLink4>

Volunteer opportunities for health professionals - <https://maresponds.org/>

Have Your Go Bag Ready in Case You Fall Ill - <https://bit.ly/ReadyBagToGo>

Funeral and End of Life Planning Guide - <https://bit.ly/EndOfLifePlanning2>

Other Resource Lists

Resources for Massachusetts LGBTQIA+ Youth During COVID-19 - <https://bit.ly/LGBTQIAResources3>

COVID-19 Resources for Youth and Young Adults - <https://bit.ly/YouthPeers>

Loaded Mashed Potato Casserole for Holiday

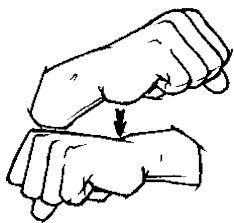


Ingredients

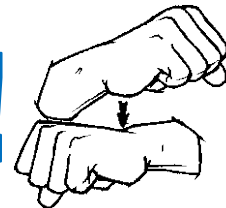
- 5 1/2 cups mashed potatoes
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoons McCormick Parsley Flakes
- 1 teaspoon McCormick Garlic Salt
- 1/4 teaspoon McCormick Ground Nutmeg
- 3/4 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- 12 slices bacon, crispy cooked and crumbled (about 1/2 cup)

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F.
Place all ingredients, except cheese and bacon, in large bowl. Beat with electric mixer on medium-high speed until potatoes are smooth and creamy. Spoon mixture into lightly greased 13x9-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese and bacon. If you prefer extra crispy bacon, reserve bacon and sprinkle at the end of cooking. Cover. Bake 30 minutes or until heated through.



Job Position Opening!



Great news!



We are hiring in the Viability DHILS program! A full-time position with excellent benefits including paid time off, mileage, and more!

Are you a motivated team player with great energy and fluent in American Sign Language? Do you have a passion working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals to improve the quality of their independent lives? If yes, we highly recommend you apply for our available position at Viability!

This **Program Supervisor position** will supervise the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services (DHILS) for Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Late-Deafened individuals in the Holyoke and Pittsfield offices. Apply for the Program Supervisor, Full-Time - ASL required using the link below:

<http://bit.ly/DHILSProgramSupervisor>

Total Rewards = Competitive Pay + Excellent Benefits + Meaningful Work

Competitive Pay, Medical Plan, Dental Plan, Vision Plan,
Health Savings Account, Health Care Reimbursement Accounts, Dependent Care Reimbursement
Accounts, Company-paid short-term disability insurance, Company-paid long-term
disability insurance, Company-paid life and AD&D insurance,
Generous Paid Time Off, Tuition Scholarship Program,
Professional and personal growth opportunities, Extensive Employee Assistance program for
employees and loved ones, Preferred ratings for home, renters', pet, and auto insurance, Fitness and
Weight Loss program support (), Retirement plan: Employer matches
maximum 4% on employee contribution of 4% at time of hire.

Community Social Chat Online



What we do at Social Chat?

We will play games!

Social chat!

Meet new people and make
new friends!

Just simply have fun!!!



When: Every Wednesday

Time: 2 pm to 3 pm

How? We meet through
Zoom online.

Interested? Questions?

You can contact Anthony

413-650-5386 or

arusso@viability.org

Community ASL Class Online

COME LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE

FOR FREE!

When: Every Thursday

Time: 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

How? Meet through Zoom online.

Interested? Questions?

Please contact Anthony if
you want to join.

Anthony @ 413-650-5386 or
arusso@viability.org

Want a different time? Tell us!



Download Zoom
www.zoom.us



COVID-19 Screening and Appointment Rules

Before we can see you in person for an **ESSENTIAL (VERY IMPORTANT)** appointment, we have to ask you some questions every time we meet in person: at the office or at your home.

Question 1: Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past 14 days? **YES/NO**

Question 2: Has anyone in your household been diagnosed with COVID - 19 within the past 14 days? **YES/NO**

Question 3: Have you had a fever over 100 degrees, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache within the past 72 hours? **YES/NO**

Question 4: Have you or anyone in your household had the following: cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, abdominal pain, new muscle aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea within the past 72 hours? **YES/NO**

Question 5: Have you or anyone in your household traveled to any hot spots within the last 14 days where areas where a large number of COVID-19 cases have been confirmed? **YES/NO**

If you answered **NO** to all, then we can meet in person **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.**

Confirmed Appointment: Now What?

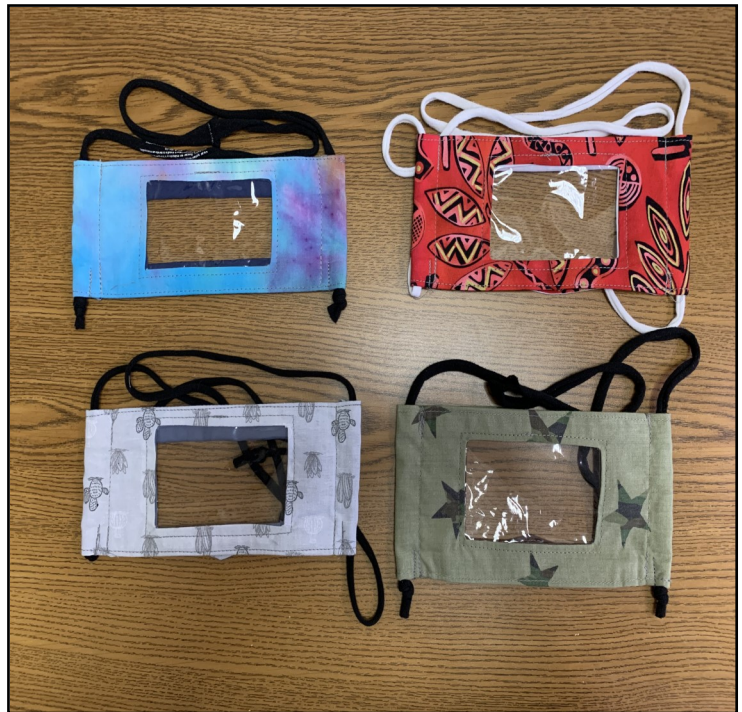
We **MUST** do this when we meet in person at your home OR at office:

Maintain 6 ft at all times 	Wash or sanitize your hands upon entry and exit of the building 
Wear a face mask or covering when speaking with people face-to-face, in the same room  	Sanitize or wash your hands frequently while on-site 
Only come at times agreed upon by you and staff and come by yourself. Do not bring people with you. 	Sanitize all surfaces that you utilize while on-site, including furniture, equipment, writing utensils 

Need a MASK?

We have homemade masks with a clear section for better Deaf and Hard of Hearing communication. Please contact your DHILS Staff if you need one. Comfortable and easy to use.

Limited Supply available!



Remember, before you go out!



Wash hands 20 seconds

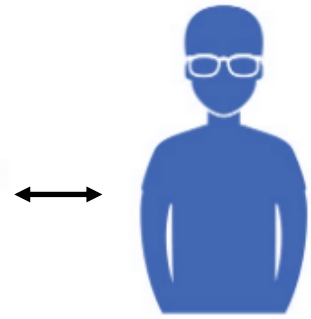
Stay Informed



Go to [Mass.Gov/covid19](https://www.mass.gov/covid19) for latest news, case counts and lab testing results.



Wear mask in the public



6 feet away from people



Contact your Viability Staff on VP or EMAIL if you have questions about resources.



Follow and Like our Facebook page.

www.facebook.com/BerkshireDHILS