

Lowell Tobacco Control Report

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Lowell

Inspections

I've been able to complete 34 in-store inspections so far this month. Most violations found had to do with missing new signs required under the new state law. With the confusion created by the implementation of the new law, some distributors are pushing products the sale of which has been prohibited in the city for years, such as blunt wraps and packs of cigars containing fewer than four cigars. These issues have been corrected before my leaving the premises.

Pricing Surveys

Although the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program (MTCP) has suspended these activities with the intent to reduce the time we spend inside retail stores, it has begun to explore the possibility of conducting them in a more limited capacity. It is currently developing a shorter form to be used with smaller samples of stores.

Implementation of the new state law: An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control

Both the law and the regulation promulgated by the Public Health Council for its implementation have a requirement that has created a few enforcement problems across the state. Specifically they require retailers to present documentation provided by tobacco manufacturers certifying the nicotine content of their vaping products. The documentation also has to certify that the vaping products and regular tobacco products are not flavored. One of the problems is that some of these documents are being issued by companies that are not the actual manufacturers of these products. MTCP is developing new guidelines it hopes will address this and other related issues.

Compliance Checks

I expect to resume compliance checks as soon as MTCP finalizes new protocols it has been developing for these activities and gives us the go-ahead to move forward. As stated earlier, most similar programs haven't even resumed regular inspections yet.

Tobacco Control Grant Renewal

It turned out MTCP could not locate the original of the signed contract package we had sent them, even after providing them with the USPS tracking number. I'm working with Brendan to get a new package signed by the city manager and mailed.

COVID-19 Survey

DPH has launched a survey it hopes will help understand inequities surrounding COVID-19. It's particularly interested in responses from minority groups impacted by the pandemic. *See attach.*

Quick Links (please see rest of message for details)

Survey: www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey

Attached materials: <http://bit.ly/CCIS-Dissemination-Materials>

FAQ document: [FAQ document](#)

Questions: covid19survey@mass.gov

1. HELP SHARE THIS SURVEY

We are asking organizations to disseminate the survey link and/or administer the survey directly to people who face too many barriers to completing it on their own. Example activities include:

- Providing link to all Massachusetts staff, consumers, family and friends
- Emailing link to organizational mailing lists
- Posting about survey on social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram
- Posting flyers about the survey in places where people gather or go regularly such as beauty/barber shops, food pantries, grocery stores
- Using staff or volunteers to contact individuals and administer the survey

What support is available for my organization to disseminate this survey? To support organizations, we have attached the following materials (in 7 languages):

- Sample email language
- Sample social media language
- Flyers with QR codes
- Resource list
- Passive consent form (if needed, see FAQ: <http://bit.ly/CCIS-FAQ>)

(all materials may be found at: <http://bit.ly/CCIS-Dissemination-Materials>)

A limited number of volunteer and grant supports will be available. To learn more about these, please complete this brief questionnaire: www.bit.ly/CCIS-webinar

2. BACKGROUND:

What is CCIS? The COVID-19 Community Impact Survey (CCIS) is an online survey aimed at collecting data to better understand and identify the social, economic, and health needs and inequities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

How will the findings be used? Findings from this survey will be used to improve DPH's ability to act - helping address the most critical needs, partnering with communities to support local efforts, and informing state policy with accurate information on what people need now and in the long term. Results will be available to community-based organizations for their own planning and action purposes.

Who should take this survey? Anyone 14 or older who lives in MA can and should take the survey. Even people who have not had COVID-19 can take this survey. We have a particular interest in gathering responses from communities who have been impacted the most, including: people of color, immigrants, individuals who are LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, essential workers, people experiencing housing instability, older adults, and those in geographic areas hardest hit by COVID-19.

What important information should I know? The survey is available in six common languages spoken in MA: English, Chinese (standard and traditional), Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and Vietnamese.

Where may I find additional information? Additional information about the CCIS Initiative may be found in the [FAQ document here](#). If you have questions, please contact covid19survey@mass.gov.

3. SAMPLE MESSAGES

Please support this effort by sending this survey to your distribution list. Below is sample language in English (please see attached files for additional languages):

Email:

Dear _____,

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA-DPH) is trying to hear from communities so that it can better help people through the COVID-19 crisis. By taking this survey, you can help find new solutions to community problems, and give MA-DPH the information they need to take action and support the communities that need it most. MA-DPH is committed to sharing information back in ways that will help us all take collective action

I believe this effort will help us better understand the impact of COVID-19 on our communities, and would encourage anyone who is 14 years old or older to participate using this link: www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey

Social media:

- MA-DPH is learning how to better help people through COVID-19. Even if you haven't been sick, your answers can help. Take the survey. www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey
- The COVID-19 Community Impact Survey will help MA-DPH learn about needs across the state, so it can plan resources and support around COVID-19. Take the survey. www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey
- COVID-19 unfairly impacts people of color more than others. Help MA-DPH learn how it can plan resources and support around COVID-19. Take the Community Impact Survey. www.mass.gov/COVIDsurvey

Thank you for your support.