

Moving Forward Together After the End of the Public Health Emergency

Dear Members,

There were substantive policy shifts that impacted assisted living operations this spring. Mass-ALA was actively engaged on these issues as “The Voice of Assisted Living in Massachusetts”. We are delighted that residents and staff can smile together again and communicate more clearly as the mask mandate for staff has been lifted. We advocated for the end of the mask mandate, and talked publicly with *McKnight’s Senior Living* about why it was important, in an [article](#) in early April. This is an example of how we listen to assisted living provider staff and residents, and advocate accordingly for the benefit of assisted living residences across the state.

When state officials announced that the Massachusetts COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) would end on May 11, the same day that the federal PHE would end, we knew there would be many questions about what this would mean for assisted living policies. We asked EOEA to send communications that would inform providers of what would change and what would remain in place. It was helpful to everyone involved in assisted living that EOEA issued letters not just to [assisted living residences](#) (but also to [residents, family, and friends of residents](#)). The letter to Executive Directors affirmed that the mask mandate and surveillance testing mandate had ended, as we had shared in prior [updates](#).

The EOEA letter to Executive Directors referenced DPH [PPE guidance](#) that we had sent to members prior to May 11, as we anticipated that it would impact ALRs, and it was the first official reference from the state that the mask mandate was ending. EOEA’s letter also referenced the list of EPA-approved cleaning products that we sent to members [on April 27](#) (We will continue to monitor guidance and to share the updates from state and federal agencies that would impact assisted living. We recognize that it’s sometimes difficult to discern which agencies and policies are impactful on assisted living operations, and we have adapted our member benefits to include helping you navigate that by sharing and summarizing important changes.

Mass-ALA has successfully advocated that some of the flexibilities in assisted living operations be extended beyond the PHE. We updated members on March 30 that Governor Healey signed a supplemental budget that included an [extension](#) of the health services, staffing, and training flexibilities to March 31, 2024. Whereas prior extensions were set to end at the expiration of the PHE, this extension is not connected to the PHE and continues until March 31, 2024. EOEA provided updates about this extension in the letter to Executive Directors.

An important question at this stage is: How can you lead your colleagues in striking the proper balance of social engagement and health, safety, and infection control going forward in a post-PHE environment? Mass-ALA is here to help with education focused on that. A legal update on the termination of the public health emergencies, featuring attorneys that focus on national and state policy respectively, will be presented at our annual [Regulations Training](#) on Tuesday June 13. An employment law liability presentation will also address emerging issues, and you will hear the latest updates directly from EOEA Certification Team, Ombudsman, and OSHA representatives at the training. Mass-ALA will also be hosting a [webinar](#) on July 27 which will feature a presentation from a physician on Respiratory Infections and Vaccine Schedule Changes.

As always, please reach out to us at massala@mass-ala.org or 781-622-5999 x 100 if you have any questions, and we would be happy to help. Thank you for your continued membership, as it strengthens Mass-ALA as the Voice of Assisted Living in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Brian Doherty

President and CEO