



Town of Hamilton
Town Manager's Office
577 Bay Rd.
Hamilton, MA 01936
P: 978.626.5200
www.hamiltonma.gov

Joseph Domelowicz Jr.
Town Manager

Hamilton Board of Health Statement Regarding Distribution of At-Home Rapid Tests for COVID -19

On December 13, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health announced that 2.1 million At-Home Rapid COVID tests would be distributed to just 102 communities in the state that had been identified as having the highest percentage of families “**below the poverty level.**”

Hamilton was identified as one of those communities based on several clusters of high need families living within our community. The guidance that was provided by the state further emphasized that, though the town would have discretion in how the tests would be distributed locally, the tests were expected to be given to those people who were identified as having a high need due to their financial situation.

After consultation with state DPH officials, the staff of the Hamilton Health Department, in collaboration with Board of Health Chair David Smith and Town Manager Joseph Domelowicz, developed a process for identifying those members of the community to whom the test kits had been targeted by the state. In determining how to get these test kits into the hands of the intended recipients we considered all of the criteria the state DPH had set forth in its announcements and instructions with these being critical:

1. increasing access [to testing] for individuals and families who are facing **financial hardship.**
2. distribute tests..... to prioritize those most in need, allocating equitably and at locations accessible to individuals and families who are **determined to be in high need and as quickly as possible** during the holiday season.
3. emphasis on increasing access [to tests] for individuals and families who are **facing hardship.**
4. the basic criterion for inclusion on the state DPH list of 102 qualifying towns was that at least 5.3% of the total town population had to fall **below the "Federal Poverty Level"**

We took all of the above into our assessment and developed the following set of candidate recipient groups, in no particular order:

- Congregate care/Hamilton Housing Authority residents
- Senior Citizens
- Acord food pantry client families
- Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary students/ families who are on MassHealth or who are otherwise low income and cannot easily afford these tests.
- Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District families whom the district staff know to be likely experiencing economic hardship or distress



Town of Hamilton
Town Manager's Office
577 Bay Rd.
Hamilton, MA 01936
P: 978.626.5200
www.hamiltonma.gov

Joseph Domelowicz Jr.
Town Manager

- Asbury Grove residents
- Homebound individuals
- Others who are known to the town to be in need of this support.

We chose to avoid personally handing test kits to individuals but rather we passed a set of kits to the directors or coordinators or function managers or school nurses of the above list of categories and groups for them to decide on recipients, as follows:

- Director of the Senior Center and Chair of the Council on Aging
- Executive Director of the Acord Food Pantry
- Dean of Students of GCTS
- President of Asbury Grove
- Chief, Hamilton Fire Department
- District Nurse Leader, HWRSB
- Hamilton Public Health Nurse

It is important to note here that none of the other communities surrounding us received any allotment of tests including: Wenham, Essex, Ipswich, Topsfield, Manchester by-the-Sea, Boxford, Middleton or Danvers. Further, Hamilton was not provided enough tests to distribute freely to the entire town. In fact, had we not followed the state guidance and attempted to distribute test kits to each household, we would not even have had enough to deliver one kit per household.

Though we were limited by the state in our ability to distribute these free test kits, we are pursuing access to make other test kits available in the weeks ahead, including through the use of a state contract that will allow us to buy additional kits with town ARPA funds at a very low cost and distribute those as needed. We are hopeful that we will have additional information on purchasing these other test kits and making them available in the weeks ahead, once we have secured a the tests.

Additionally, the President of the United States pledged on Tuesday, to make even more test kits available across the country and as we get information about how and when we will have access to those tests, we will share that information and any distribution plans or options we are able to implement at that time. **Our goal with test kits we acquire going forward, will be to make them as broadly available to our residents as possible.**

We are disappointed that we did not receive more kits and were not able to make test kits more widely available to the community, but we ask the community to understand that the free tests we were allotted came with specific guidance and town staff and volunteers conferred with the state before making any decisions about how to distribute those tests.