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Coronavirus deaths reported at state-run facilities for those with mental illness, developmental disabilities

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) Globe Staff, Updated April 23, 2020, 2:42 p.m.



Tewksbury Hospital GLOBE STAFF

Outbreaks of the novel coronavirus continued to take a toll this week on several state-run medical centers that serve

people with chronic conditions, mental illness, and intellectual disabilities.

Two men — one in his 60s, another in his 70s — died from the coronavirus at Hogan Regional Center in Danvers, state officials said Thursday. Both had underlying health conditions.

Meanwhile, one patient died at Lemuel Shattuck Hospital in Jamaica Plain, as well as a patient at Tewksbury Hospital, according to officials.

[Each facility has reported dozens of confirmed cases](#) of the coronavirus among patients and staff members. The spread of the virus presents a particular challenge for these facilities, which are trying to quell the disease while providing long-term treatment and care for vulnerable groups of patients with complex mental and medical conditions.

Workers have voiced concerns, including about limited supplies of personal protective equipment and a lack of training.

“I get a lot of calls from staff who are extremely scared and feeling unprepared,” David Guiney, a registered nurse and union representative at Tewksbury Hospital, told the Globe. “They’re fearful for their co-workers and patients.”

State officials said they’ve brought in more protective gear, held training for staff, and isolated those who are infected, relying on advice from outside medical experts and public health guidance.

“As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to impact communities across the Commonwealth, we will aggressively respond, making all resources available to front-line health care and human services staff as they care for individuals receiving treatment at the hospital,” said a statement Thursday from Brooke Karanovich, a spokeswoman for the state’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

At Tewksbury and Shattuck hospitals, officials are using staffing agencies to recruit reinforcements for their depleted workforce, as well as advertising new positions. The Army Reserve deployed a medical task force to help at Tewksbury Hospital.

Earlier this month, teams from either the National Guard or a local ambulance company were brought in to state-run facilities to conduct testing. Additional testing has been done in recent days.

At the 255-bed Shattuck Hospital, 64 patients and 46 staff had tested positive. At the 394-bed Tewksbury Hospital, 87 patients and 104 staff were infected as of Wednesday evening, state officials said. Officials have established incident command centers at both locations.

State officials said that, as of Tuesday, 47 residents and 90 staff had tested positive for COVID-19 at Hogan Regional Center, which houses about 120 people. Fifteen residents and 13 staff were infected at Wrentham Developmental Center, which houses about 220 people.

The state operates a handful of other hospitals and centers across Massachusetts that provide long-term specialty care. Altogether, those facilities had reported eight patients and a dozen staff who had tested positive as of Wednesday evening, state officials said.

The state also runs or funds thousands of group homes statewide that serve more than 11,000 people with developmental disabilities. Across that network of homes, 17 residents had died, while 504 residents and 592 staff had tested positive, as of Tuesday, officials said.

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