

HEALTH

COVID-19 testing at HCC to end March 31

HOLYOKE - Due to a rapid decline in infection rates and dwindling demand for COVID-19 tests, the Stop the Spread testing program at Holyoke Community College will conclude at the end of the month.

Thursday, Mar. 31, will be the final day of testing at HCC.

HCC has served as a state-sponsored Stop the Spread testing since the program was initiated in the summer of 2020.

Last week, Gov. Charlie Baker's administration announced that it will be winding down the free PCR testing program, with 30 of the 41 sites in Massachusetts scheduled to close at the end of March.

According to the Baker administration, testing sites have seen a 80 percent decrease in demand since the beginning of January, when the omicron variant of COVID was at its peak, also noting that at-home rapid antigen tests are now widely available either for free or through insurance reimbursement.

PCR testing will still be available lo-

cally after March at the Holyoke Mall, in Easthampton, in Springfield, and at other sites around the state.

To find a testing site, go to: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test>

Until Apr. 1, drive-through COVID-19 testing at HCC will continue six days a week in Parking Lot M by the Bartley Center for Athletics & Recreation on HCC's main campus at 303 Homestead Ave.

The HCC testing site is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.; and Tuesday and Thursday from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Testing remains free to all Massachusetts residents and is conducted on a first-come, first-serve basis. There are no appointments and no referral is necessary.

Testing may sometimes be canceled due to inclement weather. Be sure to visit the Holyoke Board of Health website for up-to-date information on cancellations:

<https://www.holyoke.org/departments/board-of-health>