



# ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

March 25, 2020

Re: Hospital Preparedness During COVID-19

Dear Hospital Partners,

Arizona is still in the opening stages of its COVID-19 outbreak and the number of cases within the state will increase significantly. The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) has been closely monitoring the spread of the virus around the world and is acutely aware of the significant toll experienced among the healthcare systems of those states and countries hardest hit.

ADHS takes the threat of COVID-19 in Arizona very seriously and both appreciates and expects your partnership in this regard. I have activated the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee to make recommendations to further develop specific guidance for healthcare delivery and use of scarce medical resources. The work of this committee is grounded in [Arizona's Crisis Standards of Care Plan](#), which I encourage you all to review.

Your facilities and staff are on the front line of this response and your continued ability to care for your patients in a safe manner is critical in Arizona's success in overcoming COVID-19. For those reasons, I urge you to do the following:

- Activate your facility emergency plan
  - Institute your hospital incident command
  - Prepare your disaster plans to ensure continuation of essential service personnel, including non-clinical staff
  - Review the [Arizona Crisis Standards of Care Plan](#) to make determinations for moving your facility from conventional care to contingency care and prepare for crisis care
- Ensure efficient triage processes to relieve excess burden on your emergency room
  - Implement triage tents, triage hotlines, outpatient referral, and other alternate triage strategies outside the emergency department
  - Develop triage criteria for emergency care versus referral to a pre-identified COVID location or safe discharge to home
  - Expand behavioral health case management capacity to reduce your number and duration of psychiatric holds
- Make room in your hospital to take on a significant surge in patients.
  - Refine your hospital admission criteria to allow management of patients in alternate care settings within the community rather than within your facility
  - Identify opportunities to expand capacity of medical-surgical beds by reducing single-occupancy patient rooms

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- Identify and plan to supply additional areas in your facility to accommodate critical care patients
  - Convert non-critical care areas to ICU space and step-down care
  - Identify unlicensed areas of your facility that can be expanded to use for patient care
- Evaluate discharge planning criteria and messaging to efficiently discharge patients not critically in need of ongoing inpatient acute care
- Institute plans to optimize staffing levels within your facility
  - Identify areas or positions where you can safely expand scope of practice and cross-train
  - Identify mechanisms to activate medical volunteers and integrate them into your facility
- Evaluate your supplies and equipment and create facility guidance for optimization of scarce resources
  - Identify alternatives to ventilators if you experience a shortage: such as anesthesia machines, BiPAP or CPAP, manual bagging, high-flow oxygen
  - Identify additional sources for supplies and equipment: training centers, outpatient facilities managed by your hospital system, ambulatory surgical centers, etc.
  - Institute CDC guidance for optimization of PPE: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>
- Strengthen communication with healthcare and public health within your region
  - Establish a routine cadence of calls with regional partners to share best practices, response strategies, and challenges
  - Identify which facilities in your region you are able to utilize for patient transfer through your triage process or for step-down care for more timely discharge
  - Report key hospital capacity data through EMResource as required under the [Enhanced Surveillance Advisory](#) issued by Governor Ducey on March 23, 2020

Please prepare to see guidance disseminated from the discussions of the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee in the coming days and weeks. Thank you for your dedication to the people of Arizona and your tireless effort to keep our communities healthy.

Sincerely,



Cara Christ, MD  
Director  
Arizona Department of Health Services

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