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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Alternate Care Site Discussion Guide

Introduction

An Alternate Care Site (ACS) is a temporary healthcare facility used to provide care for patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some patients and their loved ones may be anxious or uncertain about being transported to and cared for at an ACS. This discussion guide – which may be adapted for use by hospitals or health systems – is intended to help address their concerns, build trust, and explain the reasoning behind the transport decision. The suggested responses include several blanks that should be filled in with specific details.

“After reviewing your current treatment plan and considering your unique medical needs, we think it would be appropriate to transfer you to an ACS.”

“What is an ACS? Where is it?”

- “The ACS is a new addition to our healthcare system that is part of _____[STATE’S NAME] continuum of care for COVID-19 patients. The additional bed capacity that it provides helps us to respond to COVID-19 in our community.”
- “This particular ACS is located at _____[ADDRESS].”

“Why am I being transferred?”

Inpatient:

- “We set up the ACS for patients who are not quite healthy enough to go home yet. You are on your way to recovering from COVID-19, and the medical staff at the ACS will help you complete your recovery.”

Emergency Department patient:

- “We are confident that you will receive excellent care at the ACS. If your condition worsens, you will be transferred back to a hospital.”

“What kind of care will I receive?”

- “We are confident that you will receive excellent care at the ACS.”
- “Our ACS has a well trained, experienced staff as well as the necessary supplies, medications, and equipment to help you on your road to recovery.”
- “We want you to recover quickly; we would not recommend sending you to the ACS if we did not think this was a good fit for your current needs.”



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“How will I get there?”

- “You will be transported to the ACS by ambulance. Once you have been discharged, the staff at the ACS will arrange for you to be transported back home.”

“What is it like there?”

- “Anytime you are away from home, especially when you are sick, there is no doubt that it can be uncomfortable.”
- “You will have your own space, privacy, and the ACS team will do everything they can to make you comfortable.”
- “The staff has made privacy, comfort, and safety a priority for all of our patients.”

A note on the cost of care

- Patients may also ask about the cost of care delivered at an ACS, including those costs related to transportation. As payment and reimbursement policies vary, clinicians and administrators should be familiar with ACS reimbursement policies and practices in their states.
- If provisions have been made to provide care and transportation at no cost to the patient or their insurer, clinicians should emphasize that during this encounter.