Hospital Operations Toolkit for COVID-19

Administration:

Response Coordination – Community/Health System/Healthcare Coalition Interface

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In addition to planning for their facility, hospitals should engage in planning and response coordination with external partners to enable a coordinated community response. For hospitals that are part of a health system, this also includes alignment with enterprise planning. Depending on the community, partners may include:

- Individual healthcare facilities and providers, including other hospitals, physician practices, mental health/substance use programs, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, pharmacies, urgent care centers, community health centers, and rural health clinics.
- Emergency medical services and patient transport providers.
- The state or local health department and emergency management agency.
- Other response partners, including volunteer organizations, human services providers, the state hospital association, and community-based organizations.

Most hospitals are already engaged with these partners through their healthcare coalition (HCC). HCCs are networks of individual healthcare and response organizations in a defined geographic area that collaborate to prepare for and respond to emergencies. Collaborative efforts of HCCs include development of:

- Procedures for sharing information and maintaining situational awareness of the effects of COVID-19 on the community. This may include coordinating submission of required reporting data.
- Processes for requesting assistance from HCC members.
- Criteria for stockpiling or group purchasing or contracting for supplies and services along with a process for managing these jointly acquired resources.

> Additional information on group purchasing and stockpiling is available in the Supply Chain and Resource Management section.
>
> The Crisis Standards of Care section offers considerations on the activation of crisis standards.

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- Points of contact for social safety net services to mitigate COVID-19 risks for some populations, such as housing or food insecurity, inadequate access to transportation or technology, chronic co-morbidities, or other needs.
- Agreements to implement consistent policies, such as common visitor restriction policies.
- Triggers for implementing community-wide resources such as establishing an alternate care site or activating crisis standards of care.
- Interface of the HCC with adjacent coalitions and with the state.

Most areas of the country have experienced surges in COVID-19 cases that have stressed the capacity of hospitals. Hospitals should follow their usual transfer agreements and other patient referral mechanisms to transfer patients from overwhelmed facilities to ones with more capacity, including transfers of patients within larger health systems, to load-balance patient distribution. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some regions have augmented their usual load-balancing efforts by establishing a Medical Operations Coordination Cell (MOCC) to support a regional approach to transferring patients to facilities with available capacity or moving resources to support an overwhelmed facility. MOCCs are often integrated in the jurisdiction's Emergency Support Function #8, Public Health and Medical Services (ESF-8) activities and guide the movement of patients and resources to ensure the highest possible level of care can be provided to each patient.

Hospitals should be engaged with their HCC and their jurisdiction's lead ESF-8 agency to ensure regular communications and coordination of planning and response activities. Hospitals should review their interactions with their HCCs and lead ESF-8 agency during the pandemic so far and address any gaps in information sharing, collaboration, or response coordination, including exploring whether constructs such as the MOCC offer a feasible solution to identified challenges.

> External communication strategies are detailed in the Risk Communication and Information Sharing section.

Resources Related to Response Coordination

- American College of Surgeons: How to Set Up a Regional Medical Operations Center to Manage the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Arizona Department of Health Services: Arizona Surge Line
- ASPR:
  - COVID-19 Healthcare Planning Checklist
  - ASPR Health Care Readiness Near You
- ASPR TRACIE:
  - COVID-19 Regional Support Services
  - COVID-19: Concerns and Opportunities for Healthcare Leadership
  - Establishing Medical Operations Coordination Cells (MOCCs) for COVID-19
  - Healthcare Coalition Influenza Pandemic Checklist

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- - Healthcare Coalitions Resource Page
  - Moving Patients in a Pandemic: A Hybrid California Model Rescues Overwhelmed Hospitals
- COVID-19 Healthcare Resilience Working Group:
  - Considerations for Assessing Regional Patient Load-Balancing Effects during COVID-19
  - Critical Care Load-Balancing Operational Template
- Federal Emergency Management Agency: Operational Templates and Guidance for EMS Mass Incident Deployment, Annex IV: FEMA National Ambulance Contract
- Hackensack Meridian Health: Transfer Process for COVID-19 Hospital Surge Plan
- Mississippi State Department of Health: FY 2020 Mississippi COVID-19 System of Care Plan
- Northwest Healthcare Response Network: Regional COVID-19 Coordination Center Overview
- NRCC Healthcare Resilience Task Force: Medical Operations Coordination Cells Toolkit: First Edition
- Oklahoma Hospital Association: Surge Planning Toolkit for COVID-19

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