

COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR PHC PARTICIPATING GROUPS – 3/18/20

We have been working with our vendor-partners on ways to best support you and your participants during this period of uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. The situation is changing day-to-day, but following are the most recent updates:

Alaska Regional Hospital

We Are Ready! Alaska Regional Hospital is fully prepared to meet the needs of our community and patients. It is “all hands on deck.” We are updating staff daily and screening patients and visitors for symptoms of illness. We are working closely with the municipality, state, CDC, and our corporate partners to ensure that we have the latest news and are following the most recent guidelines. We are collaborating with our community partners, such as Providence, Alaska Native Medical Center and Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center to ensure we have a cohesive response to this crisis. We have taken measures to have a more controlled environment that limits entry into our hospital and we have instituted health-screening checks for all hospital visitors. Masks are provided to those with respiratory symptoms who come to the hospital seeking care.

Messaging to Employees/Individuals. It’s important that people understand this virus so they can make wise decisions and prevent the spread of infection. Here is some suggested messaging for you to share.

The emergence of COVID 19 has complicated our usual flu season by presenting in very similar ways. It is spread by respiratory droplets which are produced when we cough, sneeze, and to a certain extent even while talking – this is why the concept of Social Distancing is so frequently discussed. These tiny particles travel about 1 meter, or three feet, from us. CDC is recommending we stay about 6 feet apart for this reason. These tiny droplets can also land on surfaces, which we touch, and then may inadvertently inhale after touching our own face. Wash your hands often, and try not to touch your face. COVID-19 is not known to spread by the airborne route, but healthcare providers who perform certain respiratory precautions may be seen in the media using additional masks and PPE. Prevention is best handled through hand washing, avoiding friends or coworkers who are sick, cleaning of surfaces and frequently used items (like our phones), and taking good care of ourselves by eating and sleeping well so that our immune system is functioning its best.

Alaskans who have symptoms of flu (cough, achiness, “head cold”) that are not severe should stay home and contact their primary care provider or 211 for guidance on whether testing for flu, COVID 19, or other reasons is indicated, and what they can do to alleviate their symptoms.

Alaskans who are seriously ill should go to the Emergency Department. If they have a cough, fever, or shortness of breath, we will offer them a mask immediately upon entering the hospital.

Alaskans who want to minimize their chance of exposure should review the CDC website and follow their suggestions under the heading “How to Protect Yourself” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. Currently, they are recommending:

- Avoiding close contact with others as much as possible. This may mean avoiding crowded places, handshaking, or even not traveling if you are over 60 years old or have medical illnesses.
- Good self-care—handwashing (soap and water are best, but if that is not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol), staying up to date with your immunizations, and healthy habits.
- Take steps to protect others – stay home and wear a facemask if you’re sick, cover coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect surfaces.

Elective Surgeries. Yesterday it was recommended that hospitals cancel or delay elective surgeries to preserve acute hospital capacity should the need arise. We respect the position the government is in and recognize they are taking this stance out of an abundance of caution. We are grateful they chose not to mandate this position and are trusting providers to make decisions based on needs of their patients and resources available. Important to note is the definition of “elective”, which simply means that it is a scheduled surgery rather than an emergency. These scheduled “elective” surgeries can include vitally important life-saving procedures such as replacement of a faulty heart valve, removal of a serious cancerous tumor, or a pediatric hernia repair. Fortunately, as a member of the HCA family with over 2,000+ facilities across the country, our access to supplies is strong and lessons learned from markets ahead of us abundant. We are confident we have our finger on the pulse of COVID-19 activity and will make adjustments accordingly as conditions change.

Drive-Thru Testing Site. As stated before, we are working very closely with Providence, ANMC and Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center to ensure coordination and collaboration across the community to the greatest extent possible. This includes a drive up testing site, located at 4115 Lake Otis (see attached press release for more information). We made a purposeful decision as a group to support one location and direct patients there that meet criteria/ have an order for COVID-19 testing. For ease in processing, patients will be registered as “Providence” and results sent to the primary care provider of record. We also plan to have a follow up system in place to ensure results get back to the patient and provider as quickly as possible. Important to note: people coming for testing need to have a referral from their physician or 211. They will not test the worried well.

We’re all in this together. Nothing highlights the most enduring and redeeming characteristic of our humanity than in times of crises. When people are afraid, hurting or in need, the ability and desire for of us to come together and help one another is beautiful and the deepest reflection of our divine nature. This crises gives us an opportunity to be an uplifter and help others overcome their fear and pain by reminding them what is good and right in the world, to focus on the constructive and the affirmative. We all have the power to make a positive difference and bring light into the world. Thank you for your partnership and your willingness to be such an important part of this solution.

Take care of yourself and your family, both physically and mentally. Wash your hands, go for a walk, read a book, play a game, clean your closets, laugh with each other. We will get through this together!

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