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To: Illinois Local Health Departments
Illinois Hospitals
EMS Medical Directors
EMS Providers

From: Winfred Rawls, Deputy Director, Office of Preparedness and Response
Ashley Thoele, Division Chief, EMS and Highway Safety

Date: March 16, 2020

Re: **UPDATE!!** IDPH recommends strategies for PPE use

The Illinois Department of Public Health's Office of Preparedness and Response is taking the evolving national response for the COVID-19 very seriously and is working with our local health departments and hospitals to prepare as a state. In order to protect healthcare workers and prevent the spread of infection, it is recommended to use appropriate PPE whenever necessary.

The IDPH Office of Preparedness and Response works diligently to prepare hospitals to strategically plan and prepare for instances where the needs exceed the resources available. During this response concern has risen for the lack of PPE on hand and the Department hopes to relieve concerns by providing guidance to resolve any issues that may arise. The CDC has provided [guidance](#) associated with strategies for PPE use and managing healthcare supplies for healthcare system. It is our position to work collaboratively with CDC and coordinate our state efforts with the direction provided by the CDC.

The Department recommends that all Local Health Departments and Hospitals do the following:

- **Identify/Determine Risk:** Determine an organization's or health department's risk associated with encountering or treating someone possible symptomatic for the Coronavirus Disease – 2019.
- **UPDATE - Activate Incident Command Structure:** Hospitals and health departments should consider activating their internal hospital or LHD incident command to coordinate operations through the facility or community.
- **Update Policies and Plans:** Update organizational infection control policies and provide education as needed. Review emergency operations plans and activate if necessary.
- **Monitor Supply Chain:** Meet frequently with supply chain officials at your organization to determine current caches of PPE on hand. Identify if shortages or difficulties are arising regarding ordering of daily PPE supplies and develop organizational strategies for PPE shortages if they arise.
- **UPDATE- Implement Conservation Strategies:** Considerations should be made to alter surgery schedules, including cancelling any elective procedures for

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a specified amount of time, then reassess. Any measures that limit the amount of people coming to outpatient and hospital settings should be implemented. Determine nonessential staff that should be excluded from care of potential COVID-19 patients. Implement source control and identify and assess patients who need PPE and those who do not.

- **UPDATE - Staffing:** Implement strategies to use both nonessential and essential staff during a healthcare response. For example, if elective procedures are cancelled consider using those nurses, physicians, and clerical staff in other assignments as it relates to patient care or administrative duties.
- **Develop a Mitigation Plan:** Mitigate shortages by using or obtaining alternative supplies (Ex. PAPRs/CAPRs instead of n-95 masks) and provide just-in-time training as needed. Continue to work with vendors to secure PPE when it becomes available.
- **UPDATE - Communication:** Implement your hospital and local health department communication plans. Coordinate messaging and update staff and the public to provide awareness. Work with regional healthcare coalitions to gain situational awareness and up-to-date information regarding the Coronavirus Disease-2019 and healthcare and public health preparedness.

UPDATE - Lastly, there may be a time when **crisis/alternative strategies** may need to be activated when N95s, or supplies are running low-

- Use identified n95 masks that are adequate for use after manufacturer designated shelf life
- Use alternative respirators approved by NIOSH
- Implement limited re-use for patients
- Use respirators not identified as being adequate past shelf life
- Prioritize use of masks by activity type
- Exclude healthcare workers at high risk for severe illness
- Designate specific healthcare workers for care of patients with COVID-19
- Use masks not evaluated or approved by NIOSH as a last result

Please contact your IDPH Regional EMS Coordinator (REMSC) or Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) if there are questions.