



DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY
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MEMORANDUM FOR MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Supplemental Guidance - 3 for Military Medical Treatment Facility Directors in Regards to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Summary: The World Health Organization (WHO) declared Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) a pandemic on March 11, 2020 due to severity and alarming levels of disease spread. The President of the United States declared a national state of emergency on March 13, 2020. Widespread closures of public facilities, including many schools across the U.S., and cancellations of public events, followed the declaration. There are confirmed cases among Department of Defense (DoD) beneficiaries (active duty, dependents, reservists, and retirees) in states across the country and overseas. At present, New York, Washington, and California are states experiencing the most widespread community transmission. As the federal government rapidly expands COVID-19 testing, an increase in the number of total cases identified and reported at the local, state and national levels is expected.

What's happening at DHA?

- The Defense Health Agency (DHA) Director is issuing a daily COVID-19 update, via email, to summarize key issues.
- March 16, 2020: DHA Healthcare Operations issued a comprehensive response plan to address COVID-19 education, triage, and appointing in MTFs.
- DHA Healthcare Operations is working hard to find efficiencies to address the unprecedented call volume on the Nurse Advice Line. A process to help with decreasing wait times and occurrence of dropped calls has been approved and additional measures are being considered on an ongoing basis.
- DHA is implementing the following guidance, recently issued by others:
 - March 16, 2020: Health Protection Condition (HPCON) for Pentagon Reservation, Defense Health Headquarters, and DoD facilities in the National Capitol Region enhanced to BRAVO.
 - March 13, 2020: Secretary of Defense direction "Stop Movement for all Domestic Travel for DoD Components in response to COVID-19"
 - March 13, 2020: Health and Human Services "PanCAP Adapted U.S. Government COVID-19 Response Plan" to coordinate federal response activities for COVID-19 in the U.S.
 - March 11, 2020: Force Health Protection Guidance (Supplement 4) – DoD Guidance for Personnel Traveling During the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

DHA COVID-19 SharePoint: The DHA SharePoint site is the central repository for all COVID-19 guidance documents issued by the Director, DHA, as well as relevant resources published by other DoD offices and interagency partners.

To access the CAC-enabled site: (1) navigate to <https://info.health.mil/SitePages/Home.aspx>, once at the DHA homepage; (2) click the splash tile: "Latest Updates COVID-19;" (3) Select the "Operational Updates" link.

Prepare and Respond: Updated interim guidance for MTF Directors (February 5, 2020) is as follows:

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Facemasks are an acceptable alternative when the supply chain of respirators cannot meet the demand. Available respirators should be prioritized for procedures likely to generate respiratory aerosols, posing the highest exposure risk to healthcare providers. (See Attachment 1 for details.)
- MTFs may consider reusing N95 respirators when supplies are low. (See Attachment 1 for details.)
- Engineering and administrative controls are the first line of defense against infection and can improve PPE preservation. MTFs should follow conventional capacity strategies to reduce exposure. (See Attachment 1 for details.)
- Per the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), if an employee has had a successful baseline respirator medical certification examination and a baseline respirator fit test, then there is no requirement to perform an annual fit test for the same respirator, as long as the employee has not had a significant change in medical status. (See Attachment 2 or <https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-03-14/temporary-enforcement-guidance-healthcare-respiratory-protection-annual-fit> for details.)
- In lieu of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on the disposal of contaminated/used PPE related to COVID-19, MTFs are to adhere to the following guidance:
 - All PPE generated in the treatment of known, or testing of suspected COVID-19 patients will be managed following facility seasonal flu-response procedures;
 - All PPE worn in a manner to prevent contact or casual exposure to COVID-19 will be managed as non-regulated medical waste (RMW) (i.e. general waste).

Infection Prevention and Control

- CDC has issued a new non-test-based strategy (i.e., time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery strategy) to discontinue home isolation and for return to work for healthcare personnel; additionally, CDC has issued updated guidance for the test-based strategy using only one swab instead of two for each test. (See Attachment 3 for details.)

Patient Movement and Reception

- MTFs will continue to receive and provide support for all United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) validated patients moving within the Defense Transportation System. (See Attachment 4 for details.)
- The Secretary of Defense memorandum “Stop Movement for all Domestic Travel for DoD Components in Response to COVID-19” includes an important caveat relevant to MTFs: “Travel by patients and medical providers for the purpose of medical treatment for DoD personnel and their family members is authorized.”

Communications:

- Markets and Direct Support Elements distribute this guidance to all MTF Commanders and Directors, MTF healthcare providers and others, as appropriate.
- For additional information contact the DHA AD-CS Operations Branch at: dha.ncr.healthcare-ops.mbx.dhahcoops-operations@mail.mil or (703) 681-8333.



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Attachments:

1. CDC Guidance Regarding Limited Availability of PPE
2. OSHA Temporary Enforcement Guidance – Healthcare Respiratory Protection Annual Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces During COVID-19 Outbreak
3. CDC Updated Guidance Regarding Infection Prevention and Control
4. Patient Movement & Patient Reception Operations