

Outpatient Care Surge Strategies

COVID-19 Pandemic Healthcare Surge Strategies Framework

Outpatient Facilities should follow the [latest regulatory guidance](#) from the Washington Department of Health (DOH). For questions, facilities should reach out to DOH, the Northwest Healthcare Response Network (NWHRN) and/or their respective associations. For specific outbreak management and guidance regarding implementation, facilities should reach out and follow the guidance of their local health jurisdiction (LHJ).

NWHRN Engagement

- Contact the NWHRN to sign up for regional situational awareness emails and receive coordination meeting invitations
- Contact the NWHRN Duty Officer when there are questions, concerns, or resource requests: 24/7 Duty Officer line: 425-988-2897, HECC email: HECC@nwhrn.org
- Participate in healthcare coalition situational awareness and coordination efforts

Interdependencies

- Follow local, state, and federal required and/or recommended COVID-19 infection prevention guidance
- Work with professional associations and LHJs as requested
- Participate in information sharing and coordination calls with local, regional, state and federal partners
- Submit resource requests as needed to the LHJ or NWHRN, after exhausting intra-system caches
- Collaborate with regional partners for information sharing about challenges and best practices
- Share data with response agencies as requested or required
- Reach out to partners with questions or concerns
- Work with regional partners to reduce patient surge volume on acute care facilities.

Response Partners

- [Northwest Healthcare Response Network](#) – *Western Washington Healthcare Coalition*
- [Local Health Jurisdiction](#) – *Local public health authority*
- [Washington Association for Community Health](#) – *Community Health Centers Association*
- [Washington Department of Health](#) – *State public health authority*

PREPAREDNESS

- Staff training for PPE use, screening protocols, infectious control measures, and regular refresher trainings, especially when protocols change

- Identify opportunities to support staff – mental health, housing, childcare, etc.
- Outreach and messaging about how facility safety protocols ensure patient safety
- Establish a PPE cache and inventory, track usage, and rotate supplies
- Provide signage in multiple languages about COVID-19 related safety precautions and protocols

MITIGATION & RESPONSE

- Follow the latest regulatory guidance and requirements
- Implement infection control, health screening, staff testing, and visitor/vendor restrictions, as necessary. Educate, encourage, and enforce safety protocols
 - Consider working with vendors to schedule their arrival either before or after operational hours
 - Consider extending hours and staggering appointments to reduce the number of patients in your facility
 - Work with building maintenance to maximize indoor ventilation
- Notify patients about changes in safety protocols before they arrive. Try to address fears of healthcare settings
 - Eliminate patient penalties for cancellations and missed appointments related to respiratory illness
 - Reaching out to patients at higher risk of COVID-19-related complications confirm they have sufficient medication refills and will notify their provider by phone if they become ill
- Utilize telehealth, telephone visits, patient portals, or online self-assessment tools to reduce the number of in-person appointments
- Consider ways to reduce barriers to patient access, including transportation restrictions, childcare needs, fear around COVID-19, etc.
- If applicable, identify a dedicated team to only work with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients
- Implement PPE conservation strategies when required
- Strongly encourage all staff to receive both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Consider vaccine status when assigning staff to high-risk duties

RECOVERY

- Document decisions that were made and response actions
- Document what went well, areas for improvement, and lessons learned
- Identify what is needed to return to normal operations. Create a plan for achieving this
- Conduct debriefs with administration and staff
- Provide mental and behavioral health support for staff
- Develop an after-action report, identify corrective/improvement actions to implement, ideally before the next surge in cases