K&L GATES

TRIAGE: RAPID LEGAL LESSONS FOR BUSY HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Workplace Safety Highlights from the CDC's May 2020 "*Ten Ways Healthcare Systems Can Operate Effectively during the COVID-19 Pandemic*" Guidance

By Leann Walsh

MAY 2020 – CDC GUIDANCE

- This month, the CDC published guidance for health care systems and health care facility decision makers titled "*Ten Ways Healthcare Systems Can Operate Effectively during the COVID-19 Pandemic.*"

- Ten recommendations categorized in five buckets:

  - Worker Safety and Support

  - Patient Service Delivery

  - Data Streams for Situational Awareness

  - Facility Practices

  - Communications

- The guidance is available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ways-operate-effectively.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM27395.

EXECUTING INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PRACTICES FOR COVID-19

- Health care employers should follow all applicable PPE requirements, including those from the CDC, the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, and state and local public health agencies.

- The CDC's current recommendations include instituting strategies to optimize PPE, including implementing extended and limited reuse of N95 respirators, reserving N95 respirators for aerosol-generating procedures, creating extended-use PPE units where only patients with COVID-19 are provided care, implementing walk-up testing booths that allow health care providers to stand behind solid but transparent panels, such as polycarbonate, to collect samples for COVID-19, and tracking PPE supplies available using the CDC's PPE burn rate calculator.

EXECUTING INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PRACTICES FOR COVID-19

- As part of executing current infection prevention and control practices for COVID-19, health care employers should also institute universal source control for all health care personnel, patients, and visitors, consistent with the CDC's "*Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings*."

- As part of aggressive source control measures, the CDC recommends that healthcare facilities consider implementing policies requiring *everyone* entering the facility to wear a cloth face covering (if tolerated) while in the building, regardless of symptoms. This approach is consistent with the CDC's recommendation to the general public advising them to wear a cloth face covering whenever they must leave their home.

PROTOCOLS FOR HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL MONITORING

- Health care employers should develop protocols for health care personnel to monitor themselves for fever and other symptoms of COVID-19, restrict them from work when sick or post exposure, and to safely allow return to work after an exposure and/or suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

- Health care entities should establish monitoring programs for employees falling within the low, medium, and high risk categories and should follow the CDC's guidelines for healthcare personnel returning to work with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL

Health care employers should establish a plan for providing additional support for health care personnel, considering aspects such as <u>mental health</u>, <u>parenting</u>, meals, and <u>non-punitive sick policies</u>.

PLAN TO REDUCE STAFFING SHORTAGES

- Health care employers should create plans to <u>reduce staffing shortages</u>.

- For example, when staffing shortages are anticipated, healthcare facilities and employers, in collaboration with human resources and occupational health services, should use contingency capacity strategies to plan and prepare for mitigating this problem.

COMMUNICATION PLANS

- Health care employers should develop and maintain a communication plan for their health care personnel, patients, and the community, which may include virtual town halls, daily huddles with local leadership, calls with partners, emails and phone conferences for staff, media briefs, and other elements.

- For some examples, the American Hospital Association has a helpful Communications Checklist for preparing for and responding to COVID-19, and its webpage also provides links to internal and external communication plans from leading health care entities.

Today's Presenter

Leann M. Walsh

Raleigh

+1.919.743.7319

leann.walsh@klgates.com

If you have feedback or a topic you want us to analyze in a future episode, **please let us know**.

For more information on our Health Care Practice Group please visit our **website.**

For additional insights into Health Care Law please visit **K&L Gates HUB.**