

# CHA Key Messages

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## Hospitals Respond to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

February 28, 2020

- 1. As the COVID-19 virus begins to spread, California hospitals are continuing to care for their communities.**
  - **Hospitals are working closely with county, state, and federal public health officials** as suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 are identified. Existing emergency preparedness infrastructure and lines of communication are being utilized to closely coordinate between public health officials and local health care systems.
  - **The safety and well-being of our patients, hospital employees, first responders, and communities is our highest priority.** Hospitals are closely monitoring — and implementing as appropriate — the guidance issued by public health experts at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This includes ensuring that all employees who may come into contact with a potentially infected individual utilize appropriate personal protective equipment and follow all recommended infection control protocols (proper donning and doffing, hand hygiene, proper sanitation or disposal of diagnostic equipment, etc.).
- 2. The situation is rapidly evolving.**
  - California now has what is believed to be possibly the first case of community-acquired COVID-19 in the nation. The individual is being treated in a hospital in Sacramento County. Any further information about this individual must come from local public health officials.
  - Even though public health officials are now warning that additional community-acquired cases of COVID-19 are likely, **it's important to note that the CDC still considers the risk of transmission to the general public to be low at this time.**
- 3. Some aspects of the COVID-19 virus are still unknown to public health officials and health care professionals alike.**
  - We are in a real-time and emerging situation. While we all would like more information as soon as possible, we know that public health officials are working around the clock to provide all Americans with more detailed information as they

know it. This includes information on COVID-19's virus transmission process, viral shedding period, and effective treatment options.

**4. CHA and the Regional Associations are closely collaborating with local, state, and federal officials to address questions and concerns from hospitals.**

- As hospitals prepare for the likely spread of COVID-19 in communities throughout the state, numerous operational, testing, supply, licensing, and workforce questions are arising. Our teams will continue to bring these issues to the attention of appropriate officials — working to get hospitals the answers they need and deserve as quickly as possible.

**5. Disaster preparedness is a way of life for California.**

- Hospitals routinely plan for and train staff on properly responding to outbreaks of various infectious diseases.
- California hospitals prepare for all types of emergencies every day – including those that affect public health. Whether it's a serious flu season, a measles outbreak, or the emergence of a previously unseen illness, hospitals follow recommended infection control protocols issued by local, state, and federal health officials.
- **Hospitals must comply with a host of state and federal laws and regulations governing disaster preparedness.** Every hospital must have a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan that identifies known and potential risks and outlines appropriate mitigation strategies.
- **These plans, which must be updated and reviewed at least every two years, must include policies and procedures for responding to a public health event — including the outbreak of an infectious disease.**
- A hospital's ability to respond to so-called "surge" events (which is contingent upon a state emergency declaration) also must be detailed in its emergency preparedness plan.