

CHA Key Messages

Hospitals Developing Plans to Increase Testing for Health Care Workers Despite Supply Shortages

- 1. California's hospitals have the utmost commitment to the safety of our health care workers who have battled the COVID-19 pandemic for nearly a year.**
 - Hospitals want to keep health care workers safe; to prevent COVID-19 transmission, they have been taking many steps, including testing health care personnel with symptoms who may have been exposed, testing patients admitted to the hospital, testing patients before they undergo surgical procedures, cohorting positive patients in COVID-19 care units, limiting visitors, and using appropriate PPE.
 - Expansion of testing to **asymptomatic** health care workers is an immense challenge due to significant global supply chain problems that make it hard to obtain testing supplies, increased demand for testing, and longer testing turnaround times.
 - Hospitals are acting in good faith, developing plans to submit to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) that outline how they will expand testing programs for health care workers with the limited resources available.
- 2. As hospitals are seeing record numbers of COVID-19 patients, the timing of a push for screening testing of *asymptomatic* hospital workers is a concern.**
 - Given the limited availability of testing supplies, which are drained due to the global pandemic, additional testing must be balanced with the needs of those showing symptoms of COVID-19, those in contact with someone who has had COVID-19, and those who ask to be tested.
 - Testing prioritization is not a matter of desire or willingness; if everyone could get tested routinely, we would all have a greater assurance of safety, but scarce resources make this logistically impossible. The global pandemic is sapping the reagents needed for testing, and more resources have not yet materialized.
 - Following the Thanksgiving holiday, California topped more than 20,000 new cases of COVID-19 in a single day, with more than 8,000 people hospitalized due to the virus. The same week, a full 75% of the state's intensive care unit beds were filled.
 - Things are projected to get worse as the number of hospitalized Californians could triple by Christmas, according to state estimates, which will further drive demand for testing. In the past two months, the number of tests completed has doubled, according to the [California Testing Task Force](#), even as testing turnaround times during that period have increased.
- 3. With a COVID-19 vaccine slated to be available at the same time as the testing recommendations, hospitals are also preparing to offer the vaccine, to prevent infections.**

- The first COVID-19 vaccine, from Pfizer, is expected to be available for front-line health care workers as early as mid-December. Hospitals will play a pivotal role in administering the vaccine, and front-line health care workers will be prioritized.
- That means hospitals will be simultaneously rolling out weekly testing for personnel and vaccine distribution, a complex, but valuable logistical process — all designed to ensure the safety of health care workers.