

# COVID-19: FAQs & Resources for California Hospitals

COVID-19 variants, reopenings, and other factors pose the potential for future surges of patients with COVID-19 who need hospital care. As hospitals and health systems continue to care for patients during this pandemic, the following FAQs and links are designed to help inform your surge response to challenges such as staffing, space, personal protective equipment (PPE), testing, and other demands. The [CHA COVID-19 web page](#), which includes all the information below, also offers a broad range of FAQs and links to state and federal resources.

## Staffing

### How can hospitals care for additional patients and still meet nurse staffing ratio regulations?

**A:** The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is working with hospitals that need additional nurses to meet the Title 22 nurse staffing ratio requirements. CDPH has contracted with over a dozen staffing agencies to meet the needs of California's hospitals and patients. As a result, CDPH will approve a staffing ratio waiver only as a very short-term bridge until temporary nurses arrive at the hospital. Hospitals that need additional nurses or other personnel should reach out to their Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator (MHOAC) to request additional staff and email [centralizedprogramflex@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:centralizedprogramflex@cdph.ca.gov) if they need a nurse staffing ratio waiver as a bridge. The state will offer to subsidize the cost of these agency nurses in some cases, and those specifics will be contained in a memorandum of understanding between the state and the hospital.

**For more information:** CHA's website FAQs on [human resources](#) and [staffing](#) cover additional topics, such as free and discounted hotel rooms for employees, employee childcare assistance, mental health counseling resources, out-of-state medical personnel, and more.

## Space and Other Requirements

### What flexibilities for use of space and other CDPH requirements do hospitals have during the COVID-19 state of emergency?

**A:** All hospitals continue to be able to use the flexibilities in [All Facilities Letter \(AFL\) 20-26.6](#), related to the use of space and processes for the discharge of homeless patients, among others.

## State and Federal Actions

### Where can we find a list of state and federal waivers that might help us as we respond to the demands of COVID-19?

**A:** Numerous licensing and certification requirements have been suspended, which can support health care facilities in surging their capacity. See CHA's summaries of both the [state waivers](#) and [federal waivers](#).

**For more information:** See CHA's website for details about [federal funding opportunities](#) and [coverage for uninsured individuals](#).

## PPE and Other Resource Requests

### What help is available for accessing and procuring additional PPE and other critical resources?

**A:** The best way to get supplies in California is to request them through the MHOAC Program. A list of county MHOAC contacts is [here](#), and the process for requesting resources from your county MHOAC is [here](#).

**For more information:** See CHA's website for details about the [FEMA grant program](#) to help pay for PPE and [FAQs about supplies](#).

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## Testing

### What testing resources are available for hospitals?

**A:** Testing capacity continues to be challenging due to high demand and the numerous supply shortages affecting all lab manufacturers. Hospitals can provide their own lab testing, outsource their lab testing to an outside vendor, or do both. The state's [COVID -19 Testing Task Force](#) website provides a continually updated list of [labs with testing capacity](#), should a hospital choose to outsource its lab testing. This list includes three types of labs: full-service labs that can provide onsite/offsite sample collections, supplies, etc., and test onsite or facilitate shipment of specimens to a main lab site; enhanced service labs that provide sample collection kits, manage inbound logistics, and conduct diagnostic testing; and labs with testing-only services that can conduct diagnostic testing, but the submitter must supply their own collection kits. Currently, the list contains over 184 available labs.

[The Valencia Branch Laboratory](#) (VBL) is also an option for hospitals that wish to outsource their lab testing and offers two tracks for partnering with hospitals — a fast track option for health care worker testing needs and a long-term pilot option where eligible hospitals can both focus on health care worker and community equity testing needs. The VBL conducts all the lab testing at its main site in Valencia. While they supply the collection kits, hospitals are responsible for collecting the samples and sending them either to the Valencia site or to one of the [statewide VBL community collection sites](#). The lab will bill the patient's payer. Additionally, there is a software interface free to users called Color, however, it does not interface with hospitals' electronic medical records systems. Hospitals interested in partnering with the VBL should review this [onboarding document](#), complete [this form](#), and connect with the lab for further information.

### How do testing supplies get distributed?

**A:** If hospitals are unable to purchase testing supplies, they can request them through their [MHOAC](#). The state's testing task force uses collected data to understand testing capacity and supply issues, and determines, through the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, what the MHOAC and state and national supplies are, and where the distribution will occur.

**For more information:** CHA's [testing FAQs](#) include details about hospital lab requirements, types of tests, and more.

## Crisis Care

### Where can we find information about the state's guidance on crisis care and requirements for hospitals?

**A:** CDPH has issued [AFL 20-91](#), which addresses the need for all health facilities to have crisis care continuum guidelines and to implement those guidelines if they are experiencing surge as a result of the current increase in COVID-19 cases. The AFL outlines expectations for hospitals during a surge and includes links to the CDPH [Crisis Care Continuum Guidelines](#) and [Crisis Care Guidelines Pre-Implementation Checklist](#). To assist hospitals during a surge, CHA [has prepared several resources](#) that highlight the guidelines' key concepts and planning considerations for allocating scarce medical resources during surge operations.

## Additional Resources

- [Checklist for Activating an Emergency Operations Plan](#)