

COVID-19 Surges: FAQs & Resources for California Hospitals

COVID-19 variants, reopening, and varied vaccination levels 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, testing, and other demands. The [CHA COVID-19 web page](#), which includes all the information below, also offers additional FAQs.

Staffing

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

A: Based on discussions with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), a hospital should first try to increase staffing levels through the following steps (but not necessarily in this order):

- 1) Increase use of overtime as well as per diem, part-time, and in-house registry nurses
- 2) Fill unfilled positions (new hires)
- 3) Reassign RNs from unaffected units or health system partners
- 4) Increase use of contracted registry/traveler nurses
- 5) Transfer patients to other beds/units or facilities
- 6) Discharge patients as appropriate
- 7) Request ambulance diversion from LEMSA if appropriate

Hospitals that need additional nurses or other personnel should first contact their contracted staffing agencies. If they are unable to secure staff, they can next reach out to their [Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator](#) to request additional staff from the state's contracted agencies.

As a last resort, they can submit a [Form 5000a](#) for a nurse staffing ratio program waiver or flexibility to chcq-dutyofficer@cdph.ca.gov.

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: Until July 17, hospitals continue to be able to use the flexibilities in [All Facilities Letter \(AFL\) 20-26.8](#), related to the use of space and processes for the discharge of homeless patients, among other requirements. Beginning July 17, hospitals that have a continued need for flexibility will need to have secured a program flexibility from CDPH. Hospitals can submit a [Form 5000a](#) (PDF) emergency program flexibility request to CHCQDutyOfficer@cdph.ca.gov or [Form 5000](#) (PDF) program flexibility request to their local [district office](#). CHA has requested that CDPH prioritize these requests. CDPH has in turn asked that hospitals submit as soon as possible.

Additional Resources

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