

MESSAGE TO THE HOSPITAL COMMUNITY
From the Health Facility Licensing and Certification Bureau,
New Mexico Department of Health

October 9, 2009

The flu season is upon us.

The Department of Health (DOH) and its Health Facility Licensing and Certification Bureau (HFLC) understand that most hospitals are already experiencing an influx of patients that exceeds their normal expectation. The purpose of this communication is to provide HFLC guidance to you on the clinical surge for this 2009-2010 flu season.

The health and safety of patients is a priority. The current licensing regulations apply. At the same time, it is obvious that in response to increases in outpatient, inpatient, and emergency clinical volumes, hospitals may need to make clinical use of space that is not currently designated for treatment of influenza patients.

With respect to the clinical surge, the following apply:

- Designate one employee as the coordinator of emergency planning with whom HFLC can communicate as necessary.
- If you anticipate having to reassign an area currently licensed and identified for one purpose (in the floor design submitted to HFLC) to another use, develop a brief written emergency plan to address this situation and then fax it to HFLC at 505-476-9053.
- Identify in your emergency plan the license number that belongs to each area that is referenced in the plan.
- **Notify HFLC immediately if you anticipate using an area that is outside any currently licensed space.** (After normal business hours and on weekends, contact the DOH epidemiologist on call at 505-827-0006.)
- Exercise extreme caution in shifting the use of a space currently designated for one acuity level of patients for use as a space for patients with a lower level of acuity.
- Ensure that the individual(s) who take responsibility for implementing the hospital's policies on control of infections & communicable diseases assume a principal role in emergency planning.

Emergency departments, as the point of entry for members of the public seeking immediate medical attention, are expected to receive the brunt of the clinical surge. As such, emergency departments may also be the receiving location for many patients who will face extended waiting times, and protracted waiting times invariably produce irritability and stress. To both inform patients and address their apprehension, hospitals may find it useful to provide patients with written material from the National H1N1 Information website (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>), a site which includes guidance for patients and their informal caregivers about seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 virus under the title of "CDC H1N1 Flu / H1N1 Flu and You."

"Assuring safety and quality of care in New Mexico's health facilities and community-based programs."

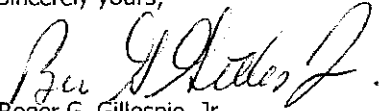
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The Health Facility Licensing and Certification Bureau recognizes the potential burden of hospitals in a circumstance such as this, and as regulatory agents we are ready and willing to assist you in treating your patients while at the same time remaining in regulatory compliance. The following HFLC staff members will serve as contacts:

- Roger Gillespie, Deputy Director, HFLC & Administrative Services Bureau (505-476-8804, Cell 505-795-4428)
- Rick Pangborn, HFLC Medical Care Program Manager (505-841-5812)
- Rita Rael Meek, HFLC Architect and Life Safety Code Program Manager (505-476-9041)

Sincerely yours,



Roger G. Gillespie, Jr.

Deputy Director for Health Facilities Licensing & Certification