Back to Work During COVID-19

Overview

The response to the novel virus, COVID-19, is a continuous learning process. This document consolidates some of the processes used by HopeHealth, a Federal Qualified Health Center, in hopes that sharing may assist other nonprofit organizations in developing their own response efforts.

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Preparing for Return

Plan your COVID-19 return-to-work guide:

- Identify your core COVID-19 response individuals or team. As a healthcare organization, the HopeHealth COVID-19 Strategy Team includes physicians, senior leadership, department heads from human resources, facilities, community relations and other key individuals.
- Review current policies and procedures relating to epidemics/pandemics. Some existing policies may fall under categories like emergency response, sick leave, employee safety, or inclement weather and can be adapted specifically for COVID-19.

HopeHealth developed a specific policy for COVID-19, for employees return to work based on Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. The HopeHealth policy mandates employees self-report any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath, etc) or potential exposure concerns to their supervisor prior to coming to work, states employee expectations, including how employees are cleared to return after potential exposure, and requires supervisor oversight so employees do not come into work sick.
Other policies to include:

- How to handle high risk activities such as travel, group gatherings, or caring for sick individuals. For example, HopeHealth has followed national guidelines by discontinuing travel and social events by canceling business trips, conferences, classes, etc., and requesting employees obtain approval prior to attending events or trips.
- Alternate arrangements for child care or sick leave and documentation to accommodate closures, vulnerable populations, and health needs. Some of these require longer sick leave as incubation periods of this virus leading to quarantine periods are 14 days.

Additionally, as this virus causes an increase in stress and anxiety, ensure individuals know where to seek behavioral health services and if available offer employee assistance programs. Individuals should establish primary care and be aware of what COVID-19 related diagnostic and treatment options may be available to them. Assist staff members who may have health conditions that make them susceptible to worse outcomes from COVID-19 exposure (chronic health conditions, immunocompromised, seniors) to freely address these concerns and needed accommodations with supervisors.

Be prepared with mitigation strategies for under staffing or remote work options. Some ways HopeHealth address these issues include:

- limiting the number of employees who interact by rotating teams
- cross-training employees
- building redundancy in job roles
- preparing alternative job duties that can be performed from home
- implementing technologies and access for performing remote job duties

**Communicate**

Communication is key for the organization to continue their mission. Throughout the COVID-19 response, HopeHealth leadership assists in guiding staff on expectations during this time. Reiteration of mission, vision, and values serves as the framework that staff use to continue to move the organization forward.

Collaborate with workers to designate effective means of communicating important COVID-19 information to both staff and stakeholders. For example, HopeHealth prepares a three times a week all staff message that updates everyone on our response efforts. The updates review a variety of topics from symptoms of COVID-19, travel policy, social distancing, ways to prevent spread (mask, cough hygiene, hand washing), behavioral health resources, COVID-19 case numbers and spread, enacting of emergency communication system, explanation of changes in policy and consumer interactions. Other forms of communication included virtual meetings, phone conferences, emails, written procedures, designated COVID-19 call phone for questions, and designing practice runs where staff had to act out certain situations for training. Messaging needs to be continually
adapted through monitoring of public health recommendations released by CDC to ensure all staff have access to that information. Frequently check the CDC COVID-19 website: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov.

Additional examples of our internal messaging can be found in the appendices.

Consumers

When operating an organization, the consumers like your staff and stakeholders, need to be aware of how you will plan to continue offering your services and keep them safe.

One of the first steps to take is limitation in exchange of materials and products including receipts, papers, credit cards, or other objects that may transfer the virus and still not impede your organizational functioning. Alternative ways could be:

- Remote services such as instead of having in-person meetings, exchange that interaction to be via phone or teleconference.
- Allow remote payment options to limiting exchanges of monetary items.
- Change paper satisfaction surveys to be available online.
- Add more information to your webpage such that less paper exchange required.
- Include more mailings of products or information

Messaging these safeguards and alternative working functions are necessary to fulfill consumer expectations. Messaging should also communicate hand washing, cough hygiene, and other public health advice to remind consumers to practice these while within your facilities. HopeHealth has included messaging to consumers of changes within visitor appointment reminders, within our call centers, signage, website, and with newspaper or other community releases.

Additional examples of our external messaging can be found in the appendices.

Social Distancing

Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing:

- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Wear masks at all possible times when interacting with others

Consideration for the nature of this virus is needed when implementing social distancing. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) for a prolonged period. Spread happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and
droplets from their mouth or nose are launched into the air and land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs. Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. COVID-19 can live for hours or days on a surface, depending on factors such as sunlight and humidity. Social distancing helps limit contact with infected people and contaminated surfaces.

There are several ways to implement social distancing in your office. Review your staff’s working space for reorganization and areas of consumer interaction to enhance distancing measures. Consider the following.

- Remove lobby / break room chairs and limiting capacity. One way to do this is by put signs in seats to ensure six feet distance between each person.
- Virtual meetings - Instead of congregating in one room, consider having phone or virtual meetings.
- Limitation in number of staff in rooms
- Visitor policies
- Elevator policy
- Chair separating/removal or use of signs
- Visual barriers for maintaining distance (glass, rope, floor markings, etc)
- Provide alternate access to services – call-in, drive up, curb-side

In addition to everyday steps to prevent COVID-19, keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus and slowing its spread locally and across the country and world. Social distancing is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Cleaning

Cleaning or disinfecting areas are extremely important in limiting the spread of the virus throughout the organization. Modifications for cleaning may need to occur to increase the frequency and target key areas like high touch or high traffic areas. High traffic areas should limit the amount of time a consumer or employee is present in that one location to minimize interactions and limit potential exposure when cleaning in those areas cannot be performed. Staff can assist with these more frequent cleanings by giving them tools and information in what to do such as wiping down break stations, work stations, devices, desk phones, keyboards, handles, and other high touch areas. Areas throughout the facility should be decluttered to allow improved cleaning. Cleaning products should be handled appropriately.
and an approved product. Further information on recommended use of EPA-registered household disinfectants can be found at [https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2).

For most employers, protecting workers in addition to cleaning is to prevent any contamination in the first place. This will depend on emphasizing basic infection prevention measures. As appropriate, all employers should implement good hygiene and infection control practices, including:

- Promote frequent and thorough hand washing, including by providing workers, customers, and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.
- Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
- Provide customers and the public with tissues and trash receptacles.
- Employers should explore whether they can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies.
- Discourage workers from using other workers’ phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment. When choosing cleaning chemicals, employers should consult information on Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved disinfectant labels with claims against emerging viral pathogens. Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against SARS-CoV-2 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use of all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, PPE).

**Supplies**

Addressing your organization’s supply chain and provision of a safe working environment is a key component in functioning during this pandemic. Many organizations have found it difficult to obtain the needed supplies to function with personal protective equipment being some of those products. Consider alternative supply chains or building in redundancy to your ordering process. Instead of working with your normal supplier, attempt to build new business relationships to offset limitation in supply. Unfortunately, with limitations in supplies there could be increases in prices therefore, investigate various funding options such as grants or donations. If your organization has multiple locations, a centralized approach to purchasing
with redistribution to locations based on need could streamline, encourage bulk purchasing, and offset various deficits in materials.

Not all organizations are providing healthcare but common personal protective equipment like gloves and masks are being utilized and therefore clear messaging and training and when and how to use this protection is needed to prevent cross-contamination and illness. While engineering and administrative controls are considered more effective in minimizing exposure to COVID-19, PPE may also be needed to prevent certain exposures. While correctly using PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other prevention strategies.

Examples of PPE include: gloves, goggles, face shields, face masks, and respiratory protection, when appropriate. During an outbreak of an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, recommendations for PPE specific to occupations or job tasks may depending on geographic location, updated risk assessments for workers, and information on PPE effectiveness in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Employers should check the OSHA and CDC websites regularly for updates about recommended PPE. Per this guidance, all types of PPE must be:
- Selected based upon the hazard to the worker.
- Consistently and properly worn when required.
- Regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced, as necessary.
- Properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of, as applicable, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.

Employers are obligated to provide their workers with PPE needed to keep them safe while performing their jobs. HopeHealth set up messaging and refresher courses for various PPE both in-person and virtual. The types of PPE required during a COVID-19 outbreak will be based on the risk of being infected with SARS-CoV-2 while working and job tasks that may lead to exposure.
Resources

Federal, state, and local government agencies are the best source of information in the event of an infectious disease outbreak, such as COVID-19. Staying informed about the latest developments and recommendations is critical, since specific guidance may change based upon evolving outbreak situations.

Below are several recommended websites to access the most current and accurate information:

■ Occupational Safety and Health Administration website: www.osha.gov
■ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov
■ National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health website: www.cdc.gov/niosh
■ The American Anxiety and Depression Association: https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources?gclid=EAIaIQobChMiHiuer56ia6QIVDY3IC17aOSYEAAYASAEgJzj_D_BwE

Drive through testing site at HopeHealth Manning campus
Appendix

Hope Insider Samples

Taking Care of You

Thank you to everyone helping HopeHealth to continue our mission to be committed to excellence through service that exemplifies love for people and passion for their well-being; for serving others, giving hope, and changing lives; and for doing so by embracing our values: innovation, accountability, integrity, excellence, and compassion.

Please remember to take care of you! Wear your masks, wash your hands, and work out your stress with daily workout routines on the HopeHealth Employee Wellness Facebook page. Remember, type "Done" in the comments after completing a session and it counts toward earning your $30 gym visit Wellness Bucks.

Lastly, don’t forget the many behavioral health resources that have been recommended. Our newest resource helps anxiety related to COVID-19 stress: Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook.

Masks

This week, HopeHealth made it mandatory for staff to wear masks if:

- You work within six-feet of another employee
- You work with patients or in patient areas
- You exhibit cough, shortness of breath, or fever

A Timeline of HopeHealth’s COVID-19 Response

Click to View
Hand Washing 101

As you take time to decompress and relax this weekend be sure to maintain precautions against COVID-19, especially hand-washing. Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water frequently for 20 seconds - the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice:

- Wet your hands and forearms
- Apply enough soap to generate a good lather
- Scrub hands and arms vigorously for at least 20 seconds - remember to include between your fingers and under your nails
- Rinse thoroughly
- Dry hands and arms with paper towel or air dryer

When you return next week, help us conserve our hand sanitizer supplies. Use soap and water instead of sanitizer whenever possible.

TeleVisits

Thank you to everyone for their efforts and patience as we roll out HopeHealth TeleVisit services and work toward web-enabling and enrolling our patients. The portal gives our patients access to their scheduled HopeHealth visits without having to leave home and physically come to our offices.

The IT department has trained providers and staff in using the TeleVisit system and will be sending out messaging to patients to enroll in segments to avoid flooding our phone systems. If a patient calls and asks you to web-enable their account or enroll them in telehealth/televisits, please enable their account and do your best to help them set up the Healow app on their smartphone. If they are trying to connect from a computer or are having difficulties with getting set up, transfer the call to ext. 1409.

A new page has been added to our website for Televisits and can be found under the Services menu. This page includes videos to help our patients prepare for their visit.
In an abundance of caution, we are **smiling** behind our masks today!
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, pick up the phone to speak to a member of your care team.

**Calling From Our Telehealth Phone:**

- Our phones are already linked for easy use, so dialing our facility phone number is not necessary
- Pressing any other keys such as *, #, or a special number to activate a call is also unnecessary
- Simply pick up the receiver and dial the extension number 1564
- This will connect you to a member of our healthcare team or a specific provider upon your request
- If you have any trouble or the phone is not working correctly, please feel free to knock loudly on the door and a member of our team will answer you as quickly as possible

Thank you again for choosing to be a part of our family and giving us the chance to provide your care today

Sincerely,

*HopeHealth Care Team*
For your safety, elevator is limited to two people.

Thank you!

hope-health.org
COVID-19 TESTING:
COVID-19 testing for HopeHealth patients only by appointment
Stop 1:
Keep windows closed, show ID through window
It is **very important** for you to answer all screening questions **honestly** and accurately. This will allow us to provide you the best care possible.

Please know **you will not be denied medical care** based on your answers to the screening questions. They are designed to identify if special testing and precautions are required during your care.

It is **very important** for you to answer all screening questions **honestly and accurately**. The **failure** to do so puts you, other patients, and our staff at risk, and **could lead to your dismissal** as a HopeHealth patient.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation!
To protect patients, guests, and staff you may only have one healthy visitor accompany you to your doctor’s appointment.

Thank you for your understanding!

Para proteger a los pacientes, los invitados y el personal, usted solo puede tener un visitante saludable que lo acompañe a la cita con su médico.

¡Gracias por su comprensión!

HOPE HEALTH
YOUR HEALTH BEGINS HERE
STOP
Please give front staff 6 feet of space

DETÉNGASE
Por favor dele 6 pies de espacio al personal de primera línea

If you have:
Si usted ha:

- Traveled outside of the United States
  + Viajado fuera de los Estados Unidos

OR
O

- Had close contact with someone who recently traveled outside of the United States and was sick
  + Tenido contacto cercano con alguien que ha viajado recientemente fuera de los Estados Unidos y estuvo enfermo/a

And now you have:
Y ahora usted tiene:

- Fever
  + Fiebre
- Cough
  + Tos
- Shortness of Breath
  + Problemas para respirar

Please tell our staff immediately.
Por favor dígale a nuestro personal de inmediato.