

Harris Health Staff and Medical Staff:

The following are provided to offer clarification on the submitted questions related to PPE, Supply Chain Inventory, Return to Work Considerations and Privacy Matters in response to COVID-19.

Can Harris Health leadership clarify use of goggles, face shields, surgical masks and N-95 Masks?

- Staff may continue to use goggles and face shields that they bring from home.
- Goggles and face shields must be cleaned and disinfected in between each patient use and must be discarded if damaged. Instructions for proper cleaning and disinfection of goggles and face shields can be found by viewing the [PPE video](#).

- Effective March 28, Harris Health workforce members entering one of Harris Health's patient care facilities are being provided a surgical mask once they have cleared screening. Harris Health is strongly encouraging workforce members to wear surgical masks while in its patient care facilities. This mirrors the practice of other TMC institutions.
- When caring for patients who are confirmed to be positive for COVID-19, N-95 Masks are required for staff participating in or performing aerosolizing procedures. Aerosol-generating procedures, in which respiratory secretions are likely to be poorly controlled, include: cardiopulmonary resuscitation, intubation, extubation, bronchoscopy, BIPAP, oropharyngeal suctioning, nebulizer therapy and sputum induction.
- Staff may not bring in N-95 masks from home or use unapproved substitutes for N-95 masks since, at present, Harris Health cannot confirm the effectiveness of these masks.

Is Harris Health stocked with sufficient PPE supplies?

- Harris Health has adequate inventory of PPE for all current infection prevention protocols in place, and has expanded the use of surgical/procedure masks throughout the patient care environment.
- Harris Health Supply Chain leadership continues to conduct daily inventories and engage in an internal daily check in phone call to confirm adequate supplies of PPE each day.
- Supply Chain leadership is also forecasting future PPE supply needs related to the COVID-19 Response in order to ensure adequate PPE supplies continue to be on hand going forward.
- Supply Chain leadership continues to seek new sources of additional PPE supplies. For example, face shields, which have been in shorter supply, may be sourced from nontraditional vendors and community partners.
- Supply Chain leadership is also working with Harris Health Mission Advancement and Community

Involvement leaders to accept donations of PPE as appropriate.

What procedure is Harris Health following for employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 regarding their being permitted to return to work?

- Harris Health is following the current CDC Return to Work Criteria for Health Care Workers with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19.

Health Care Workers with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 are excluded from work until:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and, At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared

After returning to work, these Health Care Workers should:

- Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer
- Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after illness onset
- Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles)
- Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen

Are privacy laws like HIPAA relaxed in a pandemic/emergency response?

- The Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which enforces HIPAA, has issued a [guidance document related to COVID-19](#) that provides important information about how patient information should be handled during this pandemic.
- Workforce members who need assistance, can directly contact Harris Health privacy staff in the Office of Corporate Compliance at PatientPrivacy@harrishealth.org or 713-566-6948, or continue to email the COVID_IC@harrishealth.org email address.

Thank you for caring for the residents of Harris County most in need.

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