

# Banner Health prepares for influx of patients amid COVID-19 pandemic

Preparedness efforts focus on a number of specific areas



PHOENIX (April 2, 2020) – Banner Health is working diligently and deliberately to make sure we are best prepared to handle an influx of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are monitoring capacity, resources and staffing in real-time, making adjustments to our emergency operations, when needed. Our preparedness efforts have focused on a number of specific areas, including, but not limited to:

## Increasing capacity

Currently our capacity is adequate, but we know there may be a need for additional clinical care space and beds as the number of COVID-19 cases rise. We are exploring a number of options to increase the bed capacity of our hospitals. This includes spaces within the hospitals that are not currently in use, such as closed units and conference rooms. We are also looking at other Banner-owned spaces like our ambulatory surgery centers and parking lots where we can stand up tented areas for patient care. In addition to these spaces, we are working with community leaders to identify locations that could be converted to care sites, such as hotels or churches. By increasing our overall bed capacity, it will allow us to convert some of our existing beds to ICU beds. We anticipate that there will be additional need for ICU beds as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.

## Ventilators

We are closely monitoring our ventilator utilization. At this time, the total number of ventilators that we have on hand is adequate. We expect to have a greater need for ventilators as cases of COVID-19 increase, and are working to secure those resources. In addition to ventilators, we have teams in place to also secure the necessary equipment and medications that are needed for vented patients, such as propofol, which is used to sedate patients who have been intubated.

## Staffing

Health care workers are the most valuable resource for our community during the COVID-19 outbreak. We are taking a number of actions to ensure we are appropriately staffed to meet the health care needs of the community. This includes redeployment of corporate team members to provide support at other facilities and hosting virtual hiring events to quickly fill roughly 900 open positions. We are upskilling clinicians who work in other specialties into critical care areas to supplement our current staff. We are also hiring retired health care workers who would like to come back into the workforce to support during the pandemic.

## Personal protective equipment

We are doing everything we can to protect our team members while they care for our communities. Personal protective equipment (PPE) for our health care workers continues to be at the top of our list to ensure their safety while providing care to our patients. While we continue to maximize our usual supply chain, we are also working on innovative ways to secure additional resources. We've partnered with several suppliers to ramp up the production of PPE, including 3D printing of plastic face shields. We partnered with local distillery OHSO to produce hundreds of gallons of hand sanitizer. We've manufactured thousands of [microbial resistant procedural masks](#) and [face shields](#), and we are also actively working to refurbish FEMA supplies that we have received. In addition, we are developing a reuse and sterilization process for N95 masks.

## Triage tents

Banner Health has activated [triage tents](#) at several of its acute care hospitals. These are not COVID-19 specimen collection sites, and they are not for the worried well or those with mild COVID-19 symptoms that can be managed at home. The triage tents will be used as an extension of hospital emergency rooms. At the triage tent sites, Banner staff will greet patients in their personal vehicles upon arrival and perform a preliminary COVID-19 assessment. Appropriate care will follow.

While Banner continues to focus internally on COVID-19 preparedness, we have also worked closely with local

and state health departments and federal agencies to ensure our communities are ready for a surge. The coordination with these departments and agencies allows us to balance patients and resources across numerous health systems to ensure that no system is overwhelmed while others continue to have capacity.

Additional Information: [COVID-19 Journalist Resource Page](#)

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<http://bannerhealth.mediaroom.com/covid-19influx>