



**LAC DPH Health Alert:**  
**Extreme Surge on Hospitals and 9-1-1**  
**System**



December 23, 2020

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*This message is intended for healthcare providers in Los Angeles County.  
Please distribute as appropriate.*

### **Key Message**

Our hospitals and the 9-1-1 system are experiencing an extreme surge of patients. This communication outlines steps that healthcare providers can take to help assist with this surge.

### **Situation**

Los Angeles County [data](#) shows a steep increase in new community cases of COVID-19. In the past two weeks, the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients has increased by 90%. There are very limited hospital and ICU beds available, and emergency departments are strained to capacity. Hospitals have implemented their surge plans and are adjusting staffing and space to try to meet the needs of their community. It is critical that as a healthcare community we look at all available opportunities to help decrease the surge on hospitals and our 9-1-1 system, where possible.

### **Action Steps Requested of Providers**

- Provide clear instructions to patients with conditions that might require urgent medical attention on when and how they should take action including when to go to the emergency department, when to go to urgent care, and when to call 9-1-1. See a best practice from L.A. CARE regarding when to use [Emergency Care and Urgent Care](#).
- Do not send patients to emergency departments unless absolutely medically necessary.
- If your urgent care is full, provide patients with resources to access another location or urgent care, if appropriate.
- Encourage patients to contact advice lines and/or their own healthcare provider prior to coming directly to the emergency department, if their condition allows.
- Proactively address advanced care preferences with patients with serious illnesses or who are medically frail. Make sure these patients have a Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment ([POLST](#)) form on file.
- Work with hospital discharge planners to facilitate timely hospital discharge follow-up to allow for safe hospital decompression.

Thank you for your support and for all you are doing to protect the health and well-being of your patients during these extraordinary times.

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**Visit the LAC DPH COVID-19 Provider [website](#) for up-to-date resources and guidance.**

This communication was sent by Sharon Balter, MD, Director, Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

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