

HASC COVID-19 Response

Updated 9/18/20



Since the outset of the pandemic, HASC has helped to lead a coordinated response for the region as multiple hospitals and organizations act together in response to the impact of COVID-19. We are in almost continual contact with local public health departments, county EMS agencies, local elected officials, Medicaid managed care plans and community stakeholders. In many cases, we are hosting weekly or bi-weekly calls with these groups in each county to identify new challenges and to develop mitigation strategies as we look ahead.

Hospital Financial Losses



Over the last five months, priorities have changed as we enter new stages of the pandemic. Early on, the governor asked that our hospitals swiftly ramp up physical capacity in their facilities by at least 40 percent. This sweeping statewide response taught California valuable lessons about COVID-19 spread and its disparate impact on different regions of California. Unfortunately, this also resulted in a devastating financial burden to our hospitals.

It's estimated that California hospitals will experience revenue shortfalls of \$14.6 billion by the end of the year. The federal government has provided \$5.6 billion in relief to California's hospitals, well short of the total losses, and representing only 4.8 percent of the total CARES Act funding. We have been successful in advocating for accelerated claims payments from managed care plans to hospitals and alternative funding through capitation payments to assist hospitals with their cashflow needs.

HASC is actively advocating for Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to support hospitals for their COVID-19 related expenses. We are requesting that counties consider making immediate strategic investments towards supporting our community hospitals.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



To assist in the efforts to identify available PPE, HASC has worked with CHA, state and county EMS, and city contacts, to identify commercial vendors and donors of PPE and medical items for sites where supplies are low throughout the HASC region.

We also partnered with Logistics Victory Los Angeles (LoVLA), an initiative of the City of Los Angeles and the Port of Los Angeles, to increase the supply chain and match available medical supplies with health care providers at cost – not just in the City of Los Angeles, but throughout the HASC region. We're also in the early stages of exploring the development of a Southern California regional PPE co-op to manufacture and distribute PPE locally.

Staffing and Child Care



To support staffing efforts of hospitals, HASC created the Priority Workforce Job Portal which has been deployed to serve as a central directory where member hospitals and local SNFs can post and fill high-demand positions.

To address the emergency child care needs of hospitals and their essential workers during this pandemic, HASC continues to actively work at both the county and state level with CHA to identify and communicate information on child care resources and financial subsidy opportunities to member hospitals. As an added resource, HASC has assembled a webpage that identifies contacts in each county.

Public Health Officer Orders and Elected Officials



In other counties in the HASC region, we have encountered proposed Public Health Officer Orders and Health Care resolutions that would have placed significant and unsustainable burdens on our member hospitals. These proposals would have required hospitals to increase testing capacity during a nationwide shortage, allocate more PPE to staff as requested and would have placed additional burdens on staffing. As a result of our advocacy efforts, we've been able to either have these proposals

amended or rejected. HASC leadership and our regional vice presidents remain in frequent contact with local elected officials and public health departments to identify emerging issues early, enabling us to develop advocacy strategies to address them before they are enacted.

Frontline Fatigue and Wellness



During this health crisis, health care workers continue to provide care, despite ever-challenging work demands, including higher influx of critically ill patients, increased work stress and personal demands placed on them as a result of the pandemic. Health care workers experiencing fatigue can jeopardize the health and safety of themselves, staff and others. In recognition of this, HASC is compiling a

comprehensive offering of resources to help hospitals and employees navigate wellness options. Our team aims to have an online resource portal available by September to address impacts this could have on the health care workforce.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder (MSUD) Exacerbation

With the opening months of the COVID-19 pandemic past, health care organizations are rescheduling



elective procedures and urging patients to seek care whenever they need it.

At the same time, concern exists about an emerging wave of non-COVID-19 patients seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders.

Recent surveys by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have found elevated levels of adverse mental health conditions, substance use, and suicidal ideation reported by U.S. adults as of June 2020. Of their findings:

- Approximately three times as many people have experienced anxiety disorders in the second quarter of 2019 (25.5 percent versus 8.1 percent).
- Suicidal ideation was also elevated; approximately twice as many respondents reported serious consideration of suicide in the previous 30 days than did U.S. adults in 2018.

Communications



Communications has played a critical role in supporting our members. When our hospitals resumed deferred procedures and services, HASC in collaboration with CHA and the Regional Associations developed public-facing messaging and a communications toolkit to assist member hospitals and health systems, including their communication teams, in responding to patients' concerns about seeking care in emergency departments or other appropriate care settings. Resources released this month include a co-branded Care Can't Wait public service announcement that is being released to California television stations and an Our Health California educational video that addresses the same issues.

As communities are seeing larger gatherings, paired with the relaxation of safety guidelines, we understand that there is a need to underscore the continuance of necessary precautions and to emphasize the fact that the pandemic is not over. As such, HASC developed a communications toolkit resource designed to provide messaging and assets to share with the public regarding the continuance of following safety guidelines.

Hospital capacity and resources may be further stretched with the onset of the influenza season paired with apprehension on behalf of the public to seek care. HASC is currently collaborating with CHA on the development of a flu resource website, messaging and a communications toolkit to provide to our member hospitals to encourage vaccinations through their communications channels and owned platforms.



Influenza Season and COVID-19

As we approach the flu season, we can anticipate outbreaks of COVID-19 and influenza simultaneously competing for health care resources this fall, winter and

possibly beyond. This likely scenario raises the stakes of the annual struggle to increase flu vaccinations. HASC is currently convening health plan partners to discuss potential strategies for addressing these two contagious viruses circulating concurrently and looking to develop plans to pair testing sites with vaccination sites and other ways to encourage the public to get vaccinated.

Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and Energy Conservation



HASC is engaged in ongoing communication with Southern California Edison (SCE) to promote improved communications and clarify processes and protocols in advance of a Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) event. PSPS is an operational practice that SCE may use to preemptively shut off power in high fire risk areas to reduce fire risk during extreme and potentially dangerous weather conditions. Unfortunately, PSPS events must continue even during this unprecedented pandemic. We want to ensure that our hospitals are informed of these events as early as possible and are able to avoid interruption to the services they provide.

As we experience a record-breaking heat wave, HASC has also been in communication with SCE to discuss ways in which our member hospitals may be able to contribute to the reduction of energy being used during peak periods to minimize the need for controlled outages.