



September 22, 2021

State of Alaska Actions to Address Hospital Capacity

U.S. General Services Administration

GOAL: FEMA worked with the federal General Services Administration (GSA) to set up regional contracts for states to access contract health care workers. Alaska is in Region 10 which includes Washington, Oregon and Idaho. This contract will bring contracted health care workers to Alaska to provide relief to our strained health care workforce.

- Alaska was the **second state** to use the GSA contract for health care workers.
- Contractor: DLH Solutions.
- The contractor will deploy a team to Anchorage for on-site management to coordinate the onboarding of contractors with the hospitals and skilled nursing facilities.
- Contracted health care workers will go through Alaska emergency licensing and background check processes.
- Contracted health care workers will be a phased rollout to all the requesting facilities starting the week of September 27.
- DLH Solutions contract is for 90 days with three 30-day renewals.
- Total cost for 90 days is \$87 million, 100% of which is FEMA reimbursable.
- Ask:
 - 297 registered nurses (variety of **preferred** specialties)
 - 2 licensed practical nurses
 - 114 certified nursing assistants/patient care technicians
 - 17 surgical technicians (scrub techs)
 - 15 respiratory therapists
 - 11 social workers/case managers
 - 2 radiology technicians
 - 14 medical laboratory personnel
 - 1 physician

Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) Program

GOAL: Addressing the shortage of certified nurse assistant staff in health care facilities.

- The Alaska Board of Nursing passed emergency regulations to address the critical shortfall of certified nurse assistants (CNAs) by offering flexibility to a CNA training program. The regulation change aligns Alaska CNA training requirements with the federal requirements for 120 days, reducing the number of training hours from 140 to 75. A waiver from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services allows facilities to employ temporary nurse aides for up to 120 days during the federal COVID-19 emergency. These two changes create an opportunity for facilities to hire CNAs and provide most of their training on-the-job while the trainees provide care to residents.
 - Working with the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) on a contract for CNA program.
 - Four elements of the contract:
 - Expand nurse aide training
 - A CNA Communication and Marketing Campaign to recruit new workforce
 - A CNA incentive payment program for recruitment and retention
- Funding for the CNA incentives will be from the previously authorized American Rescue Plan Act through the state Department of Health and Social Services

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

GOAL: Load leveling and decompressing local hospitals through practices related to mobile Integrated Health (MIH) by local EMS agencies and health care partners.

- Mobile Integrated Health is used across the U.S. and has been effective at lowering health care costs, as well as decreasing overcrowding in hospital emergency rooms by providing alternative choices to patients for treatment location. Some treatments can be provided on the scene or in the home and could be consultation via telemedicine with a health care provider and transported to the appropriate treatment site.
- Affects five communities: Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Juneau, Kenai and Anchorage.
- Each community is at a different stage of planning:
 - Juneau is ready to start ramping up their MIH program this week using telemedicine with a physician at Bartlett Regional Hospital.
 - The other four communities are still developing their MIH plans.
- Funding will be from the previously authorized American Rescue Plan Act through the state Department of Health and Social Services.

Background Check Unit

GOAL: Remove administrative burden and/or delay of the Medicaid background check for staff being hired at ASHNHA hospitals and nursing homes.

- DHSS commissioner waived background checks for ASHNHA member facilities in these categories:
 - Health care providers licensed and/or certified under Title 8 of Alaska Statute.
 - Non-Title 8-licensed individuals, i.e. environmental services, cooks, etc.
- Individuals with existing or current Alaska background checks that are transferring between facilities or providers are waived from applying for a new background check.

At Home Testing Kits

GOAL: Provide more testing resources to Alaskans for COVID-19 to support schools and families.

DHSS ordered \$2 million rapid at-home testing kits.

- **Who:** For students, staff and families who might have symptoms or might have been exposed. At-home testing will enable fast and ready access to testing allowing them to make decisions about whether they should stay home from school or sporting events, etc.
- **Why:** To help people make decisions about going to school or work quickly without waiting for a test result or having to leave home to get tested.
- **What people should know:**
 - The test is for self-use; each pack comes with two cards. People test themselves twice within three days, with 36-48 hours between the two tests. If either one of the test results are positive, people should consider themselves positive. A subsequent negative card does not overrule a positive.
 - The test will be simple, even for people who have never tested themselves. All needed materials (including a nasal swab and easy-to-follow instructions) will be included in the box.
 - Included is an app/portal for reporting.