



Considerations for Managing Medical Surge

All healthcare facilities should have preplanned strategies for managing the medical surge capacity that may result during the COVID-19 response. Medical Surge is defined as the ability to provide adequate medical evaluation and care during events that exceed the limits of the normal medical infrastructure of an affected community.

As part of preplanning for Medical Surge, healthcare facilities should look to define their Medical Surge Capacity and their Medical Surge Capability:

Medical Surge Capacity: The ability to evaluate and care for a markedly increased volume of patients – one that challenges or exceeds normal operating capacity. Considerations for addressing medical surge capacity should focus on systems and processes:

1. Identify the medical need
2. Identify the resources to address the need in a timely manner
3. Move the resources expeditiously to locations of patient need (as applicable)
4. Manage and support the resources to their absolute maximum capacity

Medical Surge Capability: The ability to manage patients requiring unusual or specialized medical evaluation and care to included specialized care situations where additional expertise, information, procedures, equipment or personnel will be needed.¹

Medical Surge Preparedness Steps²:

- Review your hospital emergency operations plan for information on immediate bed availability and patient surge strategies
- Review thresholds and triggers for activating your emergency operation plan and your surge management strategies
- Begin preplanning for use of alternate care strategies (telemedicine services, capacity of nurse triage lines, increased hours for outpatient clinics, alternate care sites etc.)
- Review inpatient surge activities (early discharge planning, opening already certified beds or units, and the use of remote locations)
- Review outpatient surge activities (use of tents or mobile facilities located on/within the hospitals' campus)
- Coordinate your plans with partner agencies (local emergency management, local emergency medical service agencies, local public health agencies, public safety answering points, other nearby hospital systems, outpatient clinics not part of the healthcare system, regional healthcare coalitions)
- Communicate with partners agencies and regulatory authorities when thresholds and triggers within your emergency operations plan have been met and alternate care strategies are being considered

¹ "What is Medical Surge?" 14 February 2012. Public Health Emergency.
<<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/mscc/handbook/chapter1/Pages/whatismedicalsurge.aspx>>.

² "Considerations for the Use of Temporary Surge Sites for Managing Seasonal Patient Surge" February 2018. ASPR TRACIE < <https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/technical-resources/resource/5312/considerations-for-the-use-of-temporary-care-surge-sites-for-managing-seasonal-patient-surge>>



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Alternate Care Site Considerations:

Hospitals that are considering the use of alternate care sites as part of their medical surge strategies should begin preplanning now and be prepared to provide specific details on their planning efforts when requesting use of alternate care sites. The following considerations should be part of the preplanning phase:

- Determine appropriate location for alternate care site based on regulatory requirements (availability of 1135 waiver, availability of NC GS 131E 84 waiver)
- Determine how to handle traffic control issues related to the alternate care site to ensure Emergency vehicular access to the ED for patient drop off and emergency response vehicle access (e.g. police, fire, EMS) can be maintained
- Determine what types of patients will be served in the alternate care site
- Determine how to staff and support the patients in the alternate care site
- Determine how to provide adequate equipment and supplies for the alternate care site (beds, patient monitors, oxygen, crash cart, restrooms, handwashing stations with hot water at 105-120 degrees etc.)
- Determine how to manage clean supplies and soiled supplies within the alternate care site
- Determine how to support necessary services for the alternate care site (generators, electrical access, lighting equipment etc.)
- Determine heating/cooling and ventilation system can be continuous (ventilation system should consider how to ensure the air is ventilated outside and minimum number of air exchanges (12 air changes per hour) can be met
- Determine a security site plan that specifically addresses staff and patient safety and physical protection for the alternate care site
- Determine a safety site plan (to include evacuation plan in case of emergency and how to maintain constant communications with the staff working in the alternate care site)
- Determine what hours of the day you will utilize the alternate care site
- Determine local code authority for fire and building codes are consulted during planning efforts