

## INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF CALIFORNIA STATE HOSPITAL PATIENTS REGARDING COVID-19

The California Department of State Hospitals (DSH) has been and continues to actively plan and prepare for COVID-19 across our system, following guidance from the California Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other state and local partners. Hospitals are continuing to provide round-the-clock care for your loved ones, and keeping your loved ones safe and healthy is of the utmost importance. DSH is actively monitoring the rapidly changing situation so we can respond appropriately. Here are some of the actions the department has taken:

- ❖ In mid-March, DSH-Sacramento activated the department's Emergency Operation Center, and hospitals have activated their incident command centers and developed incident action plans to better communicate and coordinate our department's response efforts.
- ❖ Hospitals have updated their plans for infection control, respiratory protection, and pandemic response. Both staff and patients are continually educated about proper handwashing, and personal protective equipment is used where appropriate.
- ❖ Normal hospital visiting has been prohibited until further notice, except for court-ordered evaluations, other legal matters, or end-of-life care. In the event of other special situations in which visitation may be considered, approval of the hospital's medical director would be required. All approved visitors are subject to a health screening. While visiting centers have been temporarily closed in alignment with the Governor's stay at home order, patients can still receive phone calls and mail from loved ones. Social connection is vital for our patients, especially during such stressful times. We encourage you to continue communicating with your loved ones whenever possible, and invite you to share messages of responsible, safe practices as well as positivity and hope.
- ❖ All hospital employees are being screened for symptoms of COVID-19 as they arrive for work. Employees who do not pass the screening are sent home.
- ❖ Patients are being screened for symptoms prior to being admitted to our hospitals.
- ❖ Admissions of certain categories of patients have been temporarily suspended. A list of those categories can be found on the DSH website under Treatment (<https://www.dsh.ca.gov/Treatment/index.html>).
- ❖ Patients are tested for COVID-19 when clinically indicated, and to date no patients have tested positive. Spaces have been identified and prepared for isolating and treating patients who test positive for COVID-19.
- ❖ To align with safe physical distancing recommendations, group treatments and activities are currently suspended or modified; however, individual care and alternate activities with appropriate physical distancing are being coordinated until groups can safely be resumed. Particular attention will be paid to topics such as anxiety and stress reduction, and proper self-care.

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- ❖ Telework is available for positions that are eligible, to the extent that the department can still fulfill its critical essential services to the public. Providing appropriate care to your loved ones remains our priority, and we are actively seeking innovative ways to continue treatment in ways that keep everyone safe.
- ❖ Patients and employees have received, and continue to receive, information about how to protect themselves from COVID-19, including activities involving personal hygiene and physical distancing.
- ❖ DSH programs including the statewide Conditional Release Program, the Los Angeles Community Based Restoration Program, and Jail-Based Competency Programs have implemented modified programming to ensure continued delivery of effective treatment while adhering to physical distancing guidelines.
- ❖ Members of the DSH Executive Team serve as members of regional and national workgroups and associations with members from other state hospitals across the country. They are monitoring trends and best practices of our state hospitals and other healthcare systems who are planning, preparing and responding to COVID-19.
- ❖ Our Conditional Release Program (CONREP) has temporarily suspended the majority of its admissions and discharges in accordance with recent directives issued by the DSH Director in an effort to reduce the introduction or further transmission of COVID-19 into the DSH system of care, and to preserve the health and safety of our current patient population. At this time, the Director has not suspended admissions of Offenders with Mental Health Disorders (OMDs). CONREP can continue to admit this commitment type. However, placement into the community is proving a significant challenge as many of the housing providers typically used for CONREP clients (board and care or room and board residences) are also limiting acceptance of new clients during the Governor's shelter-in-place order. Without appropriate housing, CONREP providers will be delayed in transitioning patients from the state hospitals to their programs.
- ❖ CONREP evaluations of patients within our state hospitals continue through document review, and other telephonic or videoconferencing capabilities.
- ❖ These actions and others by DSH are part of an ongoing process that will be continuously improved and strengthened by guidance from the California Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other state and local partners.