Guidance for Primary Care Practices, Providers and Staff
COVID-19

What is COVID-19?
Basic Facts

- **Coronaviruses** are a family of viruses that cause disease in animals and humans, including the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

- COVID-19 is a new or novel coronavirus, also called SARS-CoV-2
What is COVID-19?

Transmission and Symptoms

- Spreads person-to-person, primarily through respiratory droplets (cough, sneeze)
- Can be picked up from surfaces
- Incubation period: 2 – 14 days, 5 days on average
- Symptoms:
  - Fever, cough, shortness of breath
  - Pneumonia and respiratory failure in severe cases
Locations with Confirmed COVID-19 Cases
Global Map

As of 12:00 p.m. ET March 11, 2020

Global case numbers are reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) in their coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation report. For U.S. information, visit CDC’s COVID-19 in the U.S.
Epidemiology of COVID-19

- COVID-19 was first identified in Asia, but is now circulating globally
- First cases in Maryland identified 3/5/2020
- No ethnic or racial group is at greater risk than others of developing COVID-19
- All age groups can be affected, though older people and those with compromised immune systems appear to be at risk of more serious disease
Overview of COVID-19 in Maryland

- As of 3-11-20, there were 9 cases, including community transmission
- Governor Hogan established an expert “Coronavirus Response Team”
- Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) daily coordinating calls
- Maryland Department of Health (MDH) daily coordinating calls
- Measures are being developed to mitigate community transmission
- Testing being expanded
Primary Care Roles

- Patient Care > prevention and treatment
- Staff, Patient and Provider Safety
- Communications Overall
- Outreach to High-Risk Patients
- Testing
- Staying Up-to-Date
CDC Guidelines for Evaluation

- Clinicians should use their judgment and CDC guidelines to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested.
- Decisions on which patients receive testing should be based on the local epidemiology of COVID-19, as well as the clinical course of illness.
- Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g. cough, difficulty breathing).
- Clinicians are strongly encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness, including infections such as influenza.
Prevention and Treatment

- No prescription medication treatment
- Support telephonically and with telemedicine
- Usual OTC support
- Seriously ill with pneumonia need hospitalization
- No vaccine yet - perhaps available by 2021 earliest
- Encourage influenza vaccination to prevent flu
Provider, Staff and Patient Safety

- Preparing the office
  - Designated room
  - Masks for patients with cough
  - Triage out of waiting areas

- Rooming the patient
  - Closed door, well-ventilated
  - Possible outdoor screening
  - Minimal contact

- Cleaning and hygiene

- Remote care and monitoring preferred for high-risk patients as appropriate
Identifying High-Risk Patients

- Use data from CRISP and EMR
- Chronically ill, frail, elderly, DM, COPD, ESRD, immunocompromised, etc.
- Use clinical intuition
- Use Pre-AH tool
  - Avoid unnecessary ED, Urgent Care and Hospital visits
    - Contagion
    - Overcrowding
- Care Team interventions
Communications

- To all patients
  - Call ahead
- To high-risk patients
- Templates and consistent messaging
  - State-provided
  - Independent
- Telephonic and telemedicine - approved
  - Medicare
  - Medicaid
  - Commercial – CareFirst Medical Policy 02.01.072A
Testing

- Selection of testing candidates - use CDC guidelines
- On-site Primary Care requirements for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) updated
- Collecting test samples – use CDC guidelines
- Commercial labs test, but do not collect samples
  - LabCorp
  - Quest Diagnostics
- State Lab tests - only by direction from local health departments
Staying Current - Sources

- CDC
- MDH website
- Local Health Departments
- CONNECT
- Clinician Letters
Guidance for Communities
Social Distancing at Home

- Keep at least 3 feet from others generally, 6 feet from people who are sick
- Avoid touching face and mouth
- Limit face-to-face contact
- If you have a family member who is sick, stay home as well if told to do so by public health official or health care provider (Voluntary Home Quarantine)
If You Are Sick

- Stay home except for medical care
- Separate yourself from other people and animals
- Call ahead before seeing the doctor
- Wear a face mask *if you are sick*
- Always cover your cough and sneezes
- Don’t share household items
- Clean your hands, “high-touch” surfaces often
- Monitor your temperature and symptoms

*Face masks are NOT recommended for people who are well or without symptoms*
Guidance for Non-Health Care Businesses
COVID-19 and Businesses

Prevention Strategies at Work

- Routine environmental cleaning, especially “high-touch” surfaces
- Communicate openly with employees about COVID-19 – avoid stigma towards staff, customers
- For employees who are traveling:
  - Check [CDC Traveler’s Health Notices](https://www.cdc.gov/travel) for guidance related to travel
  - Advise employees to take their temperature, not travel if they are feeling sick
  - Employees on travel should notify employers and refrain from travel while feeling sick
COVID-19 and Businesses

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Employees who are not sick do not need to wear masks or respirators – CDC does not recommend these (except in health care settings)
- Other PPE should be based on risks for infectious disease generally (gloves for food handlers, etc.), not specifically for COVID-19
- Employees who are sick should not be at work, whether with a face mask or not – in exceptional circumstances, employees who are symptomatic should wear a face mask to reduce droplet transmission
COVID-19 Community and Business Response

Social Distancing at Work

- Limit close face-to-face work generally
- Consider alternatives to in-person large meetings
  - Encourage conference calls, telework wherever possible, especially when recommended by public health officials
Strategies for Employers

- Encourage sick employees to stay home:
  - Promote policies that encourage employees to stay home when they or family members are sick
  - Employees who are sick should not return to work unless fever- and symptom-free for at least 24 hours (consult with health care provider or public health officials for additional guidance)
  - Do not require a note from a health care provider for employees who are out sick – health care providers are likely to be very busy, and people with mild symptoms may have been told to avoid medical offices to limit spread
  - Encourage companies that provide contractual employees to adopt these policies
Continuity of Operations Plans and COVID-19

- Review HR policies and practices to ensure consistency with laws, health department guidance.
- Adopt policies where possible to promote social distancing, flexible work practices, including telecommuting.
- Clearly identify triggers for activating COOP.
- Ensure communications in place to rapidly notify personnel of changes in situation.
- Be aware of other events that may affect operations/staffing (e.g., child care, school closures).
- Monitor travel status of employees.
Guidance for Schools
School Response to COVID-19

Before COVID-19 Cases Occur

- Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans
- Clarify staff and student policies regarding staying home when sick and spreading germs at work
- Review handwashing and cleaning policies and practices with staff, students
- Monitor absenteeism
- Establish procedures to isolate staff or students who become sick at school, and make sure parents understand policies and procedures for picking up a sick child
- Maintain regular cleaning procedures
- Ensure communications plans are updated for staff and parents
When COVID-19 Cases Occur in Schools

- Coordinate with public health agencies in considering or implementing dismissal policy, including communications.
- If dismissals or closures are implemented, additional considerations to discuss:
  - Postponement or cancellation of extracurricular activities or events
  - Communicating advice about social distancing outside of school
  - Continuity of education
  - Continuity of meal programs
  - Continuity of services for children with special needs
COVID-19

State Agency Responses
Pandemic Flu Attendance and Leave

- New policy as of 2/27/2020
- Secretary of Department of Budget and Management, in consultation with Secretary of Health, determines appropriate response level:
  - **Level 1** – Normal Operations (low to moderate severity)
    - Employees report as normal
  - **Level 2** – Flexible Operations (moderate to high severity)
    - Goal is to minimize spread while maintaining operations – agencies promote distancing
  - **Level 3** – Emergency Operations (high severity)
    - Mission-critical operations maintained – employees may be reassigned to meet critical needs. All non-emergency personnel will be placed on administrative leave.
COVID-19 Response

Strategies for Everyone
COVID-19 Response

Strategies for Everyone – I

❖ Avoid images, policies, or guidance that encourages stereotypes or stigma against any group

❖ Communication, planning and preparation, and general prevention (good hand hygiene, avoiding spread of virus through cough and sneeze, cleaning of “high-touch” surfaces, and social distancing) are the most effective strategies at this point
COVID-19 Response
Strategies for Everyone – II

- During an outbreak in your community, CDC recommends the everyday preventive measures listed previously — especially staying home when sick — and these additional measures:
  - Keep away from others who are sick.
  - Limit face-to-face contact with others as much as possible.
  - Consult with your healthcare provider if you or your household members are at high risk for COVID-19 complications.
  - Wear a face mask if advised to do so by your healthcare provider or by a public health official.
  - Stay home when a household member is sick with respiratory disease symptoms, if instructed to do so by public health officials or a health care provider (Voluntary Home Quarantine).
COVID-19 Response

Environmental Cleaning

- Cleaning should emphasize “high-touch” areas
- EPA list of disinfectants registered for use against COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) available at: https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2
COVID-19 Response

Resources and References

❖ Maryland Department of Health Coronavirus Website (https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Novel-coronavirus.aspx)


❖ CDC Travel Website (https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/)
Resources for Specific Groups

- Community- and Faith-Based Organizations

- Mass Gatherings and Large Community Events

- Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions for Specific Groups