



Oneida Health
exceptional care... always

March 20, 2020

Dear Fellow Employee,

We are continuing, throughout the organization to prepare for the potential of COVID-19 cases. This includes staying abreast of all guidelines and ensuring we implement them successfully.

Please note the following updates:

1. As with many unknown situations, rumors spread and result in unnecessary fear and stress in our lives. I would like to clarify that we do not have any COVID-19 patients in our hospital nor any in our ECF at this time. As a matter of fact, any patient we screened in our inpatient settings have come back negative. As of this morning, there are 0 cases of COVID-19 in Madison County. We have screened approximately 45 people in our network to date, with 0 positives. Of course, if that changes, the Madison County Health Department will acknowledge that to the community.
2. I discussed in previous updates that we will be seeking individuals from the community to assist us if needed. A number of you asked if this will be a paid position. The plan at this time is to seek volunteers. Our hope is there are a number of people in our service area who will step forward to help if a crisis occurs. We would be sure to isolate these volunteers from the COVID-19 population and use them more for support services. At this time, we do not need volunteers, so the plan is to gather names and begin the screening process to determine if they would be a good fit for what our needs will be.
3. Test Turn Around Time of 4-10 days remains problematic. As you may have read, this is being worked on and a rapid testing process with a very timely TAT is in the works. I anticipate we will see that sometime soon. To enhance the communication of test results for individuals tested through our networks, we have implemented a nurse call back process. We cannot depend on local health departments to accomplish this as they are not currently able to keep up with the volume of work they need to accomplish. We will ensure ongoing communication with the local health department.
4. I am pleased to report that our use of telehealth systems has worked well and we plan on expanding it. Currently 5 providers are up and running with 4 others in the pipeline. With this program, we will be able to easily conduct virtual visits in our primary care and quick care services. We are looking to expand to specialty care where this type of visit makes sense.
5. The Federal and State Governments have recently passed legislation providing benefits and protections during this pandemic. We are carefully reviewing these with our legal counsel to ensure that we follow the intent of these acts and ensure we accurately communicate the impact on our staff. We plan on providing more information on this early next week.

6. Surge plans continue to be developed so that we are in a position to implement when appropriate. We continue to develop a centralized testing approach and are only waiting on the receipt of swabs and vials to implement.
7. We are continuing to perform elective surgical procedures as well as ambulatory medical procedures. The volume continues to decrease each day as patients are putting off surgery for the time being. We will continue to be available for urgent and emergent care in all of our settings for as long as we are able to provide these services. If we determine that lack of supplies, staff or regulations will restrict cases performed here, we will then make the decision to stop performing elective surgery. Of course, our Obstetrical service will continue to be available to our patients.
8. Infection Control precautions are key to our success in this pandemic. You should have received an email from Kelly Woodcock, RN outlining "Routine Infection Control Practices." Also included is a short Youtube video on how to appropriately place on (don) and remove (doff) masks. You are required to watch the video and follow the process as by doing so, you will protect yourself from transmission of an infection. You will also protect your co-workers and patients. If you do not have access to this, please ask your manager for assistance. Again, very important!
9. Please respect the privacy of those individuals who are quarantined or being tested for COVID-19. HIPAA applies and failure to respect privacy will be responded to.
10. Visitor restrictions remain in place. This includes vendors. Please help us with this. There have been several instances of individuals finding a way in to our ECF/ACF. Ask the person what they are here for and escort them to the appropriate location. Vendors should wear an approved vendor sticker if they have been approved to enter our facilities.

I will close by thanking you for your continued cooperation and support of our efforts to work through this pandemic. As a reminder, questions and concerns can be sent to Andrea Narrow at anarrow@oneidahealth.org. Continued good health to all of you.

Sincerely,



Gene F. Morreale
President and CEO