

December 1, 2020



Hi Team –

I hope everyone had a relaxing Thanksgiving weekend with many opportunities to safely “connect” and enjoy the holiday traditions of great food, family, and football, both at home and through our new normal of virtual gatherings.

This third wave of COVID infections is accelerating the pace of change, both inside and outside of TriHealth. So, there is much to update you on as we prepare for, and respond to, what is likely to be a continued rise in COVID cases and hospitalizations, here at TriHealth and across the region. As you know though, we’ve been preparing for this moment for months, and we are as ready as any health system can be!! By proactively preparing on all fronts for all possible scenarios, we are ready and able to do everything we can – *no matter what circumstance we face* – to safely care for every patient in need, while working to flatten the curve and moderate the severity of this third wave. The following is an update on where we are today:

Supporting our people with transparent, real-time communications

throughout this rapidly changing surge. To ensure we continue to adapt and respond as ONE Strong and Aligned TriHealth Team – and to best support our leaders, doctors, nurses, and all essential team members during this growing and most severe third wave – we are, once again, stepping up the frequency of our Leadership Meetings and Team Member Town Halls to ***every other week beginning today (12/1)***. Team Member Town Halls will be livestreamed on [Bridge](#) and [Facebook](#) every other Tuesday at 12noon. Please make every effort to participate in order to stay fully informed about our latest COVID surge plans and team member support resources. And, while we remain in this latest COVID surge, I will be sending this Weekly Update directly to all team members and physicians, instead of distributing through our traditional leadership cascade, to ensure everyone receives the latest information as quickly and consistently as possible.

- **Increasing COVID cases may soon require activation of the third phase of our surge plan.** Prior to this current wave of COVID infections, our all-time highest number of COVID inpatient cases at TriHealth was about 60 last summer, and as low as 25 at the end of September. While cases are now increasing at a far higher rate, our phased surge plan outlined here is ensuring we remain prepared and one step ahead of whatever comes next:
 - **Phase 1** – we have increased surge bed capacity by 97 beds by staffing all existing beds through new hiring, use of incentive pay, and adding Concierge and Support Services.
 - **Phase 2** – we have already increased surge bed capacity by an additional 56 beds for a total of 153 new beds by operationalizing previously decommissioned units and beds, and staffing such new beds through new hires, selective use of team-based nursing, and assistance from redeployed non-bedside nurses and non-clinical team members through our Helping Hands Program (described below).
 - **Phase 3** – we have plans to increase on an as needed basis surge bed capacity by an additional 174 beds for a system-wide total of 327 new beds. We will do this by converting the appropriately sized private rooms at

COVID-19 Weekly Update

- **155** COVID-positive patients in TriHealth hospitals with **9** on ventilators in the ICU.
- **20.0%** COVID positivity rate overall, with a **24.6%** positivity rate for symptomatic patients tested at TriHealth over past two weeks. **Target positivity rate is under 5%!**
- Please stay **VIGILANT** about practicing COVID Always Behaviors...
 - Wear masks
 - Social distance
 - Stay home when sick
 - Hand Hygiene
 - Gatherings of 10 or less

Good Sam and Bethesda North to semi-private, and staffing them through more widespread use of team-based nursing models, with significant support from redeployed nurses now in non-bedside roles, along with other non-clinical team members through our Helping Hands Program. We are also working with surgery leadership to move as many inpatient surgical cases – which occupy inpatient beds – from our acute care hospitals to our Surgical Hospital, TriHealth Good Samaritan Hospital at Evendale, where we do not care for COVID patients.

Today, we have 155 COVID inpatients up from 25 just eight weeks ago, which means we are now transitioning from Phase 2 to Phase 3 of our surge plan, allowing our system to safely care for more than 327 COVID inpatients, just over double our current COVID inpatient census.

- **“Helping Hands Program” launched to recruit “all hands on-deck” in support of growing COVID patient care needs.** To prepare to care for potentially twice the number or more of COVID patients in the coming weeks and months, it’s critical that we significantly increase our pool of paid clinical and non-clinical “volunteers.” To recruit and fully train the essential staff needed to serve in our expanding COVID inpatient and ICU settings, we launched our “Helping Hands Program” in November. To date, nearly 300 TriHealth non-bedside nurses, other retired nurses, doctors, and other staff have volunteered to assist, and we’re looking for hundreds more to join the effort! If you or someone you know is interested, please sign up today through our [Team Member Resource Center](#). If you are concerned about whether you are qualified to volunteer, please know:
 - **You will be fully trained in your role!** Clinicians, such as nurses, will deliver actual patient care. Volunteers, such as shared or support services team members, will serve as a resource and an “extra set of hands” to the care teams by safely performing *non-clinical work only*. This will enable nurses and other clinicians to take care of more patients at the bedside. Please note, non-clinical volunteers will never be asked to deliver patient care or perform duties in which they are uncomfortable or unprepared!
 - **We are using a “Team Nursing” approach to ensure ALL RN volunteers are fully supported and capable of performing required duties.** All nurse volunteers will be placed on nursing teams with highly experienced team leaders and other nurses to ensure every RN, regardless of expertise or skill level, is fully supported and comfortable in their assigned duties. In preparation for the likelihood we would need to activate advanced levels of our surge plan, we have been piloting this Team Nursing model at both Good Sam and Bethesda North for some time with great success.

So please, do not hesitate to volunteer, even if you’ve never worked in an inpatient setting or don’t think you have the right level of experience – we need you!! You will be fully trained and well supported every step of the way – and your invaluable talents will help us get through this time of overwhelming need for patient care! Thank you to all those who have signed up so far, and all those who are ready to commit to this ultimate act of heroic service! We are in this together, and by pitching in where needed, we can continue to fulfill our sacred mission of service to our patients and community, even under these difficult conditions – all while making sure we continue to look out for each other through the remainder of this pandemic and beyond!

- **Proactively developing “Phase 4” plans to be ready for a possible worst-case scenario, where demand exceeds all newly created capacity.** To ensure we continue to stay one step ahead in our planning and readiness for growing COVID inpatient and ICU needs through this third wave, we have taken the proactive steps of broadening our surge plan to now include a “Phase 4,” which will prepare us for a worst-case scenario, where demand exceeds all new

capacity created in Phases 1 - 3. While we continue to hope and work for the best, Phase 4 plans are standing ready to ensure we are able to provide all patients with the right level of care and necessary clinical resources, without over-taxing essential caregivers and support staff, should this very worrisome, emergency scenario occur. To do so, as part of Phase 4, we would repurpose available beds in our acute care hospitals' PACUs, recovery rooms, and other suitable facilities into COVID inpatient and ICU care settings in order to be ready for what we hope will be an unlikely event in which the region's health systems are overwhelmed due to unchecked spread of COVID. Additionally, we are, once again, coordinating with other regional health systems through the Health Collaborative to proactively prepare to stand up the Duke Energy Convention Center to serve as an alternative COVID care site, should the need arise.

Phase 2 transition to full living wage occurs on December 7. Our commitment to lead the way in our region in providing a living wage has never been more important than it is today, as COVID-related hardships outside of work add new and unanticipated burdens to household budgets. So, I am pleased to announce that TriHealth will increase its living wage to \$15/hour, effective December 7, completing the second and final step of our transition process (check Bridge later this week for more details about the increase). And please remember, in addition to the living wage adjustment, team members who are experiencing financial difficulties due to COVID may qualify for additional support through the Team Member Resource Center. Click [here](#) to learn more about the many resources available to you.

While we are all experiencing "COVID fatigue," and at times it seems there is no end in sight to this devastating pandemic, I want to end this Weekly Update with true hope and optimism. Though we now face our toughest battle yet, I know we will get through this together and better days really are just ahead, as vaccines are ready to be rolled out and administered in the coming months. By continuing to work together, supporting one another, and role modeling for our community adherence to the proven COVID mitigation measures, we will overcome this third, and, yes *final* wave, while also fulfilling our sacred mission to improve the health of our community – which needs us now more than ever!

I am inspired daily by the selfless acts of caring and courage I witness from our more than 12,000 team members and providers. Thank you for all you do to help us remain TriHealth STRONG – One Team. One Sacred Mission. One Great Health System, as we serve our community during this difficult time – together, we WILL prevail!