The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Acute Care Hospitals with an Emergency Department

FROM: Elizabeth Kelley, MPH, MBA, Director Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

DATE: April 3, 2023

RE: Wayfinding, Signage, Lighting and Security Requirements for Hospitals with an Emergency Department

In June 2022, the Department of Public Health (the Department) promulgated revisions to 105 CMR 130.000, *Hospital Licensure,* to require hospitals with an emergency department to meet specific wayfinding, signage, lighting, and security requirements set forth in the regulation (see 105 CMR 130.127 and 130.128). The purpose of this memorandum is to provide hospitals with emergency departments additional detail on the regulatory requirements to ensure safe and timely patient access to a hospital emergency department.

**Emergency Department Wayfinding, Signage, Lighting and Security Requirements**

The regulations require hospitals with emergency departments to adhere to specific wayfinding, signage, lighting, and security requirements (see 105 CMR 130.127).

Emergency department patient drop off and entry areas and hospital perimeter doors must be well lit to sufficiently allow pedestrians and drivers to see entrances, taking into account potential problems with glare and shadow. For example, hospitals must consider when shadows or glare prevent pedestrians and drivers from seeing a hospital entrance or a sign located by an entrance. These entry areas include, but may not be limited to, doors that are locked at night, main entrance doors, emergency department entrance doors, ambulance entrances and any door a patient may typically use to enter the hospital. Emergency department entrance lighting should be brighter than other entrances and/or clearly differentiated from other entrances.

Hospitals must place exterior directional signs leading to the emergency department on hospital grounds in such a manner as to ensure visual continuity from one sign to the next. Successive directional signs including, but not limited to, reinforcement signs, should be placed at regular intervals on the exterior grounds of the hospital such that the next sign is visible and legible from the location of the previous sign.

Signs providing directions to the emergency department on the grounds of the hospital should be placed at major decision points (places where people must decide to turn or keep going straight), with additional consideration of terrain and potential obstructions. Signs should be appropriately placed to direct people to and from the emergency department, parking areas, and public transportation, if applicable. Signs should use accurate and consistent facility nomenclature in order to be understandable to most patients within the hospital’s patient population.

Exterior directional signs leading to the emergency department must be maintained during inclement weather, including snow, and kept clear of debris.

**Annual Review of Security, Wayfinding, Signage and Lighting**

The regulations require hospitals with an emergency department to conduct an annual review of security, wayfinding, signage and lighting policies and procedures, technologies and features (see 105 CMR 130.128).

Hospital personnel from multiple departments, including security, facilities maintenance, risk management and the emergency department, or their equivalent positions, must participate in the annual review. Hospitals should also consider input from existing hospital resources, such as the hospital’s patient and family advisory council, regarding patients accessing the emergency department.

Hospitals must review all policies and procedures relevant to security, wayfinding, signage and lighting of the hospital grounds. The policies and procedures must include security, lighting, wayfinding, and signage contingencies in case of a temporary or permanent re-location or closure of a known emergency department entrance.