The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

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**Memorandum**

**TO:** Hospital Chief Executive Officers

**FROM:** Elizabeth Daake Kelley, MPH, MBA, Director

Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

**SUBJECT:** Space on Hospital Premises for Outpatient Patient Treatment of Respiratory Viruses

**DATE:** May 3, 2023

This guidance was updated to:

* Expand permissible alternate space use to all respiratory viruses (previously applied only to COVID-19 and influenza)
* Limit alternate space locations to be on or immediately adjacent to the hospital campus
* Define an end to alternate space use on May 10, 2024

Through this memorandum and pursuant to 105 CMR 130.051, the Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to authorize the use of alternate space for outpatient treatment on or adjacent to the hospital premises selected by the hospital for a respiratory virus treatment, testing, screening and vaccination area, provided that the hospital complies with the below *Guidelines for Use of Alternate Space for Respiratory Virus Outpatient Treatment Area*, hereinafter referred to as Guidelines. Hospitals may identify and use existing non-patient care space, or other outpatient or inpatient care space, or other unlicensed space on or adjacent to the hospital’s campus, as needed for a patient treatment area, consistent with this letter and enclosed Guidelines. Hospitals may continue to use alternate space for outpatient treatment until May 10, 2024.

A patient treatment area at a hospital may continue to include the following: screening, testing or collecting specimens from patients with possible respiratory virus exposure or as otherwise clinically indicated; administering respiratory virus vaccine; respiratory clinics for respiratory virus patients; and therapeutics delivery The patient treatment area at a hospital may also include the following: screening, assessment, testing or collecting specimens, or administering non-invasive treatments.

The Guidelines outline the conditions for temporary use of alternate space and the hospital must comply with the guidelines.

In addition to the below guidelines, a hospital using alternate space for an outpatient treatment area must:

* Be in possession of a current, active Massachusetts Controlled Substance Registration. If the address of the alternative space is different than the address of the registered hospital, a new MCSR must be issued to authorize storage of medications, or providing therapeutics in the alternative space; and
* Be in compliance with all state and federal requirements, including for vaccine storage and handling. DPH requirements on storage and handling of vaccines may be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/vaccine-storage-and-handling-guidance>

***Guidelines for Use of Alternate Space for Respiratory Virus Outpatient Treatment Area***

*The hospital must have written guidelines that address the following:*

* A staffing plan with staff qualifications, including appropriate orientation and training
* Policy for managing high risk patients, including determining if the area is appropriate space to care for individuals with acute behavioral health needs or pediatric populations
* Policy for security of patients, facilities, supplies, pharmaceuticals and for crowd management
* Patient flow systems addressing screening and testing
* Policies for ensuring appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) are available for all staff
* Protocols for following current standards of practice

*The physical space must conform to the following requirements:*

* The space must be on or adjacent to the hospital premise locations only
* Minimum four-foot aisles maintained between patient exam chairs
* Immediate access to hand wash sinks or other forms of hand hygiene
* Reasonably sized workspace with privacy considerations for patient screening and vaccination
* Provision for environmental cleaning, sanitization and appropriate decontamination
* Space, cabinets or carts for storage of supplies and specimens
* Provision for medical recordkeeping, including measures to ensure patient confidentiality
* Signage to direct patients to the space

If you have any questions about this information, please contact the Hospital Complaint Unit Supervisor at 617-753-8204.