



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

April 3, 2020

Aloha Hawaii Healthcare Providers:

Thank you for sharing your suggestions to improve the state's mitigation initiatives to effectively manage the spread of COVID-19 in Hawai'i. We are facing unprecedented challenges and recognize there is always room for improvement. We appreciate your insights from the frontlines and your commitment to serving Hawaii's patients.

The Hawai'i Department of Health recognizes healthcare providers, now more than ever, are essential to the health and wellbeing of the community. One of the issues you raised in your open letter concerns personal protective equipment. Ensuring healthcare workers in our state have appropriate personal protective equipment is vitally important to maintain a robust, responsive healthcare system in our state. Please be assured the Department of Health has identified this as an urgent priority and would like to provide you with an update based on the best information we have available.

PPE Inventory Management

In this COVID-19 environment, there has been increased demand for PPE. Yet, with limited PPE supplies nationwide, PPE has become a precious commodity. We understand hospitals are regularly submitting PPE orders to commercial vendors. To augment these efforts, the Department of Health has also requested PPE from FEMA and supplies will be distributed as soon as they are received. The Hawaii Healthcare Emergency Management (HHEM) is currently tracking PPE inventory statewide and use rates and providing updates to the Healthcare Association of Hawaii.

Optimizing PPE

We realize ordering PPE is one part of the supply solution and must be supplemented with judicious PPE utilization. We understand local hospitals are doing their part by following CDC recommendations for PPE use, extended use, and reuse.

In the event there is a statewide shortage of PPE, our contingency plan is to follow the guidance of NIOSH and CDC for extended use and limited reuse of N95 respirators to protect health care workers from job-related risks of exposure to infectious respiratory illnesses. NIOSH and CDC have published guidance on this topic at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hcwcontrols/recommendedguidanceextuse.html#respreuse>.

Please note that procedures for sterilization or re-use of single use PPE must comply with your healthcare institution's policy.

FDA/NIOSH-approved PPE

The Department of Health is also recommending providers use their own PPE that has been approved by the CDC and NIOSH as another option. However, it is important for providers to make sure their PPE complies with their hospital's infection control requirements. These policies and practices supersede the Department of Health recommendations.

Non-commercial (self-made) PPE

In the event COVID-19 requires a protracted, longer-term response and there is a significant shortage of PPE, the Department of Health recommends use of non-commercial PPE as a compromise and last resort, while still following CDC guidelines for their use. Again, any use of non-commercial or self-made PPE must follow your hospital's infection control program. CDC guidance on this topic is available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/face-masks.html>

Having your voice heard is important to ensure we can adopt and rapidly implement balanced, well-rounded strategies to manage COVID-19. Lt. Gov. Joshua Green is serving as a vital link to the healthcare community and will continue to ensure your perspectives are represented in critical decision-making.

Thank you for your commitment to patients in Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce S. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bruce S. Anderson, Ph.D.
Director of Health