

# THE NYSNA COVID RESURGENCE PLAN

## RNs Defending New York's Health, Demanding Preparedness from Hospitals

**To ensure the safety and health of staff, patients, and the New York community, every healthcare facility in New York must take the following safety measures to prepare for COVID Resurgence.**

### Environmental Controls that Will Save Lives:

- **Cohorting of all COVID-positive patients in separate units** with enhanced PPE standards is essential. Access controls will be established to ensure efficient cohorting of walk-ins.
- **All patients must be tested upon entering the facility** and required to wear surgical masks.
- **All visitors must be masked and visitation must be extremely controlled.** Visitor policies must be clearly communicated to the public, visitors must be strictly tracked, with time restrictions on their visit, and there must be adequate non-nursing staff to enforce the policy. NY facilities cannot return to open-door unlimited visitation policies.
- **Elective procedures must match the COVID census**, and suspend automatically if it starts to rise again. All patients must be tested prior to their procedures, and there must be COVID-specific standard precautions for operating rooms and labor and delivery.
- **HVAC and Filtration systems must be improved to use ventilation and negative air filtration** more effectively during the resurgence. HEPA filters and other methods must be made available on all potential COVID units.
- **Donning, Doffing, and Decon areas must be made available** for all staff and all units. NYSNA and the Employer will conduct HVAC and

environmental control assessments of the whole facility, to determine a priority list of remedies. The goal will be to use ventilation and negative air filtration effectively. HEPA filter supply must be increased to meet this demand.

### Stopping COVID from Spreading Outside Our Hospitals' Doors

- **Cohorting of all COVID-positive patients in separate units** with enhanced PPE standards is essential. Access controls will be established to ensure efficient cohorting of walk-ins.
- **The employer will establish a Command Center Hotline** to immediately address all COVID-related policies and immediately remedy concerns such as PPE replacement issues, visitation violations, or patient masking violations. The virus won't be contained without instant fixes.
- **The facility must implement accurate COVID diagnostic testing for all patients and visitors**, and have readily available **on-demand diagnostic testing for staff** on all shifts.
- **The facility must implement aggressive contact tracing protocols for all patients and employees** who test positive for COVID and deploy them immediately after any positive test result. The hospital needs to hire tracer staff immediately to be prepared.
- **The facility must implement ongoing hands-on Health and Safety training** and education for frontline staff on all COVID-related issues as the situation and recommendations evolve.

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## The Need for the Highest PPE Standards in the US

- **New N95 respirators-** N95s must be available for every patient care session with COVID-positive patients or PUI's, as well as at all points of contact with patients or the public throughout the hospital. Replacements, without rationing, will be provided when PPE is soiled or contaminated. Proper fit testing will happen prior to use for all staff.
- **Show us the PPE Stockpile NOW-** No more games on how much PPE facilities have or don't have. Nurses demand total and complete transparency on all PPE stockpile levels from the employers. NYSNA Committees must be given access to review the supply, which needs to be stocked for 90 days of regular use.
- **Full PPE Stockpiles with More than Just N95s-** Gowns, face shields, coveralls, head coverings, booties, gloves and any other necessary PPE will also be available on all units. Replacements, without rationing, will be provided by the same rules as N95s
- **PPE will not be reused unless designed/ manufactured to be decontaminated and reused.** There is no safe and proven process of "decontamination" or "sterilization" of N95 respirators that are designed for single use.
- **Elastomeric and PAPRs Now-** The number one way to ensure PPE supplies is to purchase reusable Elastomerics and PAPRs immediately. NYSNA is endorsing a NIOSH elastomeric pilot and demands all employers participate.

## Listen to the Nurses This Time- Don't Burn Them Out

- **Staffing Ratios and Levels must be restored now.** The best way to prepare for the resurgence is to make sure all facilities have enough nurses to fight COVID. Ratios and staffing levels are hard-fought contractual rights, and nurses will continue to fight to enforce them.
- **Nurses will be immediately taken off the schedule if they are confirmed COVID-positive or displaying symptoms.** Nurses will be provided the full time of statutory NYS COVID sick leave, without pressure to return to work unless they are medically cleared by their doctor. Many nurses got sick during the Spring and need guaranteed time off if they again get sick.

- **Safe Floating with clear contractual rules must be implemented.** Too many nurses were unsafely floated to units without any clinical experience in that area. The facilities need to train and orient nurses to a level where they can independently function and take on a standard assignment in that floated unit. Facilities need to work with nurses on how maximize their incredible skills and talent, not haphazardly float.
- **All nurses need time off, even if their vacation is canceled.** All canceled holidays and vacations need to be rescheduled and honored, even if the nurse is reaching an annual accrual limit. No nurse should lose time because they helped save NY again during the resurgence.

## Complete Transparency and Collaboration with Nurses

- **Nurses have a right to know what risks they're facing when they report to work.** Employers must issue regular daily reports to all staff, documenting essential information such as how many COVID-positive patients they are treating, levels of PPE, ongoing plans for screening and cohorting, and the number of staff who've been exposed to or gotten sick from COVID. Nurses can't fight this virus and win without all the intel.
- **The employer will provide copies of the New York DOH Health Emergency Response Data System (HERDS) reports** to NYSNA whenever produced and sent to New York State.
- **Employers must share their surge capacity plan to address future COVID outbreaks** with all staff. NYSNA and the employer will identify where new units will open, detail staffing needs for those new units, and plan for any training required to safely redeploy staff.
- **The employer and NYSNA must conduct unit by unit assessments of preparedness.** Each and every unit needs to be assessed for COVID risks and COVID patient care capabilities. The assessment will involve frontline nurse feedback and input to affect immediate and long term changes to improve preparedness.
- **Nurses need to have a seat at the table during all decisions involving their patients and profession.** If the employers trust nurses to run their facilities 24-7 when management goes home, they should trust their judgement in the board room when strategic decisions are made in response to COVID-19.