TO: Ballad Health All
FROM: Ballad Health Corporate Emergency Operations Center
DATE: Jan. 27, 2022
TITLE: Crisis Standards of Care; Strategies to Mitigate Healthcare Personnel Staffing Shortages
ACTION: Please post and cascade to all team members.

This communication contains important information on the following items, PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO REVIEW THIS DOCUMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY.

- o Adoption of new CDC guidance for Crisis Standards of Care as it relates to strategies to mitigate healthcare personnel staffing shortages until Monday, February 7, 2022.
- o No contact tracing until Monday, February 7, 2022
- o Required masking, eye protection and PPE
- o Effective immediately, one N95 mask will be made available for each team member each day.
- o Helping Hands. Please volunteer!
- o Meetings, community events, and remote work
- o Vaccination mandate. All exemption requests must be submitted by 1/31/22, first dose required by 2/11/22.
- o Effective immediately, Ballad Health will now accept proof of positive at-home testing
- o Ballad Health insurance will now reimburse for at-home COVID tests

Effective Thursday, January 27, 2022, Ballad Health will follow the CDC's guidance for Crisis Standards of Care as it relates to strategies to mitigate healthcare personnel staffing shortages.

As of today, 838 Ballad Health team members are symptomatic, positive or awaiting test results.

Due to the highly transmissible Omicron variant and its impact to our team members and healthcare worker across the country, **Ballad Health will follow the CDC's updated [guidance for strategies to mitigate healthcare personnel staffing shortages](), until Monday, February 7, 2022,** and will then be reevaluated to determine if crisis standards will be maintained or downgraded.

CDC guidance key points include:

- Maintaining appropriate staffing in healthcare facilities is essential to providing a safe work environment for health care personnel ("HCP") and for safe patient care.
- Maximizing interventions to protect HCP, patients, and visitors are critical at all times, including when considering strategies to address staffing shortages.
- CDC's mitigation strategies offer a continuum of options for addressing staffing shortages.

Work Restrictions for HCP With SARS-CoV-2 Infection and Exposures

"Up to Date" with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses is defined in Stay Up to Date with Your Vaccines | CDC

For more details, including recommendations for healthcare personnel who are iimmunocompromised, have severe to critical illness, or are within 90 days of prior infection, refer to Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (conventional standards) and Strategies to Mitigate Healthcare Personnel Staffing Shortages (contingency and crisis standards).

Work Restrictions for HCP With SARS-CoV-2 Infection

Vaccination Status	Conventional	Contingency	Crisis
Up to Date and Not Up to Date	10 days OR 7 days with negative test†, if asymptomatic or mild to moderate illness (with improving symptoms)	5 days with/without negative test, if asymptomatic or mild to moderate illness (with improving symptoms)	No work restriction, with prioritization considerations (e.g., types of patients they care for)

Work Restrictions for Asymptomatic HCP with SARS-CoV-2 Exposures

Vaccination Status	Conventional	Contingency	Crisis
Up to Date	No work restrictions, with negative test on days 1‡ and 5–7	No work restriction	No work restriction
Not Up to Date	10 days OR 7 days with negative test†	No work restriction with negative tests on days 1‡, 2, 3, & 5–7 (if shortage of tests prioritize Day 1 to 2 and 5-7)	No work restrictions (test if possible)

†Negative test result within 48 hours before returning to work
‡For calculating day of test: 1) for those with infection consider day of symptom onset (or first positive test if asymptomatic) as day 0; 2) for those with exposure consider day of exposure as day 0

CDC

cdc.gov/coronavirus

Effective 1/27-2/7

How will this impact Ballad Health?

Based on the categories below, if a team member tests positive and returns to work, they should adhere to the following recommendations:

- Self-monitor for symptoms and seek re-evaluation from occupational health if symptoms recur or worsen.
- Until they meet the conventional return to work criteria:
    - They should wear a respirator or well-fitting facemask at all times, even when they are in non-patient care areas such as breakrooms.
    - If they must remove their respirator or well-fitting facemask, for example, in order to eat or drink, they should separate themselves from others.
    - To the extent possible, they should practice physical distancing from others.
    - Patients (if tolerated) should wear well-fitting source control while interacting with these team members.
- Additionally, due to the high transmissibility and current circulation of COVID, contact tracing will cease until February 7, 2022, and will then be reevaluated to determine if reinstitution is necessary.

Vaccinated team members

- **Positive COVID test, no symptoms**
    - No work restriction, with prioritization considerations. Team members without symptoms may be temporarily reassigned to a different department.
    - Team members must report test results to their managers.
    - Team members must ALWAYS wear appropriate PPE (as outlined below).
    - **Team members that test positive and return to work, will NOT care for patients in the following areas:** Oncology, NICU, Labor and Delivery, Niswonger Children's Hospital, Hospitots.
    - Team members that test positive and return to work might first be assigned to COVID-patient units.
    - Managers must identify break room/location for positive team members to eat with the intent of reducing the risk of spreading to others.
    - Managers must ensure their teams are always wearing the appropriate PPE (as outlined below).
- **Positive COVID test, with symptoms**
    - Team members, with symptoms, that feel well enough to return to work may do so.
    - If the team member has had a fever, they must be fever-free without the use of a fever-reducer for at least 24-hours before returning to work.
    - Team members must report test results to their managers.
    - Team members must ALWAYS wear appropriate PPE (as outlined below).
    - **Team members that test positive and return to work, will NOT care for patients in the following areas:** Oncology, NICU, Labor and Delivery, Niswonger Children's Hospital, Hospitots.
    - Team members that test positive and return to work might first be assigned to COVID-patient units.
    - Managers must identify break room/location for positive team members to eat with the intent of reducing the risk of spreading to others.
    - Managers must ensure their teams are always wearing the appropriate PPE (as outlined below).

Unvaccinated team members

- **Positive COVID test, no symptoms**
    - Return to work.
    - Team members must report test results to their managers.
    - Team members must ALWAYS wear appropriate PPE (as outlined below).
    - **Team members that test positive and return to work, will NOT care for patients in the following areas:** Oncology, NICU, Labor and Delivery, Niswonger Children's Hospital, Hospitots.
    - Team members that test positive and return to work might first be assigned to COVID-patient units.

- Managers must identify break room/location for positive team members to eat with the intent of reducing the risk of spreading to others.
- Managers must ensure their teams are always wearing the appropriate PPE (as outlined below).

- **Positive COVID test, with symptoms**
  - Team members, with symptoms, that feel well enough to return to work may do so.
  - If the team member has had a fever, they must be fever-free without the use of a fever-reducer for at least 24-hours before returning to work.
  - Team members must report test results to their managers.
  - Team members must ALWAYS wear appropriate PPE (as outlined below).
  - **Team members that test positive and return to work, will NOT care for patients in the following areas:** Oncology, NICU, Labor and Delivery, Niswonger Children's Hospital, Hospitots.
  - Team members that test positive and return to work might first be assigned to COVID-patient units.
  - Managers must identify break room/location for positive team members to eat with the intent of reducing the risk of spreading to others.
  - Managers must ensure their teams are always wearing the appropriate PPE (as outlined below).

What is appropriate universal masking, eye protection and PPE?

As we continue to take precautionary efforts to lessen the possibility of spread, please make sure you are following our policies for universal masking, **which apply to all Ballad Health hospitals, doctor's offices, medical facilities, and administrative offices.**

- **Masks are part of the Ballad Health Dress Code (HR-200-023). This means everyone, in all Ballad Health facilities, is required to mask. Effective immediately, one N95 mask will be made available for each team member each day.**
  - This also applies to patients unless they are alone in their rooms.
  - The only exception for team members is if they are eating in designated areas or working alone in a private office or non-clinical area, in which case they may remove their mask.
  - We have seen an increase in non-compliance with mask requirements recently. Please make sure masks are being worn and worn properly.
  - Facial hair outside of "clean shaven" is not acceptable (anything that prohibits a proper N-95 fit).
  - Masks must cover the nose and mouth and be appropriately connected by ear loops or tied on both the top and bottom (pinching the bridge of the nose without tying it is not acceptable).
- **Universal eye protection is required** for team members in all clinical roles.
  - All team members in clinical areas must wear the appropriate PPE, including face shields. As previously announced, eye protection in any clinical encounter in any environment is required as it is critical to

reducing spread and infection. If you are unsure about what is required, speak with your supervisor who can consult with CEOC if additional clarification is needed.

What is Helping Hands?

With our patient volumes at a high level and a critical need for assistance, Ballad Health is seeking current team members – both clinical and non-clinical – to step in and assist our frontline teams in a paid role to support our Helping Hands Program. These duties may be in addition to your existing Ballad Health role or, in some cases, if you and your current supervisor agree, may be filled during your current work schedule/fulltime employment.

If you have a clinical background and are not currently working in an acute patient care provision role, or if you do not have a clinical background but you're willing to assist, you can help support our non-COVID nursing patient care teams.

Team members who are willing to assist with acute patient care teams should follow the link below and submit the requested documentation. Following submission, a member of the Helping Hands Program will reach out to team members directly.

If you have been working in the Helping Hands Program previously, we ask you to consider participating again.

Our staffing situation is critical. As we see COVID-19 numbers rise in our hospitals, our ability to provide patient care could be compromised. We are taking an all-hands-on-deck approach in asking for help.

Hours worked in the alternative acute patient care support positions will be compensated by your base rate of pay (overtime if applicable). Team members will be provided special instructions on how to clock in for these special shifts, this includes salaried team members. Team members have the option of working on a shift basis or working extra hours. Any assistance you can provide is greatly appreciated.

The most critical need is for sitters in the hospitals. Additional Helping Hands opportunities include unit liaisons, ED liaisons, food service, environmental services, supply support, screeners and working in the Call Center.

Thank you in advance to any team members who are willing to take on this crucial extra work and thank you to all team members for what you are doing every day during this time of crisis.

What is CEOC's guidance on meetings, community events, and remote work?

Also, as a reminder, CEOC has reinstated the following guidelines.

All internal meetings must be in virtual format or take place by phone. In-person meetings may only take place when necessary and all participants must remain masked, regardless of vaccination status.

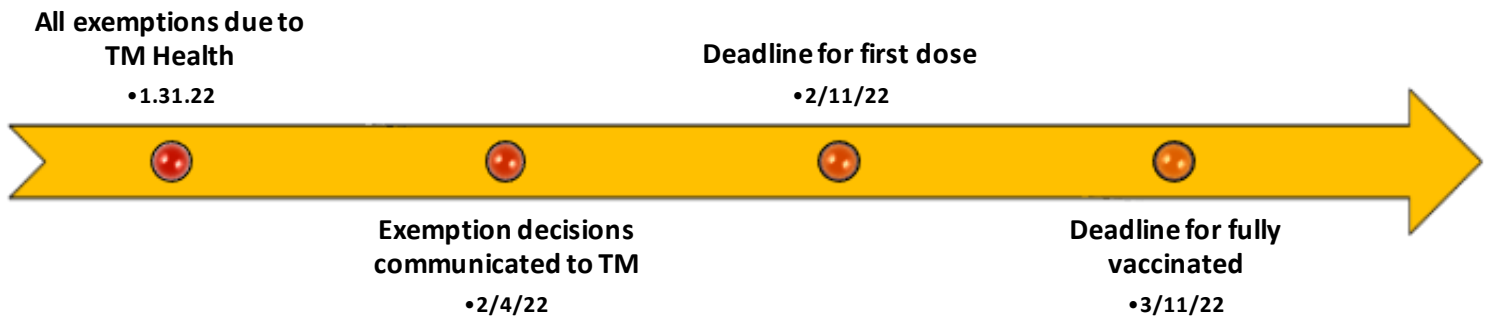- **Team members should avoid group meetings/celebrations with meals and congregating without masks.**
- **Social distancing of 6 feet is required**, including in break areas.
- **Team members who are able to work remotely should do so.** Please consult with your manager and seek approval from departmental senior leadership before making arrangements.
- **Ballad Health is withdrawing participation in community events**, such as civic celebrations and indoor expos.
- **Internal events should be postponed or moved to a virtual environment**.

Vaccine Mandate Requirement as imposed by the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

The following timeline highlights key dates for team members that are currently unvaccinated.

All exemptions due to TM Health
- 1.31.22

Deadline for first dose
- 2/11/22

Exemption decisions communicated to TM
- 2/4/22

Deadline for fully vaccinated
- 3/11/22

For additional information, please review memo sent to leaders from Debbie Dover on 1.18.22.

Update on COVID testing

Effective immediately, Ballad Health will now accept proof of positive at-home testing by following the steps below.

Positive test result?

- Take a picture of your positive at home antigen test and send the picture along with the following information to teammemberhealth@balladhealth.org:
  - Team member name
  - Date & Time of test
  - Facility
  - Department
  - U Number
  - Supervisor Name

- o After emailing the above information, call your facility Team Member Health representative to discuss your symptoms, quarantine date, etc.

Negative test result?

- o If the at home antigen test reads negative BUT you still have symptoms, please call your facility Team Member Health representative for more information.

COVID tests are now reimbursable with Ballad Health insurance

- o Who is eligible for the OTC, at-home COVID 19 test kits through OptumRx?
  - o Any team member enrolled in a Ballad Health Medical/Pharmacy Plan. Note: the test kits are only available through OptumRx. Reimbursement is not available through the Blue Cross Blue Shield Medical plans.
- o What are the options for coverage of OTC at-home COVID-19 test kits?
  - o Pay $0 at a preferred network pharmacy: Visit a Walmart, Sam's Club or Rite Aid pharmacy and simply go to the pharmacy counter, present your OptumRx member ID card, and ask to have your OTC at-home COVID-19 test kits submitted to your plan for coverage.
  - o Purchase a kit and then submit an electronic form for reimbursement: You can also purchase an OTC at-home COVID-19 test kit at other stores or online retailers. Keep your purchase receipt(s) to submit for reimbursement. To receive the quickest possible reimbursement of up to $12 per test, submit an electronic claim form by visiting optumrx.com/testinfo.
  - o Purchase a kit and then print and mail in a paper reimbursement form: If you prefer to submit your claim by mail, you can print a form at optumrx.com/testinfo and then mail it in. Reimbursement applies up to $12 per test. Please note: you will receive reimbursement more quickly if you submit an electronic claim.
  - o Which COVID-19 tests are covered?
    - ▪ Coverage includes OTC at-home COVID-19 test kits authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The most common tests are BinaxNOW™, Flowflex™, InteliSwab™, On/Go™ and QuickVue®.
- o Is there a limit to how many tests will be covered?
  - o Covered members can get up to 8 individual tests per month, e.g., a family of 4 would be eligible for 32 tests a month.
- o Additional questions?
  - o Visit optumrx.com/testinfo for the latest updates and information.

Have a question about vaccines, the Omicron variant, or a new policy? Contact the Ballad Health Corporate Emergency Operations Center at **BalladHealthCorporateEOC@balladhealth.org.**

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