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Idaho activates Crisis Standards of Care in North Idaho due to of surge in COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization

September 7, 2021

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) has activated [Crisis Standards of Care](#)  (CSC) in accordance with IDAPA 16.02.09 – Crisis Standards of Care For Healthcare Entities. CSC is activated in the Panhandle Health District and the North Central Health District ([Public Health Districts 1 and 2](#)) because of a severe shortage of staffing and available beds in the northern area of the state caused by a massive increase in patients with COVID-19 who require hospitalization.

Kootenai Health in Coeur d'Alene requested that CSC be activated. The CSC Activation Advisory Committee convened virtually on Sept. 6 and recommended that CSC be activated in the Panhandle and North Central Health Districts. Although DHW has activated CSC in North Idaho, hospitals will implement as needed and according to their own CSC policies.

Hospitals and healthcare systems impacted are:

- **Panhandle (PHD1)**
 - Benewah Community Hospital
 - Bonner General Hospital
 - Boundary Community Hospital
 - Kootenai Health
 - Shoshone Medical Center
- **North Central (PHD2)**
 - Clearwater Valley Hospital and Clinics
 - Gritman Medical Center
 - St. Joseph Regional Medical Center
 - St. Mary's Hospitals & Clinics
 - Syringa Hospital & Clinics

Crisis standards of care are guidelines that help healthcare providers and systems decide how to deliver the best care possible under the extraordinary circumstances of an overwhelming disaster or public health emergency. The guidelines may be used when there are not enough healthcare resources to provide the usual standard of care to people who need it. The goal of crisis standards of care is to extend care to as many patients as possible and save as many lives as possible.

“We have reached an unprecedented and unwanted point in the history of our state. We have taken so many steps to avoid getting here, but yet again we need to ask more Idahoans to choose to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. More Idahoans need to choose to receive the vaccine so we can minimize the spread of the disease and reduce the number of COVID-19

hospitalizations, many of which involve younger Idahoans and are preventable with safe and effective vaccines,” Governor Brad Little said.

When crisis standards of care are in effect, people who need medical care may experience care that is different from what they expect. For example, patients admitted to the hospital may find that hospital beds are not available or are in repurposed rooms (such as a conference room) or that needed equipment is not available.

“Crisis standards of care is a last resort. It means we have exhausted our resources to the point that our healthcare systems are unable to provide the treatment and care we expect,” said DHW Director Dave Jeppesen. “This is a decision I was fervently hoping to avoid. The best tools we have to turn this around is for more people to get vaccinated and to wear masks indoors and in outdoor crowded public places. Please choose to get vaccinated as soon as possible – it is your very best protection against being hospitalized from COVID-19.”

The process to initiate crisis standards of care began when resources were limited to the point of affecting medical care. The director of DHW convened the Crisis Standards of Care Activation Advisory Committee on Sept. 6, 2021, to review all the measures that were taken to address the staffing and bed shortages. The committee determined that the ability of northern Idaho hospitals and healthcare systems to deliver the usual standard of care has been severely affected by the staffing shortages, and all contingency measures to address these shortages had been exhausted. The committee recommended to the director that crisis standards of care be activated. Director Jeppesen issued his decision on Sept. 6, 2021, under the authority vested in him through the temporary rule.

Efforts will continue with earnest to alleviate the staffing and any other resource constraints in North Idaho. The crisis standards of care will remain in effect until there are sufficient resources to provide the usual standard of care to all patients.

Learn more about crisis standards of care and see an FAQ at <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/idaho-resources/> 

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