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Subject: Updated Announcement: COVID-19 Message to DHCS Stakeholders

Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2020 11:29:50 AM

DHCS is reissuing this announcement with additional detail on essential workforce members in the third paragraph.

Dear DHCS Stakeholders,

DHCS is receiving many questions asking for clarification as to what constitutes an “essential workforce” during this COVID-19 State of Emergency. To help answer those questions we’ve gathered some important information from the state’s [COVID-19 information center](#), a key part of the state’s effort to protect and inform ourselves and our communities during the COVID-19 emergency.

The Healthcare and Public Health (HPH) Sector is important and vast, ranging from large-scale health care facilities, and local physicians’ offices, to our state supported behavioral health providers. All of them, large and small, are parts of our essential workforce – which is more critical now than perhaps ever before, as we work together against COVID-19.

Officially called Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers, these essential individuals are the clinical, professional, and support staff now providing COVID-19 testing, medical, behavioral and substance use staff treating patients, the nurses providing care and advice, infection control personnel, pharmacists, and more. The nature of an emergency requires that virtually everyone, including administrative and support staff that assist the clinicians, nurses and other staff to do their jobs, be available to provide essential support during an incident such as the COVID-19 emergency.

As such, these essential workforce members are deemed necessary to maintain the continuity of operations in the Healthcare and Public Health Sector. Because of that “necessary” designation, when they are supporting essential critical infrastructure sectors, like health care, they are not subject to the State’s public health directives to stay at home.

DHCS, whose workers are also a part of the essential workforce, is closely following all state guidance and directives. For example, we are encouraging employees to take recommended safety precautions and to work remotely, using telehealth or other technology wherever possible. DHCS also encourages other health care partners supporting the COVID-19 effort to take protective measures and use telehealth whenever appropriate. To support these telehealth recommendations, DHCS has provided flexibility around reimbursement for virtual care by health care providers. For details, see our [COVID-19 Response website](#), which is frequently updated with guidance related to telehealth and other COVID-19 questions.

Finally, to ensure services are available for those most in need, DHCS also encourages triage and prioritization, including delaying or canceling routine/non-

urgent care to make capacity for those needing urgent help.