



Delaware Hospitals' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

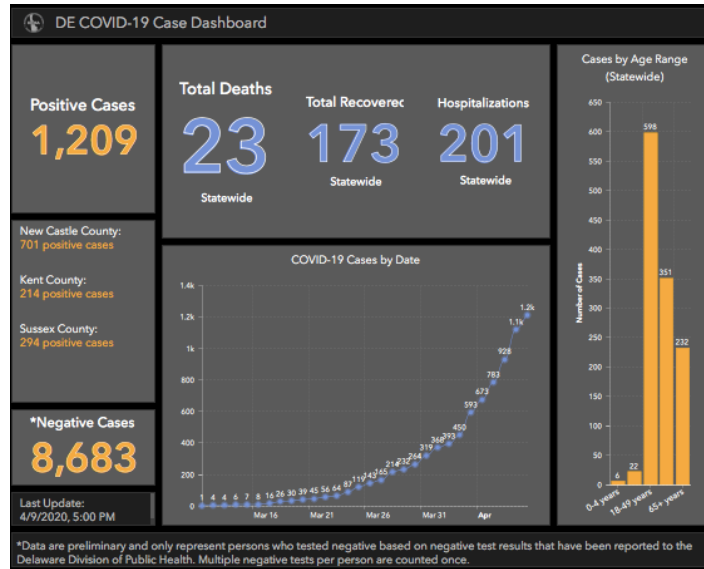
April 10, 2020



Nanticoke Memorial Hospital's health care heroes call on Delawareans to stay home to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Key Data

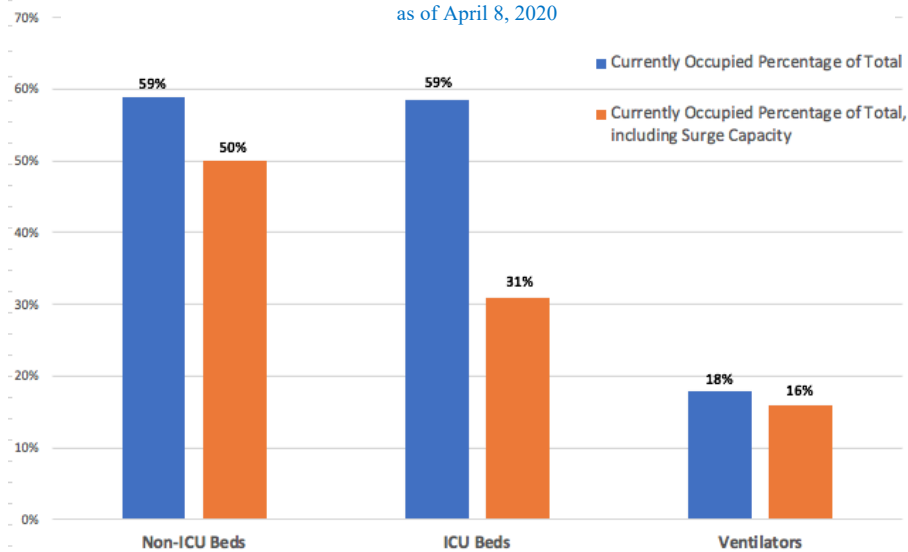
COVID-19 Cases in Delaware



Data above captured on April 9, 2020. Source: <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov>

Delaware Hospital Resources - Current Capacity

Note that occupancy numbers include both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients as of April 8, 2020



Data from DEMA COVID-19 Predictive Modeling Group Daily Data & Modeling April 8, 2020

Hospital Revenue Lost Daily

(General Acute Care & Pediatric Health Systems)

\$5 Million Per Day on Average

Hospital Capacity

For years, Delaware hospitals have collaborated on emergency preparedness, meeting regularly as part of the Healthcare Preparedness Coalition and holding drills to practice response in emergency situations, including pandemics. This preparation has laid the groundwork for the collaboration happening now between each acute care hospital in Delaware and our State partners to address coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

A critical component of this collaboration is taking important steps to ensure maximum capacity is available for those that are severely ill as a result of Coronavirus disease.

Currently in Delaware, there are more than enough beds to meet existing COVID-19 needs, as hospitals have canceled most of their non-urgent, non-emergency surgeries and services. As we know from the experience of other nations and states before us, we expect a significant surge of COVID-19 patients in the days and weeks ahead.

For this reason, Delaware hospitals have plans in place to provide several hundred more additional temporary beds, increasing capacity by 30% to treat a surge in patients. Working together, and with partners including the Delaware Division of Public Health, Emergency Medical Services, the Delaware Emergency Management Agency, State and Federal government, and epidemiologists, planning is also underway to procure beds and locations to meet an increased demand over and above the surge capacity already in place within the hospitals should additional resources be needed.

Locations already identified as alternate care sites to accommodate overflow patients from Delaware hospitals include Governor Bacon Health Center, the Department of Health and Social Services' long-term care facility in Delaware City; a rehabilitation gym and a medical intensive care unit within Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children; and a mobile hospital in Sussex County, a collaborative effort between Bayhealth, Beebe Healthcare and Nanticoke Memorial Hospital and state and county officials.

While the primary goal will be to care for patients within the hospitals, alternative care sites will be opened to alleviate the surge on hospitals when needed. There is daily reporting between Delaware hospitals and state officials to make informed decisions on when to activate these additional sites.

We will do everything possible along with our state partners to treat every Delawarean who needs health care services resulting from COVID-19 infection.



Some of Bayhealth's health care heroes ask Delawareans to #BeMyHero by staying home and practicing social distancing.

Adequate Staff/Workforce to Meet Patient Needs

Additional beds are important to house a surge in patients, but this is not enough unless there are doctors, nurses and health care workers available to care for them. With this in mind, Delaware hospitals are working closely with the State to make sure additional staff is available to meet patient needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With assistance from the University of Delaware, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Governor's Office and the Division of Professional Regulation, several initiatives have been undertaken to enhance the healthcare workforce here in Delaware.

- (1) Issuance of emergency orders from the Governor and the Division of Public Health (DPH) and the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) serving to improve flexibility and reduce barriers to entry into the healthcare workforce, specifically allowing students and individuals with out of state, lapsed, retired licenses to assist during our Public Health Emergency. [Click here for the DPH/DEMA order](#) issued on March 23rd and [click here for the follow up joint order](#) signed on April 1st.
- (2) Creation and implementation of the COVID-19 [Medical Personnel Form](#) which streamlines entry into the healthcare workforce through the state Division of Professional Regulation.
- (3) Healthcare Workforce Repository – created in collaboration with the Governor's Office and DTI, this repository can be used by potential childcare and healthcare providers to detail their availability and capacity to enter the workforce.
- (4) Virtual Job Fair – an ongoing effort between nursing schools and Delaware healthcare systems, these job fairs serve to connect allied health students and clinicians with healthcare job opportunities across the state.

Delaware hospitals are very appreciative of Governor Carney and his team for his assistance in many of the above efforts. These actions will help augment our existing health care workforce in the event of a COVID-19 surge in patients and provide the care necessary to keep Delawareans as safe and healthy as possible during this crisis.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Health Care Workers/Employees

As is the case nationally, there is a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) – N95 masks, isolation gowns, etc. -- to protect health care workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 fight in Delaware. Delaware hospitals are extremely concerned about the PPE shortage, which is why it is so important for Delawareans to stay home and “flatten the curve” to help preserve these precious resources and help keep health care workers safe and healthy.

Delaware hospitals are working together and with partners in the State and Federal Government to gain access to available PPE. We are also exploring avenues for safely decontaminating N95 masks and other protective equipment to prolong the life of existing PPE.

We are immensely thankful to the Delaware business community who have stepped in to help through direct donations of N95 face masks, face shields, medical gloves, and other supplies. The business community, working together with eBrightHealth, are also assisting Delaware hospitals in setting up donation sites for public donations of PPE. Visit <https://donatede.org> for information on collection sites and a list of items that can be donated. Our hospitals have reported that these efforts have resulted in the donation of good quality PPE that is making the difference in protecting our health care workers and first responders.

Thousands of community volunteers have also joined forces to sew face masks to help protect Delaware’s health care workers. For example, a Facebook page called “Help for Healthcare Workers Delaware” has organized the creation and distribution of more than 10,000 homemade masks to Delawareans on the front lines fighting COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that homemade masks may be used by health professionals as a last resort if PPE is not available. In a recent press release, the state of Delaware issued guidance on the public’s use of cloth face coverings. [Click here](#) to view Delaware’s cloth face mask guidance.

We are very thankful to our community partners for their help in providing additional PPE for our health care workers who are working so hard to keep us all safe and healthy during this pandemic.



Dr. David Tam, Beebe Healthcare’s President & CEO, visited with some of the screening team members to thank them for all they are doing.

Testing



Saint Francis Healthcare's COVID-19 mobile testing team works at their mobile testing tent.

Across the nation and here in Delaware, there is a need for more testing supplies and faster test results.

In addition to working with the State on acquiring testing supplies, multiple Delaware hospitals have implemented their own FDA-authorized in-house lab processing of COVID-19 tests to help meet our community need.

Delaware hospitals will continue to work collaboratively with Governor Carney, the Delaware Emergency Management Agency, and the Division of Public Health COVID-19 Testing Collaborative in moving these efforts forward to best serve citizens across Delaware.

Delaware hospitals have performed nearly 11,000 COVID-19 tests, 87% of all tests reported across the state, according to COVID-19 Testing Collaborative data through April 7th 2020.

With limited supplies available, it is imperative that only those with symptoms of COVID-19, such as cough, fever, or shortness of breath, be screened for a test. If you do have symptoms and suspect you have Coronavirus, stay home and call your health care provider! They will assess you and determine if you need a test. If a test is needed, they will refer you to a local testing site. This helps to protect your health and the safety of those working and being tested at the sites.

Each general acute care hospital in Delaware has set up a testing site for those with symptoms of COVID-19 who have a prescription/referral from a health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, you can call the Division of Public Health Call Center Line at 1-866-408-1899. Some hospitals also have their own COVID-19 patient screening hotlines: Bayhealth patients can call 302-310-8477 and Beebe Healthcare patients can call 302-645-3200.

Ventilators

Ventilators, machines that assist with moving air in and out of a patient's lungs, have been widely discussed as a tool used in hospitals for a small portion of COVID-19 patients with respiratory compromise. Worries have been raised across the country that the supply of ventilators may not keep pace with the need as COVID-19 spreads, creating concerns about resource allocation and prioritization. In fact, our neighboring states of New York and New Jersey are currently experiencing ventilator supply shortages.

Importantly, not all COVID-19 patients will need hospitalization, and only a small portion of those hospitalized patients will need ventilator support. As of April 8th, Delaware hospitals reported a total of approximately 400 ventilators, with fewer than 25% currently being utilized. In spite of this favorable picture, we recognize the critical need to anticipate the COVID-19 surge here and prepare accordingly. Governor Carney has announced that Delaware is working on securing additional ventilators, for example by working with Bloom Energy to refurbish ventilators that are currently out of commission and bring them back into service.

Fortunately, Delaware's hospitals also have plentiful supplies of other non-invasive respiratory support services such as CPAP and BIPAP machines that are also used to treat respiratory issues associated with COVID-19.

Working with our partners in the State, Delaware hospitals will continue to collaborate on assessing ventilator needs and taking every step possible to ensure adequate resources are available to meet patient needs.

Delaware hospital ethics committees, along with the State, are also developing a crisis standard of care framework to be implemented in the event that resources are not available to meet patient need. We hope the COVID-19 situation in Delaware never gets to that point, but our hospitals recognize our duty to plan and prepare for all possibilities.



Nemours shared a [video on their Facebook page](#) thanking all their #HealthCareHeroes for all they are doing during COVID-19.

Financial Status of Hospitals

The COVID-19 crisis has created significant financial hardship for Delaware hospitals. Extraordinary costs have been incurred as hospitals purchase additional equipment, PPE, and hire additional staff to fight the pandemic. In addition, more services are being provided via telemedicine, which often comes with inconsistent and uncertain reimbursement. At the same time, Delaware hospitals are losing revenue as a result of the precautions they are taking to protect patients from COVID-19 spread. The significant reduction and elimination of non-emergency surgeries and services has reduced revenue flows from these activities to near zero.

In aggregate, Delaware hospitals report an average revenue loss of more than \$5 million per day as a result of COVID-19.

We appreciate the efforts of Delaware's congressional delegation in advancing the CARES Act, which includes provisions that we anticipate will provide some assistance to hospitals dealing with the cash flow shortage. However, more help is needed.

We urge state and federal lawmakers to continue finding ways to help hospitals maintain cash flow to support current operations.



Some of Delaware's health care heroes pose for a picture at ChristianaCare.

Message to the Public

Delaware residents have a vital role to play in fighting COVID-19. By staying home, practicing social distancing, and diligently hand washing, Delawareans can help slow the spread of coronavirus disease.

It is also imperative that Delawareans NOT go directly to the Emergency Department, Testing Centers or their doctor's office if they suspect they have Coronavirus. Always call first to protect the safety of health care workers and to preserve precious resources for those that truly need them.

If you are having a true emergency, such as significant difficulty breathing, please call 911 first and disclose that you suspect you have Coronavirus to protect the safety of first responders.

Together, we can slow the spread of COVID-19, keep more Delawareans healthy and save the lives of our friends and neighbors.

Resources

- **Information:** For up to date information on COVID-19 in Delaware, including data on the number of cases and additional resources, visit de.gov/coronavirus
- **Questions:** For questions on COVID-19 call the Delaware Division of Public Health hotline at [1-866-408-1899](tel:1-866-408-1899) or email DPHcall@delaware.gov
- **Testing:** If you have symptoms of COVID-19, call your health care provider first to determine if a test is needed and to provide a referral to a testing site. If you do not have a health care provider, call:
 - The Division of Public Health at [1-866-408-1899](tel:1-866-408-1899)
 - Some hospitals also have their own COVID-19 patient screening hotlines:
 - Bayhealth patients can call 302-310-8477
 - Beebe Healthcare patients can call 302-645-3200
- **Emergency Orders:** For a list of the Governor's Emergency Declarations and orders, visit: <https://governor.delaware.gov/health-soe/>
 - The Delaware Healthcare Association also has a summary of each order and links to supporting documents on our website at <https://www.deha.org/News/DHA-Blog/Delaware's-COVID-19-Emergency-Declarations-and-Rel>
- **Donations:** To donate PPE and other supplies, visit: <https://donatede.org>
- **Delaware Healthcare Association contacts:**
 - Wayne Smith, President & CEO: wayne@deha.org, 302-547-5864
 - Megan McNamara Williams, DNP, FNP-C, FAANP, Vice President: megan@deha.org, 302-223-5993
 - Christina Crooks Bryan, Director of Communications and Policy: christina@deha.org, 302-245-1638
 - Yasmine Chinoy, Operations and Office Manager: yasmnine@deha.org, 302-747-8664