



Greater New York Hospital Association

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Kenneth E. Raske, President

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TO: Chief Executive Officers
FROM: Kenneth E. Raske, President
RE: Update on Hurricane Katrina Emergency Relief Efforts

Over the last week, GNYHA has been actively working with local, State, and Federal agencies and other organizations, including the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the New York State Department of Health (DOH), the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the American Hospital Association (AHA), and the Healthcare Association of New York State to facilitate its members' offers to help with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. I am writing to provide you with an update on GNYHA's efforts in that regard.

Hospital Teams and Resources

GNYHA has been holding daily conference calls with HHS and members interested in staffing HHS' planned emergency medical shelters in order to answer questions related to that effort. As indicated in previous GNYHA member letter bulletins, HHS has been requesting 100-person teams of volunteers from hospitals that would be sent to the Gulf region to staff HHS emergency medical shelters. The goals of the medical shelters are to stabilize patients, provide treatment, and fill prescriptions that may have lapsed since the hurricane. Patients requiring further care may be transported to medical facilities in surrounding areas. HHS had initially planned to set up 40 shelters with 250 beds each. Those plans are evolving and it appears that HHS may be interested in staffing the shelters with smaller teams. We note that HHS strongly prefers that team members come from the same hospital or system so that they can better coordinate their efforts.

Government officials have stressed that, although GNYHA members would like to assist in relief efforts immediately, this will be a long-term effort. Therefore, even if GNYHA members are not called upon in the next several days, GNYHA members may be called for assistance at a later date.

Hospitals that are interested in putting forward teams to staff the shelters should let GNYHA know, if they have not done so already. In addition, the AHA has established a Web site, located at www.hospitalreliefforts.org, where hospitals can register what personnel and supplies they can provide for the relief effort.

GNYHA members should be aware that 1199 is communicating with represented employees about the possibility of having them trained as volunteers that would work with the Red Cross as part of relief efforts in the Gulf region. GNYHA is not aware of requests for health care volunteers or requests for volunteers as part of the Red Cross relief efforts at this time and continues to plan for hospital-based teams to be deployed in the event that they are needed. According to the League of Voluntary Hospitals and Homes of New York, there is no agreement to release 1199 represented employees with pay for volunteer trainings or volunteering outside of the hospital-based teams. Any decision to pay employees that may volunteer through either a hospital-based team or through 1199 efforts is an individual institutional decision.

Individual Volunteers

Individual providers who are affiliated with hospitals who wish to volunteer their services in the Gulf region should contact the person in the hospital responsible for putting together a team, if the hospital is doing so. Individual providers who are not affiliated with hospitals who wish to volunteer their services may want to consider the following:

- signing up with HHS to register for an appointment by HHS to assist in hurricane relief efforts at: <https://volunteer.ccrf.hhs.gov>;
- contacting the local medical reserve corps, which may be sending volunteers to the Gulf region. For example, the New York City Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is deploying non-physician volunteers to staff American Red Cross shelters. More information is available on the MRC Web site at www.medicalreserve.org; and
- contacting their local professional organization, as some of them (e.g., the Medical Society of the State of New York, the New York State Nurses Association), are compiling lists of those interested in volunteering.

DOH has released a health advisory with background information regarding volunteer relief efforts that is posted on the GNYHA Web page described below.

Legal, GME, and Payment Issues

GNYHA members have raised a number of questions regarding the official status, role, and legal and liability protections that will be accorded to the teams of medical personnel deployed by HHS to travel to the Gulf region. GNYHA will be sending a separate GNYHA member letter bulletin that addresses those issues, and GNYHA members with questions should contact Deborah Brown at GNYHA. GNYHA has also been reviewing graduate medical education issues and reimbursement issues. GNYHA members with questions regarding graduate medical education issues should contact Tim Johnson at GNYHA, and GNYHA members with questions regarding reimbursement should contact Stewart Presser at GNYHA.

Request for Infectious Disease Specialist Consultations

The National Institutes of Health has asked various organizations to assist in identifying clinicians that would be willing to be available to provide expert consultation (by phone or e-mail) in infectious disease treatment and management, including HIV/AIDS for clinicians who may find themselves with patients displaced by Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Providers who are interested in volunteering should submit their contact information (name, address, affiliation, specialty, e-mail address, and phone number) to Susan Benjamin at DOH at sxb05@health.state.ny.us.

New York State's Efforts

Governor Pataki has been working with several New York State agencies in order to provide temporary shelter to evacuees in facilities in New York State that are currently unused. Facilities being reviewed are military bases, closed hospitals, and closed nursing homes. According to Governor Pataki, FEMA put evacuations to states outside the Southeastern United States on hold earlier this week because most evacuees have asked to remain in the region and as close as possible to their homes.

Governor Pataki has announced a new toll-free hotline, 1-888-7-NYS-AID, which the State has setup to coordinate assistance efforts. New Yorkers can call if they are able to offer long-term and vacant housing resources that could be used to house evacuees. These resources will be included in a national inventory that FEMA is developing. In addition, any Katrina victims that are already in New York State should call the hotline to register to ensure that they can receive the support and benefits they deserve. The Governor has also announced that the National Guard Armory at Jamaica, Queens will be open to accept good, used clothing donations from New Yorkers to transport to the Gulf Coast region.

Waiver of Certain Regulatory Requirements

On September 1, 2005, HHS Secretary Leavitt signed a waiver of certain provisions of the Social Security Act (Act) and related regulations, per his authority under Section 1135 of the Act. This action temporarily waives certain regulatory requirements to the extent necessary to ensure provision of health care to Medicare, Medicaid, and State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) enrollees and to provide reimbursements and exemptions from sanctions to providers unable to comply with the requirements due to Hurricane Katrina.

The waived provisions include:

- certain conditions of participation and certification requirements for individual health care providers or hospitals;
- license requirements for the state in which medical professionals are providing services, as long as they are licensed in good standing in another state;
- sanctions under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA);
- limitations on payments to permit Medicare Advantage enrollees to use out-of-network providers in an emergency; and
- sanctions and penalties under HIPAA privacy regulations.

Additional information may be found on the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services Web site at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/katrina/1135ssa.pdf>.

Hurricane Relief Section on GNYHA's Web site

GNYHA has launched a new section on its Web site entitled "Hurricane Katrina Resources," located on the GNYHA home page. The section includes links to many resources, including information for volunteers that may be part of the relief effort, legal issues related to providing services in response to a declared disaster, payment issues, and general information about response efforts related to Hurricane Katrina. To view the section, go to GNYHA's Web site located at www.gnyha.org. This section is accessible to GNYHA members and the general public.

Other Web Sites

In addition to the GNYHA Web page described above, the following Web sites may provide useful information to you:

- American Hospital Association: www.hospitalreliefforts.org : includes information such as an unofficial example of the scope of staffing needed for the medical shelters.
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org : provides information on volunteering, donations and locating family members that have been displaced due to the hurricane.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/travel/other/hurricane/hurricane_relief_workers.htm : provides interim health recommendations for relief workers.
- Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS): www.cms.hhs.gov/katrina/: provides information about CMS emergency relief activities, including billing and payment policy revisions.

If you have any questions, please contact Susan C. Waltman, Doris R. Varlese, or Alison Burke at GNYHA.

cc: Emergency Preparedness Coordinating Council
Chairs, Disaster Committee
Directors, Pre-hospital Care
Chairs, Emergency Medicine Departments
Administrators, Emergency Departments
Infection Control Directors
AIDS Administrators/Directors
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Committee
Public Affairs Committee
Community Affairs Forum
Government Affairs Forum