

Governor Walz Secures a Third Federal Emergency Medical Team to Support M Health Fairview Southdale Hospital

HHS team joins Department of Defense medical teams that are currently supporting staff at HCMC and St. Cloud Hospital; Announcement comes after Governor asked President Biden for more COVID-19 assistance during his visit to Minnesota earlier this week.

Governor Tim Walz today announced the arrival of a third emergency federal medical team to support Minnesota hospitals. The announcement comes after the Governor asked President Biden for more COVID-19 assistance during his visit to Minnesota earlier this week.

A team of 14 doctors, nurses, and hospital staff from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will support COVID-19 treatment and patient care at M Health Fairview Southdale Hospital in Edina. The team, from HHS's National Disaster Medical System, will arrive on Friday and deploy for at least two weeks, with the option to extend.

Governor Walz previously secured Department of Defense (DoD) emergency staffing teams for HCMC in Minneapolis and St. Cloud Hospital. The three federal teams are relieving doctors and nurses who have been treating a spike in hospitalized COVID-19 patients around the state.

The Walz-Flanagan Administration worked with Minnesota hospitals to ask HHS and DoD for emergency staffing support, a request Governor Walz reiterated directly to President Biden on Tuesday.

"Minnesota's frontline health care workers continue to tirelessly treat patients sick with COVID-19. I am so grateful for their dedication, and I want to thank the Biden Administration for providing emergency staffing support to help the great doctors and nurses at M Health Fairview Southdale," said Governor Walz. "There are simple things Minnesotans can do to keep themselves safe, healthy, and out of the hospital. Get vaccinated if you haven't yet. Get your booster if you are due. Get tested and stay home if you feel sick. The last thing Minnesota hospitals need right now is more COVID-19 patients – and the last thing any Minnesotan should want is to be hospitalized with this dire disease."

"We all need to do whatever we can to help our doctors, nurses, and hospital staff. That's why our administration has worked hand-in-hand with federal health officials to provide staffing support to our hospitals, including M Health Fairview Southdale. We are so grateful they are here," said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. "Now it's time for all Minnesotans to pitch in and do their part. Get vaccinated. Get boosted. Get tested. We are still all in this together."

"We deeply appreciate the federal government support and we ask all Minnesotans to do their part by using the effective tools now available to us to reduce the spread of COVID in our communities," said Minnesota Department of Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm. "That includes vaccines and boosters, masking, testing when appropriate, staying away from crowds, and staying home when sick."

“Throughout this pandemic, teams across our health system have pushed through obstacles to find new and creative ways to deliver life-saving care to our community,” said Laura Reed, Chief Nursing Executive and Chief Operating Officer at Fairview Health Services. “Even now, more than 19 months into our fight against COVID-19, we continue to be presented with new challenges and a need for new solutions. A rise in COVID-19 cases, coupled with a significant need for acute care, has caused many hospitals across the country to reach capacity. We remain grateful to the Governor and MDH for their advocacy in bringing in federal support to augment our essential healthcare teams, ensuring we can continue to respond to trauma and health emergencies when Minnesotans need us most.”

The three federal staffing teams are helping Minnesota hospitals manage persistently high COVID-19 caseloads. On Wednesday, Minnesota hospitals reported 1,549 patients hospitalized for COVID-19, including 345 patients in ICUs.

Securing federal emergency staffing teams has been one aspect of Governor’s Walz’s action plan to support hospitals and long-term care facilities as they deal with staffing and bed shortages during this case surge.

Since October, Governor Walz has:

- Worked with long-term care facilities to launch three alternative care sites to accept non-critical patients from hospitals. The sites – in Shakopee, Brainerd, and Saint Paul – have made 88 beds available for non-emergency patients, allowing hospitals to transfer patients and provide acute care to those who need it most;
- Activated 400 members of the Minnesota National Guard to serve as a skilled-nursing “response teams” that will support skilled-nursing facilities experiencing severe staffing shortages;
- Made \$50 million in federal American Rescue Plan funding available for immediate emergency grants to long-term care facilities to hire and retain employees;
- Expanded the Emergency Staffing Pool so that short-term emergency temporary staff could be used to open up additional long-term care beds for patients ready to be discharged from a hospital; and
- Directed the Department of Human Services to free up capacity at state-operated long-term care facilities.