

Governor Walz Secures Extension of Emergency Federal Medical Teams for Minnesota Hospitals

Today, Governor Tim Walz announced an extension of the federal government's emergency staffing support at two Minnesota hospitals following his appeal to President Biden for additional support.

Two Department of Defense emergency staffing teams will continue to support staff and treat patients at HCMC in Minneapolis and St. Cloud Hospital through late January 2022. The teams arrived in Minnesota in November on initial 30-day deployments and will remain for an additional 30 days after Governor Walz requested an extension this week in a letter to the White House.

"We are at a critical moment in our pandemic response, and we are using every resource available to relieve the pressure on our overworked health care personnel and to make sure patients receive the treatment they need and deserve," said Governor Walz. "I am astounded by the resiliency of our doctors, nurses, and hospital staff, and my administration is working every day to help make their jobs easier. That's why I'm grateful to President Biden and his administration for accepting our urgent request for more staffing support in our hospitals."

"Our medical personnel continue to feel the strain of COVID-19. We are relieved and thankful that the Biden Administration has extended its support for our doctors, nurses, hospitals, and, ultimately, patients seeking care," said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. "While Minnesota's hospital personnel and these federal medical teams are on the front line of this pandemic, every Minnesotan has a role to play, right now, in helping fight COVID-19. Please get vaccinated, get boosted when you're due, get tested if you feel ill, and wear a mask in public."

"The DoD team has been an enormous support for our staff. Unfortunately, the current surge of COVID-19 patients in our referral area has not decreased since the team arrived at the end of November. We continue to see large and increasing numbers of patients come through the doors of CentraCare - St. Cloud Hospital. Unfortunately, our rural hospitals and referral partners are feeling that same surge. Our beds and ICUs are full," said Dr. Ken Holmen, President and CEO of CentraCare. "The U.S. Air Force Medical Response Team help is still vitally needed, and we are thankful for their willingness and ability to help our clinical team care for this community."

"These exceptionally skilled nurses and physicians, along with our outstanding team members, have made it possible for us to treat more patients from across Minnesota who need care for traumatic injuries or critical illnesses than we would have been able to without federal support," said Jennifer DeCubellis, CEO, Hennepin Healthcare. "Extending federal support is a 30-day reprieve that will help during the upcoming holidays, but in order for things to change the public needs to do its part – get vaccinated, get a booster, mask up, and stay safe. We thank Governor Walz, Senator Klobuchar, and President Biden for recognizing the immense pressure on health care systems across Minnesota right now and ensuring that we have the staffing available to try to continue to meet the needs of Minnesotans who need care."

Minnesota hospitals are currently treating nearly 1,600 people for COVID-19 with nearly than 370 COVID-positive Minnesotans in the ICU. Hospitals report the vast majority of these patients are unvaccinated.