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NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ALERT

Returning Hospital Capacity to Licensure Limits

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Background

The pandemic has had a tremendous impact on healthcare across New Mexico. From utilization surges and lags to workforce shortages, each delivery system is experiencing demand and pressure not seen before in modern times. Although the case counts have declined, the strain being placed on hospitals continues, particularly in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. The current situation is not sustainable for safe and effective operation.

The situation is particularly acute at UNM Hospital (UNMH), as UNMH is still consistently operating at or above 125% of its licensed capacity. Stretching to this capacity and beyond over the past two and a half years has only been possible because of the federal public health emergency (PHE), which is likely to end in the next 4 months. In anticipation of the end of the PHE, UNMH must now begin return to its licensed capacity. As it does so, it must still maintain capacity for the unique services only UNMH can provide in the state. UNMH is the state's only academic and quaternary medical care center. It is also the state's only Level I Trauma center, only Comprehensive Stroke Center, only dedicated Children's Hospital, and is the state's Children's Psychiatric Center. UNMH has requested the assistance of the Medical Advisory Team (MAT) as it prepares to return to its licensed capacity, while continuing to fulfill UNMH's critical role in the New Mexico health care delivery system.

The Medical Advisory Team's (MAT) Plan:

- Reimplement the "hub and spoke" model that was successful in the pandemic response to balance the census across NM hospitals and assist in the transfer of patients when needed.
- A subcommittee of the MAT is reviewing transportation logistics associated with using the hub and spoke model and determining best methods to transport patients and return them to their community once hospitalization, partial hospitalization, or treatment is complete.

UNMH's Internal Plan:

- Work with referring hospitals to refine protocols for admissions through Access UNM (PALS) to limit volume to those patients who require the unique services of UNMH.

- Work with referring hospitals to coordinate care across entities as appropriate (such as utilization of swing beds at critical access hospitals).
- Increase same day or next day access to clinic appointments so that patients who are seen in the ED can be safely discharged and have follow up the following day.
- Close non-licensed care spaces created during the pandemic response.

What can NM Hospitals do to help:

- Locally admit patients that are the appropriate level of care and capability for your organization.
- First attempt to transfer within the facility's hub and spoke region if clinically capable of providing the care.
- Work with facilities in the hub and spoke structure to coordinate care, such as sending out a patient for a procedure to an Albuquerque hospital or a Hub hospital, but returning the patient to the spoke hospital for their inpatient care if clinically capable.
- DOH requests that hospitals request transfer only through Access UNM (PALS) and not use alternative transfer inquiries, such as calling a UNM physician directly.

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the New Mexico Health Alert Network, click the following link to go directly to the HAN registration page <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjz/10b2> Please provide all information requested to begin receiving important health alerts and advisories.