

COVID-19 Update

Date: Wednesday, April 29, 2020
To: Everyone at HHS
From: Rob Maclsaac, President and CEO
Subject: **CEO Update on Hospital Services**

What you need to know:

- The Premier has provided a framework for the reopening of businesses and services in the province.
- Ontario Health is providing guidance to hospitals on the resumption of clinical services.
- HHS is developing a process to plan for the reintegration of the clinical services and transformation projects that were paused during our initial pandemic response.
- The reintroduction of clinical services at HHS will align with the direction provided by Ontario Health and will be guided by an ethical framework rooted in the best interests of our patients.
- We will continue to provide regular updates as this process moves forward.

What is happening?

Across Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS), we have mounted a highly effective response to the initial threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the process, we have necessarily paused many clinical services and important projects.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, but the impact on our region and our hospital is changing. The projected demand for clinical capacity is less than initially forecast and we are entering a new phase of pandemic response planning.

What work is ahead?

We are planning for the gradual reintegration of clinical services and transformation projects that were paused during our initial pandemic response, keeping in mind that simply returning to business as usual will not be possible as long as the virus continues to infect people in our community. We must maintain a safe hospital environment and will need a clear process to guide decisions about the allocation of limited resources.

This week, the Premier announced a framework for making decisions about the reopening of businesses and services in the province. The process will be gradual, guided by provincial decisions made during the weeks and months ahead. All Ontario hospitals are instructed to maintain their existing clinical service reductions until further notice, and to preserve the capacity requested of us for the provincial pandemic response effort. Ontario Health is developing further guidance for hospitals about the gradual resumption of hospital services.

What are the immediate next steps?

In anticipation, Hamilton Health Sciences has started work on a process to guide the staged reintegration of ambulatory and procedural services at our sites. Task Force groups are now engaging physicians, leaders, staff and other stakeholders to develop the principles needed to guide this work. The principles pay close attention to the ethical and operational considerations needed to determine which services are able to resume, when, and to what degree. HHS' patient care mission is a primary consideration, and attention will also be paid to the impact of increasing services on ongoing pandemic containment priorities, infection control, staffing levels, clinical support services, as well as supply inventories.

When will we begin to resume ambulatory and procedural services or other work?

HHS will follow a principle-based process to resume services consistent with guidelines anticipated from Ontario Health. As mentioned above, the reintegration of clinical services that have been paused will occur over a period of weeks and months. In the coming weeks, our senior executive team will approve the implementation plan, once input has been provided from our organization's Board of Directors, Medical Advisory Council, pandemic response command centre, and site leadership. Updates on this process will be part of our ongoing corporate communications about COVID-19.

HHS is also starting to resume efforts on critical transformation projects that were underway across the organization prior to the pandemic. This includes projects in our Digital Health Plan, as well as the selection process for our new Health Information System. It also includes important projects for the redevelopment of our facilities and the renewal of our equipment fleet. The Transformation Executive Committee is meeting on May 6 to consider the timelines and process for this work to resume. Again, updates will be part of our ongoing corporate communications.
