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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Re-establishment of a Field Hospital at the DCU Center in Worcester

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

11/13/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

Department of Public Health

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced that the first field hospital will be stood up at the DCU Center in Worcester as the Commonwealth prepares additional capacity for COVID-19 patients. This site will be built by the National Guard and is the first field hospital to re-open in the state since June.

“The Commonwealth continues to see an alarming rise in cases and hospitalizations for COVID-19 and we are acting now to expand hospital capacity,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.** “All residents are urged to follow guidance to wear masks, stay home at night and stop gathering. We are preparing our hospital system to add more beds and stand up our first field hospital to care for COVID-19 patients if these trends continue. We will keep working with our health care system to monitor capacity and will be prepared to open more locations if needed.”

The plan to re-establish the field hospital in Worcester was activated this week. The site is expected to be available for patients in the first week of December if needed and additional locations will be added in other regions if necessary. No further changes or restrictions to regular hospital services in Massachusetts are being implemented at this time.

“Since Day One of our response to this crisis, we have worked to ensure that our hospitals and health care providers have the resources they need to meet the acute care health needs of our residents,” **said EOHHS Secretary Marylou Sudders, the COVID-19 Command Center Director.** “We are in a much better position to respond to what will be a difficult next few months, and the early re-opening of this field hospital is based on the data we see is the right action to take at this time."

State officials have closely monitored several metrics and note that hospitalizations since Labor Day have increased from 178 to 661. While the hospital system manages the current demand for COVID and non-COVID care, the DCU site will provide approximately 240 additional beds to care for lower-acuity COVID-19 patients, helping preserve hospital system capacity for higher-risk patients diagnosed with COVID-19 or other serious health conditions.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) will coordinate the logistics of the DCU Center field hospital, in close collaboration with the Command Center, City of Worcester, and UMass Memorial Health Care, which will again lead all clinical, day-to-day, operations.

“The Commonwealth’s forward planning and ability to stand up this Alternate Care Site with our partners is a direct result of lessons learned and our experience during the first wave of the pandemic,” **said MEMA Director Samantha Phillips**. "We hope that we won't need all of these overflow beds, but if we do, they’ll be ready.”

The DCU Center was the first of five field hospitals constructed by the Commonwealth during the response to the springtime surge of COVID-19 cases. From early April until late May, when it was de-mobilized, the DCU site served 161 patients. In total, the DCU and the Boston Hope field hospitals cared for more than 570 hospital patients during the first pandemic surge.

“This is the right thing to do and at the right time. The field hospital was an enormous asset for Central Massachusetts hospitals during the spring surge. I believe it can serve an even greater purpose today because we have learned so much more about the virus and caring for COVID-19 patients since then. Our team is ready to deploy and to assist the state’s hospitals,” **said Eric W. Dickson, MD, President and CEO of UMass Memorial Health Care**.

Alternate Care Sites are designed as clinical spaces for lower acuity patients. These sites provide a relief valve for hospitals, allowing them to manage or reconfigure their facilities to care for more seriously ill patients. Each site is built to safely accommodate the beds, equipment, and medical supplies needed to appropriately care for COVID-19 patients.

The establishment of field hospitals has been a critical strategy in Massachusetts' response to COVID-19. Additionally, the Command Center has added 30 specialty beds at two long term care facilities to increase capacity for individuals being discharged from acute care hospitals to nursing home level of care and are on ventilators or had tracheotomies. The Commonwealth’s continued preparedness has also included the stockpiling of millions of pieces of PPE, including gloves, masks, gowns, and other essential equipment as hundreds of additional ventilators. The state’s emergency stockpile will buttress strong preparedness that hospitals and other health care facilities have undertaken in the last several months, including building their own inventories to respond to the next stage of the pandemic.

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