

**Subject:** COVID-19 Update – September 10

**Sent:** Thursday, September 10, 2020 7:03 PM

**From:** Bo Boulenger

**To:** DG-BHSF Everyone; DG-BT Everyone Automated; BRRH Everyone; BRRH-BocaCare All

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This week marks six months since we saw our first patient with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) at one of our hospitals. On March 11, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Since then, we have cared for thousands of patients with the virus. We have learned a lot in the process, and we continue to learn more every day. Through uncertainty and challenges, we have worked together to deliver effective and compassionate patient care and have made an enormous impact on the lives of so many families. And, we did it safely by masking and using proper protocols. Thank you for the incredible teamwork that you demonstrate every day.

I'm pleased to share there has been continued improvement as far as the number of cases we are seeing at our locations. At the height of the surge this summer, the number of patients with COVID-19 across our system was above 800, and today we are caring for 167 patients with COVID-19 across our hospitals – a 19 percent decrease from last week and a 43 percent decrease from two weeks ago. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have discharged more than 6,000 patients with COVID-19.

As trends like the infection rate and positivity rate continue to improve locally and across the state, and restrictions begin to ease across South Florida, we are also seeing more patients return to us for their regular care. As always, safety continues to be our priority across our system, and we're ready to care for our community.

### **Return to Work Guidelines**

Baptist Health follows the CDC's time- and symptom-based guidelines when determining when employees should return to work following exposure to COVID-19. It is important to know that a positive test after 10 or 20 days in an improved patient is not indicative of infectivity. Our Occupational Health office determines when employees can return to work based on the following CDC Guidelines:

- *Symptom-Based Strategy:* Symptomatic employees with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 will be excluded from work until at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever and improvement of symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath). OHO will release employee to work after symptoms have resolved and no sooner than 10 days from the onset of symptoms.
- *Time-Based Strategy:* Asymptomatic employees with a confirmed COVID-19 positive test will be excluded from work until at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 test assuming the employee has not developed symptoms since the positive test. If the employee develops symptoms during the quarantine period, then the symptom-based strategy will apply. OHO will release the employee to work after 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive test as long as the employee remained asymptomatic.

Exceptions apply for Miami Cancer Institute and Lynn Cancer Institute employees. If you have any questions, please contact your Occupational Health Office representative.

## **Flu Vaccine**

Flu season is quickly approaching, and during this COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to plan ahead and get your flu shot early. As a reminder, Baptist Health requires all employees, leaders, medical staff, students, contract workers and vendors who work at any Baptist Health location to get the influenza vaccine each year, unless approved for an exemption. The flu vaccine will begin to be offered across the system on September 21. Occupational Health will be sharing more details with employees soon.

## **Testing**

Baptist Health Urgent Care and Urgent Care Express centers will soon have the capability to offer COVID 19 rapid antigen testing to our patients, which means that patients visiting our centers will have the ability to have their COVID-19 test results by the time they leave our site. We look forward to being able to provide this service to our community and increasing the number of testing platforms that we have available.

## **Visitor Guidelines**

We continue to adapt our visitor policies at our hospitals and other locations based on current circumstances. The most up-to-date visitor guidelines by entity can be found on our website at [BaptistHealth.net/Coronavirus](https://BaptistHealth.net/Coronavirus).

## **2020 Census**

The challenges of COVID-19 have given us unique opportunities to take care of others. Now there's another way we can help each other – by completing the 2020 Census, before September 30. This is important because when the federal government conducts the Census, it not only counts everyone in our state, it makes crucial funding allocation decisions based on that count for healthcare, social services, and community programs and hospitals (like ours) for the next 10 years. For example, Census data is used to calculate Medicaid reimbursement levels and track factors that influence health, such as income and housing, to help ensure equitable access to care. Although Florida is the third-most-populous state in the US, in 2010 we had the third-lowest Census participation rate. This resulted in a loss of an estimated \$20 billion in federal funding and other support. I encourage you to be counted in the 2020 Census. Information you provide is strictly confidential and cannot be used against you in any way. You can complete the Census form online ([2020Census.gov](https://2020Census.gov)), by phone (844-330-2020), or by mail.

As always, thank you for your work and dedication to our patients and to each other. Together we'll continue to do our part to fight this virus as our community recovers. We are hopeful that the positive trends continue - and know that the incredible work we've done as a team has helped us get to this point.

With immense gratitude,  
Bo

## **Bo Boulenger**

**Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer**

6855 Red Road | Coral Gables, FL 33143

Direct: 786-662-7572 | Main: 786-662-7111

Email: [bob@baptisthealth.net](mailto:bob@baptisthealth.net)