



# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **County of San Mateo Partners with Dignity Health and AMI to Increase Staffed ICU Bed Capacity for the Bay Area Region**

**Redwood City** – As the rise in COVID-19 cases threatens the health and safety of residents of the Bay Area region and beyond, the County of San Mateo has partnered with Dignity Health and AMI Expeditionary Healthcare to increase local ICU bed availability for this crucial period.

The agreement provides licensed medical professionals from AMI to staff up to 10 intensive care unit (ICU) beds in Dignity Health’s Sequoia Hospital in Redwood City for at least 30 days. The increased surge capacity will serve not only San Mateo County but the Bay Area region as a whole.

This \$4.5 million investment by the County of San Mateo strengthens the ability to provide urgent hospital care for residents during this time of unprecedented surge.

“We’re fortunate to be able to connect resources to key partners to support our local community and our neighbors during this crisis,” said County Manager Mike Callagy.

With the regional stay-at-home order requiring a period of at least three weeks of staying at home and avoiding all but essential activities, this arrangement is aimed at preventing those needing ICU-level care from not being able to get it due to the staffing constraints at hospitals across the Bay Area. The first 5-bed unit is expected to be staffed within a week, with the second 5-bed unit available by the following week.

Sequoia Hospital’s critical care and ICU teams have been working around the clock since the beginning of the pandemic to ensure patients receive the life-saving care they need.

Teams are in daily contact with colleagues at other hospitals and across Dignity Health, and with city, county, and national health experts such as the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“We are proud of the collaborative relationship we have with San Mateo County and the other health care providers within the region,” said Sequoia Hospital President and CEO

Bill Graham. “We are pleased to be able to offer this additional resource to support the increased demand for ICU care.”

Medical personnel from AMI Expeditionary Healthcare, which mobilizes clinical resources for healthcare disasters and emergencies around the world, have supported other County Health operations during the pandemic, including COVID-19 testing and clinical services support at congregate care facilities.

Bay Area health directors agreed that accessing highly trained critical care staff during the surge represents a vital need within the region. The placement of patients into these supplemental ICU beds will be facilitated by San Mateo County’s Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator (MHAOC) program.

Collaborating with local, regional, and state partners, the MHOAC program coordinates the County’s emergency medical response in crisis situations and serves as the medical health mutual aid system. Dignity Health’s presence in three Bay Area counties provides a footprint to serve the region as whole.

“When ICU capacity drops below 15 percent, every staffed ICU bed counts, especially for each individual who needs care,” said Travis Kusman, Emergency Medical Services director for San Mateo County, who also serves as the Regional Disaster Medical Health Coordinator.

The additional surge capacity is a piece of the larger regional response, which relies on the public’s continuing to follow existing safety guidelines. According to Louise Rogers, chief of San Mateo County Health, the substantial increase in COVID-19 cases requires collaboration and focus for these critical next few weeks.

“In addition to reinforcing what we all need to do as residents – to always wear a mask in public, insulate our households from exposure, and taking the earliest possible actions to mask, isolate, self-quarantine even within our households – we determined there is an additional role we could play by investing in greater ICU staffing capacity,” Rogers said. “This partnership between San Mateo County, AMI, and Dignity Health is a timely backstop to preserve the availability of medical care for Bay Area residents.”

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