

March 18, 2020

Bozeman Health Big Sky Medical Center COVID-19 Preparedness

Bozeman Health is actively coordinating their communication, preparedness, and response activities for COVID-19 and formally activated their health system Incident Command structure on February 10, 2020. This structure remains active to scale their response due to increasing global spread of COVID-19.

Over the last several weeks, the Bozeman Health COVID-19 Response Team, led by Kallie Kujawa, System Director of Quality and Safety, Dr. Mark Winton (Infectious Disease and Travel Medicine Specialist), Dr. Eric Lowe (Emergency Medicine), and the Infection Prevention Specialists has prepared the health system, including Big Sky Medical Center and b2 UrgentCare Big Sky for a possible sustained community transmission of COVID-19, with the assistance of others in the Incident Command team, including Dr. Kathryn Bertany, president of Big Sky Medical Center and Deaconess Hospital.

Birgen Knoff, System Director of Clinical Practice and Emergency Operations Manager, has been partnering with the COVID-19 Response Team to continue to build a systemwide structure to coordinate entity activities as well as coordinate with the Montana State Healthcare Coalitions, EMS, and city and county agencies, including Gallatin City-County Health Department. The many other critical members of the COVID-19 Response Team have been and continue to be incorporated into the Incident Command structure, with operational and clinical support from every Bozeman Health care site.

Formal situational reports, daily status emails, and on-demand communication (including emails, phone calls, meetings, etc.) are regularly being shared with Big Sky Medical Center and b2 UrgentCare employees and medical staff to keep all employees and medical staff providers throughout the health system informed about the rapidly changing environment.

“We extend our most sincere thanks to the many employees and medical staff, including those at Big Sky Medical Center, who continually exhibit a high-quality, safe, and expert environment for all employees and patients throughout Southwest Montana,” stated Dr. Bertany.

Big Sky Medical Center Current Status

Big Sky Medical Center is prepared for and has the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to collect specimens to send to the state lab in Helena for COVID-19 testing. Bozeman Health and all state-wide providers only collect specimens (i.e. swab the patient’s nose) – all testing in the state of Montana occurs at the State Lab in Helena. Specimen collection, and subsequent COVID-19 testing, is based on individual evaluations of persons who come to Big Sky Medical Center and that evaluation includes review of symptoms, medical history, and travel history. It is important to note that the current COVID-19 test is not reliable when specimens are collected from people who do not have any symptoms.

Therefore, Bozeman Health Big Sky Medical Center providers are following strict parameters from CDC and the State Health Department about when and who to swab for COVID-19. If you hear concerns from individuals about not being tested, you can reassure them that Bozeman Health is following all protocol from our governing entities and handling each patient with compassion to address their individual symptoms.

The test for COVID-19 is not sensitive enough to detect the virus in individuals with no symptoms or mild symptoms, so per CDC guidelines, providers will not collect a specimen (swab) patients with mild to no symptoms even if they have been to a restricted country or have been in direct contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. There are some exceptions for individuals with underlying health conditions, or who live or care for those who are especially vulnerable to the disease.

Medical supply monitoring and management information is being shared daily throughout the health system to ensure each care site has the supplies needed to care for their patient populations.

Dr. Bertany and Taylor Rose, Big Sky Medical Center's new director of operations and clinical services, remain in ongoing dialogue with community leaders, sharing updates about BSMC's status and discussing future needs.

Big Sky residents and visitors can call Big Sky Medical Center's main number at 406-995-6995 and on the phone tree is an option to reach the COVID-19 Health Line, where residents and visitors can speak to nurses about COVID-19 and any respiratory symptoms. The COVID-19 Health Line is staffed from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

No-Cost b2 VirtualCare Visits

b2 VirtualCare, Bozeman Health's virtual care platform, is temporarily offering no-cost virtual visits to those community members who may be experiencing flu-like symptoms including: fever, dry cough, and fatigue.

For community members needing to access these services, they can download the b2 VirtualCare app using Google Play or the Apple App Store or by visiting b2virtualcare.com. When accessing the virtual platform, patients must use the promo code **FLUBZN2020**.

Bozeman Health is happy to offer this temporary option to address the current public health emergency in support of our community members and only applies to specific symptoms in light of recent guidance from CMS urging Medicare Advantage Organizations and Part D Sponsors to increase access to care services in the wake of COVID-19.

Bozeman Health General Emergency Preparedness

Bozeman Health has an emergency preparedness plan that was developed using best practice materials from FEMA, along with an emergency preparedness team that regularly meets and conducts emergency response drills at entities throughout the health system.

An important component of Bozeman Health's emergency preparedness plan is a close working relationship with Gallatin City-County Health Department, Gallatin County Emergency Preparedness, and other partners including Montana State University, which Bozeman Health maintains through active participation in the All-Hazards All Disciplines (AHAD) quarterly meeting held by Gallatin County Emergency Preparedness. Participation in AHAD includes training classes, conducting drills and tabletop exercises and collaboration on process and procedure for handling incidents or emergency situations as a larger community.

More than 20 Bozeman Health leaders and clinical team members, including three Big Sky Medical Center employees, have completed comprehensive training in Healthcare Leadership in Mass-Casualty Incidents at FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama in the past year as part of continuous emergency preparedness training and development efforts. Much of the work required for emergency preparedness is done behind the scenes but is a critical component of Bozeman Health Big Sky Medical Center's day-to-day operations.

Healthcare Incident Command Structure

Bozeman Health utilizes the standardized FEMA hospital incident command structure which works within the framework of the National Incident Management System to ensure they are organized in their approach to the situation and are partnering with other agencies in the community as needed. Bozeman Health has and will continue to stand up Incident Command whenever activation of the emergency operations plan is warranted in response to a situation. Incident Command is a component of an emergency operations plan that ensures primary activities or functions necessary to effectively respond to incidents are appropriately identified, resourced, and managed. Incident Command is centralized for the entire Bozeman Health care system to ensure standardized, consistent policies, procedures, and guidelines at every care site.

Community Information

Gallatin City-County Health Department is the best resource for public health information. Members of the public can call Healthy Gallatin COVID-19 line at **406-548-0123** with any questions or concerns. Non-English speaking options are also available.

Social Media Links

<https://www.facebook.com/bozemanhealth/>

https://www.instagram.com/bozeman_health/

<https://www.facebook.com/bigskymedicalcenter/>

<https://www.instagram.com/bigskymedicalcenter/>

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About Bozeman Health

Bozeman Health is an integrated healthcare delivery system serving an eight-county region in Southwest Montana. As a nonprofit organization, governed by a volunteer community board of directors, we are the largest private employer in Gallatin County, with more than 2,300 employees, including 250 medical providers representing 40 clinical specialties. It is our privilege to deliver expert, compassionate health and wellness services across the care continuum, designed to meet the diverse healthcare needs of the communities we serve. Learn more about Bozeman Health at [BozemanHealth.org](https://www.BozemanHealth.org).