



## **North Country Healthcare Implements Measures to Address COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

**March 15, 2020; Whitefield, NH** – North Country Healthcare (NCH) has put in place a series of measures to increase our ability to safely treat and serve during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) emergency.

Most significantly, an overarching NCH Incident Command Center for situational awareness has been set up to link the Command Centers of each affiliate hospital (Androscoggin Valley Hospital, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital, and Weeks Medical Center). In addition, NCH has added representation from North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency to address the unique needs of that patient population as well.

Precautionary, non-invasive screening at our hospital campuses now act as an added safeguard against the possible spread of the virus and other infectious diseases. All individuals presenting on any NCH campus will be screened for symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and be directed accordingly.

Patient screening is also being conducted via telephone with those who have upcoming outpatient clinic appointments, to ensure a symptom-free environment for those within the clinics/hospitals. Such screening is also being conducted for patients who have home health visits scheduled through North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency, a North Country Healthcare partner.

Effective immediately, affiliate hospitals have suspended activities by their respective volunteers who are 60+ years old, to help limit their risk of exposure to the virus.

Restrictions currently limit patients to one visitor between the ages of 19-59 at a time.

Rigorous control standards continue to be enforced, including hand washing, avoidance of unnecessary physical contact and appropriate social distancing (six feet) within physical spaces.

**PLEASE Call Prior to Visiting an NCH Facility**

Patients who are concerned that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should **call the hospital before visiting** any hospital campus or clinic/center. To protect our patients, providers and staff, please **do not go the emergency room for treatment unless you are having a medical emergency.**

To help ensure the safety of our patients, providers, and staff, Employee/Occupational Health team members at each facility are actively screening and monitoring, per CDC guidelines, employees and medical providers who return from travel. If and when any possible COVID-19 encounter takes place, the appropriate CDC recommendation(s) will be followed.

“As we implement these additional safeguards across North Country Healthcare facilities, it is also a good time for everyone to remember that each of us has a role to play in keeping ourselves and others healthy,” commented Ed Laverty, PA-C, Chief Medical Officer, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital. Measures that everyone can take include:

- washing your hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer;
- avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- avoiding contact with sick people;
- staying away from large crowds as much as possible;
- disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

If you become sick, **stay home from work and school to avoid infecting others. Avoid the emergency room for cough or runny nose unless you are suffering from more serious symptoms** of COVID-19 or the flu, which include trouble breathing or shortness of breath; chest or abdominal pain or pressure; sudden dizziness; confusion; severe or persistent vomiting; symptoms that improve but then return with fever and a worse cough.

We remain committed to the health and well-being of everyone in our community and encourage everyone to read up-to-date information from the Centers for Disease Control at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

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