Home Care Needs Priority Supplies, Regulatory Flexibility & Emergency Aid for COVID-19 Response

A Statement from HCA President and CEO Al Cardillo

“The home care population includes the elderly and individuals with multiple underlying chronic conditions who are at greatest risk from COVID-19. Individuals in quarantine, as well as those self-isolating and possibly living with COVID-19 undetected, are residing at home in most cases.”

“While hospital surge capacity concerns are, of course, extremely vital in this massive public health crisis, essential access to supplies, regulatory flexibility and emergency aid are needed for home care providers serving 900,000 individuals at home all across New York State. A great many of these individuals are at risk and require vital services to protect their health and safety.”

“In a just-completed HCA survey on the crisis, nearly 300 home care providers in every region of New York State report that they collectively serve more than 14,100 priority level 1 patients in the community. These are patients who, without home care, would face a rapid, immediately life-threatening deterioration in their existing health condition or would need to be transferred to another setting, such as hospitals or nursing homes already stretched to capacity. Many of these most at-risk patients are homebound, or dependent on technology or ventilators, with severe life-limiting conditions.”

“The vast majority of home and community-based providers (68%) in our survey report that they do not have access to adequate personal protective equipment. Almost half (48%) report instances where patients and/or family members refuse entry of staff in the home due to concerns about the virus at a time when home health agencies are working vigorously to screen caregivers and patients alike for the safety of both.”

“School and daycare closures, meanwhile, have greatly impacted case coverage, exacerbating a chronic workforce shortage that, before COVID-19, was already among home care’s top challenges. The use of telehealth technology and modern, commonly used applications such as
virtual video telephonic visits will help to alleviate this burden, assure continuity of care, and minimize spread of disease.”

“HCA is calling on state officials to make available immediate financial aid for home care’s COVID-19 response as well as waivers of certain regulations to relieve workforce pressures while ensuring the safety of patients and the workforce alike. These waivers would provide immediate relief. Certain services or procedures can be done remotely, using telehealth or other technologies. Other procedures, such as timeframes for completing in-home assessments, can be relaxed. This regulatory flexibility helps reduce the exposure of patients and staff, allowing for deployment of resources proportionate to risk and preventing further stresses on hospitals as cases continue to rise.”

HCA is a statewide health organization comprised of nearly 400 member providers and organizations delivering home and community-based care to several hundred thousand New Yorkers annually. HCA works to support providers in the delivery of high quality, cost-effective home and community-based care for the state’s citizens. HCA providers include hospitals, nursing homes, free-standing agencies and health systems which operate Certified Home Health Agencies, Licensed Home Care Services Agencies, Managed Long Term Care Plans, Hospices, Long Term Home Health Care Programs, waiver programs, and an array of allied, supportive services entities.