

## How Clinton Area Ambulance Service (CAASA) is taking care of business during the COVID 19 Pandemic

We hope this message finds you all safe and well. Our Team has been working tirelessly and performing admirably over these last several months of this pandemic. We want to assure you that while we look much different with all of our personal protective gear on, we are the same group of caring Providers willing and able to take care of you. There are some things that are currently being done differently that we would like you to know about.

- **At the beginning of the shift:** All crews are screened next door at Sparrow Clinton Hospital for temperature, symptoms, and any possible exposures. All ambulances are stocked and fully sanitized. Our base offices and living quarters are also fully sanitized every morning by the crew.
- **When you call 911:** You will be asked more questions. This is for the protection of everyone who may be responding to the scene of this call. Be assured, that while the call taker is asking all of these questions, their Dispatcher partner is working on getting Police, Fire, or EMS resources headed your way.
- **When Rescue arrives:** In areas served by Medical First Responders, depending on the Dispatch information, they may stage nearby and not enter the scene. If the call is deemed a non-life threatening situation, Rescue is ready to assist the transport unit as needed, but otherwise may not proceed into the scene. If there is an urgent need that must be addressed quickly, the Responders first on scene will proceed to the patient and initiate appropriate care. Expect the Responders to be wearing at least a face mask and gloves and that they will request the patient to put on a mask. They may be wearing goggles or face shields, as well as a gown or white Tyvek suit. This personal protective equipment (PPE) has two purposes. It protects the Responder from any possible contamination from the scene, and it protects you from being contaminated by the people entering your home. This PPE is either appropriately disposed of or sanitized after each call.
- **When we arrive:** You will see more masks and gloves, perhaps gowns or coveralls or Tyvek suits as well. As with Rescue, the purpose of the PPE is to protect everyone. While we are on way to the scene, especially if COVID 19 is known or possible, you may receive a phone call from our crew. The crew member will ask you more questions regarding your history and current health. This allows them to determine what equipment will be needed, and if extra help will be needed. They may ask you to meet them at the door if you are able. We will ask you to put on a mask for droplet containment, and ask others on scene to also put on a mask, or step away at least 6 feet unless they are needed. If you are having problems breathing, you may get an oxygen mask placed instead of a surgical mask. You may get a surgical mask over a nasal cannula. Our Provider may initiate their assessment from 6 feet away if the patient is stable. We will only have the number of Providers needed to care for you enter the scene. All of these precautions seem cold and uncaring, but are in place for your protection and for the protection of our Providers and their families. Our Providers prefer the “old way” of being more personable as well.
- **What we might do:** The conversation with the transport crew may include not being transported to the hospital. If that is a consideration, the transport unit will contact the

Emergency Room Dr, or in some cases, your Doctor, to explain the findings of the assessment. Any decision to not transport will be made in concert with a Doctor, and be agreeable to the patient and/or family.

- **What we will do:** Some treatment recommendations have changed to minimize the potential aerosolization of the coronavirus. This will not prevent us from providing any needed treatments for our patients. That is the purpose of the PPE, and why we wear it.
- **After every call:** The cot and equipment and all touch surfaces are sanitized.
- **For any COVID positive or possible transports:** The rig sanitizing process includes a full chemical sanitizing of the driver's and patient compartments. The crews will be in full PPE for the call, and on return to the base, will appropriately remove their PPE, dispose of any single use PPE, and place the reusable PPE and/or uniform in the laundry to be sanitized. They then proceed to the showers, following up with a clean uniform, ready for the next call. This assures that if you are our next patient, that you will not be exposed to any viruses or bacteria.
- **Our concerns for you:** If you have other health concerns that make COVID 19 a bigger risk for you, and you're not feeling well, please call your Doctor for medical advice, or 911 as needed. Addressing this early may allow for other options besides a trip to the hospital.
- **The take home message:** Calling 911 and going to the Emergency Room right now—even in the midst of a pandemic—is safe. Assuring that you are maintaining your health is more important now than ever.

#### FAQ's:

- If I or a family member is at risk because of age or health concerns, should I postpone regular Doctors' appointments for health maintenance to avoid the chance of being exposed to COVID 19?
  - You should call your Doctor's office. Not monitoring and maintaining your health is a dangerous choice, and may make you more vulnerable. Most Doctors' offices have ways to work with their patients without office visits.
- Those "virtual visits" with my Doctor require a computer or smart phone. I'm not comfortable or don't have access to this technology, what can I do?
  - Call your Doctor's office and share your concerns. They will work with you to overcome the issues. We are currently working on a new option for your Doctor to work with our Agency, where we would visit with you in your home, have the technology for you and your Doctor to see each other, and physically perform the assessments your Doctor requests.
- What are the most important things I can do to protect myself and my family?
  - Social distancing is free, easy, and effective.
  - Good hand hygiene is very effective, who knew how long 20 seconds was until we timed our hand washing?
  - Wear a mask covering your mouth and nose when out in the public. They are becoming readily available and some folks have gotten pretty creative personalizing them.
  - Stay home when you are sick.

- What else is CAASA doing to help fight the spread of COVID 19 in OUR community?
  - We are working closely with our local Health Department, Sparrow Clinton Hospital, and our public safety partners, and participate in weekly meetings coordinated by our Emergency Management team in the EOC to address any gaps or needs in the community.
  - We offer our services to our local partners, and are willing to assist in testing or immunizations as needed.
  - We currently house and disperse the County supply of PPE for both Fire and EMS to our County agencies.
  - We offer qualitative fit testing of N95 respirators for first responders, students or staff who are required to wear the higher level protection for work or school.

**TIPS to weather this storm:**

- Be patient, with yourself, your family, and others. This is a very stressful time for everyone, from those not working to those overworked. Random acts of kindness make us feel good for performing them, and comforting to those who receive them.
- Focus on what you can do, not on what you can't do. Been wanting to organize your garage, but never had time? To have time to take a walk or ride a bike? Start an exercise program? Do you have family or friends that would appreciate a phone call or snap chat? Miss the "me" time on your daily commute? Schedule these into your day or week and enjoy the results!
- Most of us have never experienced this level of stress for such a sustained length of time. Seek the help you need. Whether it be family, a trusted friend, clergy, or professional help, seek it out. Your mental health affects your physical health, relationships with loved ones and others, and should not go untreated any more than a broken arm should. It is a sign of strength to recognize and seek help in managing your mental and emotional health.
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