

OSF HealthCare partnering with state of Illinois in fight against COVID-19

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Peoria, Ill. | April 11, 2020) – OSF HealthCare is launching a Pandemic Health Worker Program (PHWP) that will serve individuals with COVID-19 symptoms. Through a contract with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, the PHWP is designed to protect the well-being of the general public during the COVID pandemic.

Pandemic Health Workers (PHWs) will digitally connect with referred clients who are experiencing COVID symptoms and need to stay home or quarantine to protect themselves and others. Through this program, OSF HealthCare and the State of Illinois will proactively and digitally support those needing care, while also reducing the potential influx of non-emergent patients into a hospital's emergency department.

"The PHW program is an extension of OSF Healthcare System's role in providing compassion and competence in a healthcare crisis," said John Vozenilek, MD, Vice President and Chief Medical Officer of Innovation and Digital Health for OSF HealthCare. "Equipped with technology, PHWs will visit care recipients on a daily basis, deliver kits that include essential tools to monitor their health, and follow-up over a 14-day period to ensure no further assistance is needed."

When assigned to the PHWP, a client will receive health monitoring tools, depending on what already is available in the home, and will typically stay in the program for 14 days. A PHW will be connecting with at least 27 clients per month.

A person is eligible for the PHWP if he or she is showing COVID-19 symptoms, or is at high risk for contracting the virus, but does not require emergency or inpatient care, and can be digitally monitored at home. They must first call the COVID-19 Nurse Hotline (833-OSF-KNOW) and be digitally triaged by a nurse. Depending on the answers to the screening questions, the nurse or other provider will determine if they are eligible for the PHWP. If enrolled, the client will be notified and receive a phone call from a PHW within 48 hours.

The PHWP is one of many innovative programs created by OSF HealthCare to manage COVID-19 patients. The health care Ministry has also integrated an AI symptom checker into its [website's digital assistant](#), a chatbot named Clare. A 24/7 nurse triage line at 833-OSF KNOW (833-673-5669) fields calls from across Illinois about the virus, and a free text messaging tool called OSF COVID Companion pushes guidance about COVID-19. As of April 2, a video visit option is available as well. On the first day of operation, there were 19 video visits from a broad geographical area in Illinois and included both pediatric and adult patients.

"We are grateful the state of Illinois saw promise in the multi-pronged, digital response, we developed to manage COVID-19," said Michelle Conger, Chief Strategy Officer and Chief Executive Officer of Saint Gabriel for OSF HealthCare. "With an expected increase in the number of coronavirus cases in the coming weeks, we believe the Pandemic Health Worker Program will help alleviate pressure from hospitals, and protect health care workers, and patients, from further spread of the virus."

Teams of PHWs will be stationed throughout Illinois with the first groups established in Alton, Evergreen Park and Peoria/Bloomington. The program will eventually expand to serve communities in and around Champaign/Urbana/Danville, Galesburg/Kewanee/Monmouth, Ottawa/Mendota/Streator, Pontiac and Rockford. OSF HealthCare is expected to initially serve 8,400 people through its PHWs each month when all locations are activated.

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About OSF HealthCare

OSF HealthCare is an integrated health system owned and operated by The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, headquartered in Peoria, Illinois. OSF HealthCare employs more than 23,600 Mission Partners in 147 locations, including 14 hospitals – 10 acute care, four critical access – with 2,097 licensed beds, and two colleges of nursing throughout Illinois and Michigan. The OSF HealthCare physician network employs more than 1,500 primary care, specialists and advanced practice providers. OSF HealthCare, through OSF Home Care Services, operates an extensive network of home health and hospice services. It also owns Pointcore Inc., comprised of health care-related businesses; OSF HealthCare Foundation, the philanthropic arm for the organization; and OSF Ventures, which provides investment capital for promising health care innovation startups. More at www.osfhealthcare.org.