

Their plans were set, their training conducted. When COVID-19 arrived in DuPage County, Edward-Elmhurst Health was prepared to leap into action.

“We practice emergency preparedness and disaster planning all the time,” said Mary Lou Mastro, system president and CEO. “We have the infrastructure in place and we have been working very, very hard to serve our community and ensure safety.”

Hospital leaders and staff prepared for a potential surge of patients by ramping up bed capacity, increasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and closing walk-in clinics.

On March 17, the system’s two hospitals—Edward Hospital in Naperville and Elmhurst Hospital—had 82 isolation rooms. Less than a week later, system leaders increased capacity to 156. Both hospitals erected tents to screen potential COVID-19 patients separately and save valuable resources for patients with critical cases.

The system entered this crisis with a three-month supply of PPE—for use under normal circumstances. Edward-Elmhurst called on the community to donate PPE, with the promise that unneeded supplies would be sent to other hospitals.

As the situation unfolds, Sanjeeb Khatua, MD, system chief physician executive, stressed that the “labor pool is extremely important. We’re looking at the use of different skill sets and how to best redeploy them.”

System leaders will continue to re-organize operations to accommodate additional patients and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

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