Statement from South Shore Health

June 12, 2020

Our first priority is always for the health and safety of our patients and staff.

It’s important to note that South Shore Health, as required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has attested to its readiness to enter to Phase 2 of the state’s reopening. We are fully compliant with the health and safety standards set forth by the Department of Public Health related to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supply and use.

We are working diligently to make certain we meet the state’s guidelines by ensuring we have enough stock of PPE on hand should we face another wave, or surge, of the disease. Our PPE is adequate and meets the needs of our clinicians and providers. Each day we look thoroughly at numbers of supplies, anticipated burn rate and calculate future needs.

During the height of the pandemic, we, along with health care organizations across the nation, adopted CDC guidance on the *extended* useand reuse of the N-95 masks. We have, as necessary, employed a CDC 5-day extended use rule. Part of this rule requires that clinicians conduct a daily soil and fit test before donning an N-95 mask. If the mask does not meet fit requirements or is soiled, it is discarded.

In terms of CDC N-95 *reuse* protocols, after 5 days of use, the mask is put into a plastic bag with the clinician’s name on it, placed in a recycle bin and sent out for disinfection. Once disinfected, it is returned to that clinician for reuse. The masks are recycled no more than five times. Again, we are following CDC guidelines.

In the spirit of collegiality and helpfulness one of our physicians sent an email several weeks ago to some clinical employees and shared a link to an online retailer to suggest clinicians might proactively take advantage of current supplies of eye goggles as availability of that PPE was predicted to be challenging. This was not intended to be an official organizational communication.

That email was addressed at a COVID-19 Hospital Incident Command meeting the following day, during which the HICS commander made it clear that we had a more than adequate supply of all PPE for all of our staff and reinforced that if members of the staff had concerns about obtaining supplies they should address their concerns through the HICS chain of command.

Before the first Massachusetts COVID-19 patient was identified, South Shore Health was taking aggressive steps to prepare for the spread of the virus – through regularly scheduled emergency management meetings and weekly COVID-19 preparedness meetings with a large team. Throughout the pandemic we have followed the Center for Disease Control and state DPH guidance on PPE. And as we move forward and welcome visitors and patients back to our services and facilities we are taking a measured and thoughtful approach to reopening in accordance the DPH and state regulations.