



Office of the Governor
JB Pritzker



Office of the Mayor
Lori Lightfoot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2020

CONTACT

Gov.Press@Illinois.gov

CONTACT

Press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT, GOVERNOR PRITZKER AND HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE
COMPLETED FIRST PHASE OF MCCORMICK PLACE ALTERNATE CARE FACILITY
DELIVERING 500 HOSPITAL BEDS**

New facility set to provide a total of 3,000 patient rooms, increasing capacity to respond to COVID-19 crisis and alleviate burden on Chicago's hospital system

CHICAGO—Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and Governor JB Pritzker today joined the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Illinois National Guard, and the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPA) to announce the completion of the first phase of work to transform the McCormick Place Campus into a new Alternate Care Facility (ACF) to treat low to moderate acuity COVID-19 patients. Phase One of the project delivered 500 10' X 10' patient rooms furnished with beds and basic healthcare items, 14 nursing stations and fully built out support rooms for medical supply storage, pharmacy and housekeeping services. The full site will bring an additional 3,000 patient rooms online by the end of the month, providing capacity to address an anticipated surge in hospitalizations around the state related to COVID-19.

The new ACF, one of the largest in the nation, is designed to alleviate the burden of low acuity COVID patients on Chicago's existing health care system so hospitals and healthcare workers can serve more severe cases in those settings.

"In preparation for the significant increase of COVID-19 cases that is expected over the coming weeks, the City of Chicago is working in lockstep with Governor Pritzker and our public health teams to provide a large-scale expansion of our city's healthcare capacity," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The unique care setting available at McCormick Place builds on our already extensive efforts to ensure our residents are fully cared for during this critical time, thereby allowing our local hospitals to focus on those patients most in need and save as many lives as possible."

Officials today also announced the appointment of an Executive Leadership Team, comprised of seasoned health officials tapped to oversee clinical operations in a



**Office of the Governor
JB Pritzker**



**Office of the Mayor
Lori Lightfoot**

unique setting. When the McCormick Place ACF is completed, it will be one of the largest of its kind Alternate Care Facilities in the nation.

“Monumental, round-the-clock dedication got this done before we need it – preparing for saving lives in the event things become as bad as some have predicted,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank the Army Corps of Engineers, the Illinois National Guard, FEMA and all of our hardworking union trades-people. In one week’s time, the heroes who came together to make this possible built us a facility larger than the largest hospital in Illinois.”

While Illinois hospitals have not reached full capacity, the State and City are working in lockstep to build a robust system combining existing and temporary clinical care settings in Chicago and across Illinois to aid in the recovery of confirmed COVID-19 patients. The completion of the first 500 beds in under a week marks a milestone in the development of this unique care setting, the first of its kind in the State. While timing of when the ACF will be needed cannot be known for certain, it is estimated that the first phase of the facility could be operational to receive low-acuity patients as soon as next week.

“To accommodate patients in a clinical setting, space inside of McCormick Place has been divided into three separate units. The three different units, outlined in order of completion, will be focused on treating low-acuity patients in different types of care settings, and each unit will be equipped with nurses stations and support rooms. Unit 1 will provide initial capacity for 500 patients, with tri-walled spaces for low-acuity patients. Unit 2, will provide capacity for 1,750 patients, providing open-space care for fully mobile, low-acuity COVID-19 positive patients. The final phase of construction, Unit 3, will provide negative-pressure isolation pods for up to 750 patients exhibiting high transmission symptoms.

The ACF will operate under the direction of a veteran team of hospital administrators. Led by Dr. Nick Turkal, a former Advocate Healthcare CEO and newly named Executive Director of McCormick Place Alternate Care Facility, the team will be charged with mobilizing a unique clinical setting, overseeing its day-to-day operations, and ensuring the safety of all patients and workers under their care. Turkal will be joined by Martin Judd, who will serve as Chief Operating Officer, and Dr. Paul Merrick will serve as clinical advisor for the facility.

“This is an enormously difficult time for people across Chicago and the entire State, and here at McCormick Place we will have the ability to be of service not just our



**Office of the Governor
JB Pritzker**



**Office of the Mayor
Lori Lightfoot**

healthcare system but the entire city of Chicago,” said Dr. Nick Turkal, Executive Director of McCormick Place Alternate Care Facility. “This facility is ready to alleviate some of the strain on our hospitals and help our healthcare workers better care for our COVID-19 patients by providing support to COVID-19 patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms and creating space at hospitals for the more severe cases.”

The City and State are collaborating on staffing the facility by seeking qualified personnel from the suburbs and surrounding area, helping alleviate the burden of COVID-19 on area hospitals and emergency units so that those hospitals can serve more severe cases.

The City today also announced it has reached several new agreements with local hotels to provide temporary housing for healthcare workers in direct contact with COVID-19 positive patients or symptomatic persons. Accommodations are being made available at London House and the Godfrey Hotel and will offer workers a place to sleep, shower or eat – while providing peace of mind and place for workers to go without risking exposure to their families during the crisis.

Starting next Wednesday, the 200-room London House, and the 225-room Godfrey Hotel capacity will be reserved for healthcare workers who interact with COVID-19 patients, including doctors, nurses, orderlies, lab technicians, and custodial staff. Rooms are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and healthcare professionals will need to provide proof of employment at a Chicago-area hospital.

Construction of the McCormick Place ACF began 24 hours after the signing of the contract, and the buildout of Phase One has been happening 24/7, with the 500 patient rooms being completed within just five days. The City and the State modeled the unique operations at the ACF after several other cities have taken the same steps to address similar hospital capacity issues. This includes New York City, which converted the Javits Center into a 2,910 bed Alternate Care Facility originally designed to provide general medical care to non-COVID-19 patients. Other smaller operations include the Baltimore, Santa Clara and Oregon Convention Centers.

Construction is being managed by the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) with support from USACE, FEMA, and the Illinois National Guard. Walsh Construction was brought aboard for the estimated \$15 million project, for which the initial phase was delivered in less than one week. The buildout for this project will be paid for by the federal government.



**Office of the Governor
JB Pritzker**



**Office of the Mayor
Lori Lightfoot**

While construction is underway, the City will coordinate contracting and procurement to provide wraparound services crucial to the operation, including but not limited to, medical supplies, equipment, engineering, janitorial staff, food service, and waste management.

For more information and Chicago specific updates on COVID-19, text COVID19 to 78015, email coronavirus@chicago.gov or visit Chicago.gov/coronavirus. For all personal protective equipment (PPE) donations, email PPE.donations@illinois.gov. For health questions about COVID-19, call the hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or email dph.sick@illinois.gov.

#