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Emergency Department Recommendations for Triageing COVID-19 Phone Calls

The public is curious about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and may be calling local Emergency Departments to seek information. It is important as an employee of any healthcare organization, especially an employee in the Emergency Department, to triage these calls and provide assistance, if possible.

The CDC has provided direction for healthcare organizations on pre-screening individuals who may be seeking care at healthcare facilities. Additional information from the CDC can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>.

In order to minimize the risk for exposure of a symptomatic person to the public and healthcare workers, it is critical to triage these calls appropriately. The person answering the phone should determine:

- **Is the person seeking information about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus?**
 - If a person calls seeking information about the virus, but is NOT seeking medical care, direct them to the **Hotline (1-800-889-3931)**, or the IDPH email drop box to submit questions (**DPH.SICK@illinois.gov**).
 - Information about [COVID -19](#) is also available online including the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and may help to clarify questions from the public.

OR

- **Is the person seeking care by a physician?**
 - CDC recommends that any person that attempts to come to the Emergency Department and meets criteria for a possible [person under investigation](#), as defined by the CDC, should CALL the ED PRIOR TO THEIR ARRIVAL.
 - The person (operator/health clerk/unit secretary) answering the phone should direct the person to speak to the Charge Nurse or Triage Nurse in the Emergency Department and the clinician can use the [Flowchart to Identify and Assess for COVID-19](#) to triage further and provide recommendations to the caller.
 - If the person is determined to potentially need further care, then begin coordination to receive the patient in the Emergency Department.
 - If a person complains of shortness of breath or other emergent symptoms, they should be directed to call 911.
 - Request that the person call once they arrive at the ED and prior to entering the building to allow time for the staff to prepare for entry.
 - If possible, ask the person to apply a mask **prior** to entering the ED and immediately place the patient in a negative air pressure room.