




To: Ascension Wisconsin Leaders, Physicians and Associates

From: Bernie Sherry, Senior Vice President, Ascension and Ministry Market Executive, Ascension Wisconsin 

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Date: May 7, 2020

Subject: "Reintroducing" Our Services to Our Patients and Communities

This message is being shared now with all Ascension Wisconsin leaders, physicians and associates.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

We are taking careful and measured steps to ensure a safe and gradual return to providing patients full access to healthcare services at our Ascension Wisconsin sites of care while continuing to serve and support individuals and communities impacted by COVID-19. As we resume our operations, patients can expect expanded access to healthcare services with enhanced safeguards to ensure our sites of care continue to serve as healing environments – where quality care is delivered with high levels of safety and compassion.

HOW IS THIS PROCESS OCCURRING?

Ascension Wisconsin has formed a multidisciplinary team of clinical and administrative leaders to

develop a standardized process to return to the full complement of services our communities across the state have come to trust. We are following specific guidance and protocols to reboot the healthcare economy via patient screenings, testing and scheduling services that can be immediately implemented, based on a phased approach that takes into consideration the status of the COVID-19 environmental conditions. These services have been developed with patient, caregiver and support staff safety in mind.

As we slowly and purposely return to providing full access to services, all Ascension Wisconsin facilities—hospitals, emergency rooms, clinics and offices—will continue to implement recommended infection prevention precautions with enhanced safeguards to minimize the exposure risks related to COVID-19 for patients and caregivers.

AMBULATORY READINESS AT ASCENSION MEDICAL GROUP WISCONSIN

The return to market plan for Ascension Medical Group Wisconsin (AMG-WI) clinics aligns with state and local criteria and takes into account our wide geographical spread in Wisconsin, as well as the large variation in infection rates across the regions. Our guiding principles for re-configuring the clinics are based on safety, social distancing and a continued emphasis on virtual care.

As part of this work, we have implemented an [AMG Clinic Readiness Checklist](#) to help ensure our providers and all staff are equipped with the resources and standard workflows to manage a safe and high quality care management plan pre-, during and post-visit. Patient workflows to reflect this 'new normal' have been established to support the reintroduction and expansion of services at the clinics and include:

- **Clinic Safety and In-person Visits** - redesigning workflow from parking lot to exam room
- **Registration and Scheduling** - moving to virtual, remote and electronic options
- **Optimizing Virtual Visits** - improving workflows for in-office and at-home VPO visits
- **Lab and Testing** - offering alternative care options, such as drive-through Anticoagulation Clinic INR clinics, drive-through vaccine clinics and other mobile delivery systems
- **Chronic Care Protocols** - providing guidance on in-person and virtual visits for patients with chronic health conditions
- **Communication** - focusing on safety and reassurance for our providers, staff and patients

Effective May 11, 2020, all AMG-WI clinics will be prepared to reintroduce and expand services under these new workflows and guidelines with the exception of the sites below. These sites are delayed due to current high levels of COVID-19 PUIs and positive cases:

- Racine Region - all AMG clinics
- Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Milwaukee at Bay View
- Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Milwaukee at Airport Business Park
- Ascension Medical Group at Cudahy
- Ascension Medical Group - W. Oklahoma
- Ascension Medical Group at S. 16th Street Ascension Medical Group - St. Francis Euclid Building
- Ascension Medical Group - St. Francis Ohio Building

GRADUALLY REINTRODUCING ELECTIVE SURGERIES AND MEDICALLY NECESSARY PROCEDURES

Effective Monday, May 11, 2020, in some locations, we will gradually reintroduce the availability of certain elective surgeries and medically necessary procedures, while continuing efforts to serve and support patients, associates and communities impacted by COVID-19. The timing of this development will vary across the state and will proceed in stages, in accordance with Ascension's system-wide safety and infection control protocols.

Visitor Restrictions: In March, at the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), we enacted visitor restrictions to protect our patients and staff. As our facilities begin to reintroduce elective surgeries and procedures, we are now revising these policies. As a result, we will be relaxing some of these restrictions as soon as we reasonably can do so to still maximize the safety of patients and at the same time provide our patients with the optimal social and spiritual support for healing. Each local facility will have its own specific visitor guidelines.

Our phased, measured and clinically-led process to resume surgeries for certain elective, non-urgent and medically necessary procedures is designed to keep our patients, associates and physicians safe and informed throughout this time of transition.

As certain elective procedures are reintroduced, hospital staff will begin the process of contacting patients to reschedule procedures that were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, using clinical judgment to prioritize scheduling for patients with the most urgent and immediate needs. Services also will be available for patients to take a proactive role in their health and schedule appointments and regular doctors' visits online or over the phone.

ENGAGING WITH OUR PATIENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

For the past few weeks, the Ascension Wisconsin Marketing and Communications team has been promoting our commitment to safety to reassure our patients and communities, and strengthen Ascension Wisconsin as a trusted health network. As we continue to reintroduce our services, we will gradually shift our marketing, advertising and other external messaging to support this transition, with a focus on driving growth and promoting our physicians and caregivers.

Last week, I recorded a video that will be shared today, thanking our communities for their coordination and determination during these unprecedented times, and reminding our Wisconsin residents to seek care for their chronic health needs. This video will be posted on our social media channels and shared with community stakeholders. [Click here](#) to watch.

Below are more examples of messaging that is currently in-market to support these safety and reassurance efforts:

- **Public Relations**

- [ERs Prepared to Safely Treat Patients](#) - Sent April 22
- Ascension Wisconsin announces plans for resuming services - Announcement scheduled for tomorrow
- Interviews with clinical and operational leaders - Ongoing

- **Radio Advertising**

- There are a variety of radio ads that are currently broadcasting throughout Wisconsin. They focus on the following key messages:
 - Safety Reassurance
 - Emergency Care Reassurance

- Don't Delay Care, We're Here For You
- Listen to the radio spots [here](#).
- **Print Advertising**
 - "An emergency is still an emergency - don't delay important care" print ads are appearing throughout Ascension Wisconsin markets.
 - View sample print advertisement [here](#).
- **Outdoor Billboards**
 - Billboards are currently promoting Ascension Online Care across Wisconsin, and general brand messages are displayed in the Northwoods.
 - These will be updated with a "Open for Appointments" message as we begin to reopen.
 - View sample billboard creative [here](#).
- **Social Media**
 - Content focused on safety, emergency care and essential care, including a [Don't Delay ER Care video](#), have been shared widely on our various social media channels
 - View additional sample social media messages [here](#).
 - Remember to follow us on social media:
 - [Facebook](#) – This is the Ascension Wisconsin page -- Don't forget to follow your local hospital's Facebook page (Ascension St. Michael's, Ascension All Saints, Ascension Mercy, etc.), too.
 - [Twitter](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [LinkedIn - Bernie Sherry](#)
 - [LinkedIn - Dr. Gregory Brusko](#)
 - [LinkedIn - Heather Schimmers](#)
- **Email to Patients**
 - An email reinforcing our commitment to safe care, as well as how to access care, has been sent to all patients who have had appointments at our facilities in the past 18 months. Read the email [here](#).

We also will share ongoing internal updates in our Leadership Briefing and Associate Update communications and on our recently launched [Ascension Wisconsin COVID-19 intranet](#).

We will continue our COVID-19 readiness and response plans to both reduce the spread of the virus and to immediately manage any possible surge of patients in need of care for the virus. We also will continue to ensure the safety and well-being of you - our caregivers, our patients and community.

If you have any questions, please connect with your local Incident Command Team.

Thank you for your continued care of our patients and those we are privileged to serve.

Thank you.

