Dept. of Health Services: Joins Gov. Evers to announce 154 Wisconsin National Guard members completed CNA training course since January

Posted on Thursday, Mar 10, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. Get the app or access via desktop.

Provide update on administration's efforts to support hospital and nursing home capacity

Gov. Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) today announced a total of 154 Wisconsin National Guard members have completed certified nursing assistant (CNA) training since early January 2022. This collaborative effort among the Evers Administration, Madison College, and the Wisconsin National Guard was intended to bring needed short-term staffing support to Wisconsin's hospitals and nursing homes. The goal was to open 200 or more beds by the end of February. As of March 7, 226 beds have been opened at 17 nursing homes and more beds will open as 56 more Wisconsin National Guard personnel are placed at six nursing homes across the state this week.

"One of our top priorities throughout the pandemic has been to make sure our hospitals and health care providers have the staff and resources they need to keep providing care to Wisconsinites when they need it most," said Gov. Evers. "I am proud to announce that because of the Wisconsin National Guard and its volunteer members who stepped up to be trained as CNAs, we have met and surpassed our goal of the number of nursing home beds we expected to open up. The Wisconsin National Guard continues to be an invaluable partner and one who continues to provide resources that meet our current needs."

Supporting Wisconsin's health care system was critical as Wisconsin saw an unprecedented number of COVID-19 cases during the Omicron surge. At the height of the surge, Wisconsin saw the seven-day average of new confirmed cases climb to record highs, easily surpassing an average of 15,000 cases per day. The seven-day average grew nearly six-fold in just one month from mid-December to mid-January and became nearly 200 percent higher than the previous November 2020 peak. The surge in new cases sent a record number of Wisconsinites to hospitals across the state. By mid-January, there were 2,278 patients in the hospital with COVID-19, 488 of whom were in intensive care units. Many hospitals across the state were operating at or near peak capacity for weeks. Less than two months later, the situation has greatly improved. The current seven-day average of new confirmed COVID-19 cases is 402, with hospitalizations continuing to decline.

"It has truly been an all-hands-on-deck effort to support our state's health care capacity during the Omicron surge. I am honored to have worked with our partners with the Wisconsin National Guard, Madison College, the Wisconsin Hospital Association, as well as numerous hospitals and long-term care providers who all came together to develop and roll out innovative short-term strategies to support the staffing pressure on our hospitals and nursing homes," said DHS Deputy Secretary Deb Standridge. "Our partnership with Madison College and Wisconsin National Guard not only provided a critical opportunity to support our health care providers, it has also opened up future career opportunities in health care for our Wisconsin National Guard members."

"The citizen soldiers and airmen of the Wisconsin National Guard have answered every call put before them throughout the pandemic. Once again, they're making our state proud and demonstrating their agility and ability to adapt to any mission the state asks us to complete," said Maj. Gen. Paul Knapp, Wisconsin's adjutant general. "I'm so proud of their service and commitment over these last two challenging years, and I'm grateful to have so many dedicated Wisconsinites serving in uniform willing to come to the aid of their friends and neighbors when the state needs help."

The Evers Administration has worked to support its health care system during the COVID-19 surge:

- **Staffing contracts:** Since mid-October 2021, DHS and our state's hospitals and long-term care providers have invested more than $90 million to work with staffing agencies to recruit 1,180 nurses, nursing assistants, and other types of

health care workers to support 155 health and residential care facilities like hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities across the state. As Wisconsin's COVID-19 cases are stabilizing, DHS has stopped accepting new staffing requests. DHS will continue to work with facilities that already have a staffing contract in place with DHS to recruit temporary staff.

- **Public health advisory:** In December, DHS issued a [public health advisory](#) calling on all Wisconsinites to take urgent action to prevent additional hospitalizations and deaths due to the highly contagious Omicron variant of COVID-19. The advisory was issued because of the serious risk that continued, increased numbers of COVID-19 cases would overwhelm Wisconsin's health care system and its ability to care for patients.
- **FEMA support for Bellin Health:** In December, the Evers Administration received federal assistance from FEMA to send a 20-person team from the U.S. Navy to support Bellin Health's COVID-19 response in the Green Bay area. This assistance is critical for supporting hospitals and health care systems that are at or nearly at capacity. The FEMA team first arrived at Bellin Health in December 2021 and its mission concluded on February 28, 2022.
- **Partnership with Madison College to provide CNA training:** In early January, Gov. Evers announced a new partnership with Madison College to provide training to Wisconsin National Guard Members. More than 150 National Guard Members have been trained through this historic partnership.

DHS is urging all Wisconsinites to continue to do their part to protect themselves, their families, and their communities from the COVID-19 virus:

- [Get vaccinated](#) against COVID-19, including a booster dose as soon as you are eligible.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick or have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- [Get tested](#) if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or were exposed to someone who has COVID-19.
- Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) when recommended and/or if you or someone you live or interact with may be at greater risk. Wearing a mask is recommended in public indoor settings in counties with a [High COVID-19 Community Level(link is external)](#).

To find a COVID-19 vaccine provider in your community, visit [Vaccines.gov(link is external)](#), or call 211 or 877-947-2211. For up-to-date information about Wisconsin's COVID-19 response, visit the [DHS COVID-19 webpage](#). You can also follow @DHSWI

on [Facebook(link is external)](#), [Twitter(link is external)](#), or dhs.wi on [Instagram(link is external)](#) for more information on COVID-19.