

# Senior physician COVID-19 resource guide

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The AMA has curated a selection of resources to provide guidance to senior and retired physicians who may wish to return to work or are called upon to do so during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

## 1. License considerations

The licensure status of retired physicians varies by state. In some states retired physicians maintain their regular license while others create a separate category for retired or inactive physicians, and still others have no license category for retired physicians. In response to COVID-19, many states have taken action to allow retired physicians to temporarily return to practice through an Executive Order, Department of Health Order or Board of Medicine directive. Often these actions specify the physician's license must have been in good standing at the time of retirement. Many states have also indicated the physician must have been in active practice within the last 2-5 years.

The path to reentry from a licensing perspective varies. For senior and retired physicians who maintain an active license, there are no licensure restrictions on re-entry to practice. For physicians who maintain an inactive, retired physician, or similar license, your state may have temporarily waived any barriers to re-entry. We encourage you to check the Federation of State Medical Boards' COVID-19 resource on state actions on license status for inactive/retired physicians for guidance: As this landscape continues to evolve, we strongly encourage physicians to check with their respective state medical boards for the latest information.

## 2. Providing assistance that does not involve direct patient care

Whether senior physicians should be providing direct patient care for COVID 19 patients is a complex issue that must balance a number of factors, such as whether the age of the physician and their family members puts them in a high risk group, whether personal protective equipment (PPE) is readily available, and whether they could contribute meaningfully in a non-direct patient care role. Below is a

list of important contributions to consider:

- Many health systems are assigning senior physicians to telehealth and administrative activities, which may free up others to be on the front line.
- Contact your local or state health department. Many are keeping listings of needed roles for volunteer physicians and health care workers.
- Medical schools are using senior physicians for online teaching and mentoring of medical students. Contact your medical school's dean's office to find out how you can participate.
- Consider making an appointment at your local Red Cross to donate blood.
- Provide online outreach to residents of nursing homes or senior residential communities to combat isolation

Assist local practices in creating patient education materials and information sheets with local/regional resources.

### **3. Re-entering practice**

Explore opportunities to provide mentoring or training in your practice location. Many institutions have developed algorithms for telephone triage and/or assessment of symptomatic patients.

### **4. Professional liability**

Explore coverage with your local health system. If you are licensed and volunteer, the third federal economic COVID-19 stimulus package (H.R. 748) includes liability protections for volunteer health care professionals during COVID-19 emergency response. In addition, if you are authorized to prescribe and administer certain countermeasures to treat COVID-19, you may be immune from liability under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act (PREP Act).

Also check with your state medical association; you may have additional liability protections under state law, a recent Gubernatorial Executive Order, or other emergency response programs, such as the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act (UEVHPA) or the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

### **5. Retirement status**

Some physicians are receiving retirement income that may be affected by a return to paid employment. Check the status of your retirement income according to the role you are being asked to perform.

## 6. Role clarification

Clarity on the following questions may be helpful if you are planning to volunteer your assistance.

- What are the activities I'm being asked to do?
- Do those activities align with my skill set?
- What types of training/refreshers/mentoring will be provided?
- Will I be provided with PPE?

## 7. COVID-19 resources

- *JAMA Network* Coronavirus disease 2019 resource center
- AMA COVID-19 resource center
- AMA licensure chart (PDF)