

## Eli's Hospice Insider

### Emergencies: Hospices Face These Top COVID-19 Threats

#### Two-thirds of surveyed providers were short on equipment.

Hospices are facing a vast array of problems thanks to the 2019 novel coronavirus. But hospice heroes across the nation are stepping up to the plate to battle the virus and its fallout.

From coast to coast, providers and industry members report these top problems in the face of COVID-19.

**1. PPE.** Hospice agencies are facing a shortage of personal protective equipment including gloves and masks. "Home care is not alone in experiencing shortages of PPE," notes **Mary McGoldrick**, a nurse consultant with **Home Health Systems Inc.** "It's a problem in all healthcare sectors," McGoldrick says.

A recent survey conducted by the **Home Care Association of New York State** found that 67 percent of home care and hospice agency respondents could not secure enough PPE. See the survey results at <https://hca-nys.org/covid-19-impact-on-home-care-by-the-numbers>. (For tips on tackling these top trouble spots, see story below.)

**2. Staffing.** Maintaining adequate staffing is a big trouble area - or will be soon, experts predict. Multiple factors are impacting staffing, experts note: school closures requiring staff to stay home with children; workers deciding they don't want to risk COVID-19 exposure; and clinicians self-quarantining due to suspected exposure.

**Plus:** "As our staff continue to be out in the communities caring for patients, I expect a loss of available staff as they fall ill themselves," says consultant **Sherri Parson** with **Quality in Real-Time**. That will increasingly affect staffing levels as the virus spreads.

**3. Labor law changes.** The Families First Coronavirus Response Act, signed into law March 18, requires paid sick leave and paid Family and Medical Leave Act leave effective April 2. Providers will receive a tax credit for their leave payments.

Right now, hospice providers are trying to figure out if they are considered exempt as health care providers under the new law. And the law also contains an exemption for employers with fewer than 50 employees when the pay would jeopardize the viability of the business, but the hardship waiver process is still fuzzy.

Providers will have to wait on the **Department of Labor's** guidance for health care providers to determine whether they must pay the weeks of leave required under the law, the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice** notes.

**4. Entrance denial.** Patients at home are denying entrance to home care workers, and nursing facilities are denying entrance to hospice workers, sources relate.