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# Member information regarding COVID-19

Mar 10, 2020 | News, Patient safety



March 18: CMS issues recommendations for surgeries and procedures during COVID-19 crisis

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### ***A message from Brian Shepard, CEO, United Network for Organ Sharing***

“UNOS is committed to supporting the donation and transplant community as you meet the challenges of the coronavirus outbreak. We have plans and contingencies in place to ensure the uninterrupted operation of the UNet<sup>SM</sup> system and the Organ Center.

Communication and cooperation are hallmarks of our community, and they have never been more important than today. As transportation, logistics, testing, and treatment challenges impact donation and transplant, it is important that the community remains transparent and flexible.”

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### **Risk of transmission**

Risk of transmitting disease through solid organ transplantation is not known at the time. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 website](#) provides the most up to date information regarding recommended precautions, global risk assessment, and travel.

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### **Latest updates March 18, 2020**

#### **For transplant programs**

- If you have decided that some of your individual candidates should not receive organ offers at this time, please make them temporarily inactive

using the new “COVID-19 precaution” reason code or one of the previously available codes. See [instructions](#) for details.

- If you already have made someone temporarily inactive, and used a different code, you do not need to change to the new COVID-19 precaution reason code—although you do have the ability to edit the current inactive reason selection for improved internal tracking. Transplant hospitals can generate a custom report that includes inactive reason information.
- If you know that you will temporarily not be performing transplants, you have the ability to inactivate your program’s entire waiting list in UNet. UNOS is working on additional resource materials to assist you. In the meantime, Appendix K of the [Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Bylaws](#) addresses the procedure you would need to follow. If you have to inactivate an entire program, please let us know promptly by emailing [membershiprequests@unos.org](mailto:membershiprequests@unos.org).
- Consider alternate organ retrieval options such as local procurement, particularly as access to donor hospitals or transportation affects logistics.
- Work closely with OPOs regarding expediting operating rooms.
- Following these steps will help match runs move more quickly to candidates and programs that are ready to transplant.

### For organ procurement organizations

- To the extent practical, continue to follow the match run.
- If transportation systems become disrupted and an organ cannot be transported to a hospital on the match run, the OPO should use the 861 bypass code and proceed to allocate as high on the match run as logistics allow. These decisions should be based on the availability of transportation options, not on DSA or regional boundaries.
- As always, OPOs often make logistical judgment calls in order to ensure that an organ is transplanted, and they should continue to do so now.

### MPSC reviews

The [Membership and Professional Standards Committee](#) (MPSC) is a body of peers from within the donation and transplant community. OPTN policies and requirements have not been suspended. However, deviations from OPTN requirements will be evaluated in the context of the circumstances that have arisen due to this national crisis. The MPSC will look for a commitment to



patient safety, stewardship of donated organs, and the rationale for the decisions that your transplant program or OPO make.

Site surveys will be conducted virtually at least through the end of April, and any member who is not able to participate in a survey at this time can request a delay by emailing [MQFeedback@UNOS.org](mailto:MQFeedback@UNOS.org).

## Transplant candidate data reporting

In order to ensure that candidates' allocation scores are not negatively impacted by challenges with clinic visits and laboratory testing, the [OPTN Executive Committee](#) has approved an emergency policy allowing transplant programs to certify that the lab values already in the system are the most currently available labs and "carry forward" this data, preventing automatic downgrades. Hospitals that wish to update lab values for candidates can still do so. See the [policy notice](#) and [instructions](#) for details.

## Reporting issues

The OPTN is collecting information about challenges and issues created by the outbreak in order to evaluate further improvements and assistance that Health and Human Services, the OPTN and UNOS can provide. Please use this [survey tool](#) to report interruptions or issues. Please note that the link works in the Google Chrome browser, but it does not work in Internet Explorer.

[Report COVID-19 issues](#)

## Resources

### Transplant programs

- The American Society of Transplantation has developed [FAQ for organ transplantation](#) that relays information on the current state of COVID-19 as it relates to transplantation.
- The Transplantation Society offers [additional recommendations](#), with a particular emphasis on living donors and/or transplant patients who

have traveled to or from areas where COVID-19 is especially widespread.

- ***New policy language is in effect March 17, 2020*** regarding data submission requirements for transplant candidates in cases where data collection is affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, a new candidate inactivation code, "COVID-19 precaution," has been added to Waitlist<sup>SM</sup>. Find details on the [policy change notice](#).

### Organ procurement organizations

The Association of Organ Procurement Organizations has developed an [informational resource](#) addressing donor evaluation and OPO procedures in light of potential COVID-19 infection. Please check the AOPO site frequently for updates.

### Transplant recipients

Information regarding COVID-19 is changing rapidly. The American Society of Transplantation has developed a [transplant community FAQ resource](#) that provides detailed information for transplant recipients.

## Template letters

- [Sample patient notification letter for programs that choose long-term inactivation](#)
- [Sample notification letter to the OPTN for programs that choose long-term inactivation](#)

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## Meetings and events

*OPTN committee meetings.* All OPTN committee meetings through April 21 have been converted to virtual meetings. Meetings later than that date are



being evaluated.

*Transplant Management Forum.* The 2020 [Transplant Management Forum](#) (TMF) scheduled for April 6-8 in Las Vegas is canceled.

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## More information

- [Secretary Azar announces historic expansion of telehealth access to combat COVID-19](#) [Added March 17]
- [Coronavirus disease 2019: Implications of emerging infections for transplantation](#) [Added March 16]

If you have any additional questions, please contact [member.questions@unos.org](mailto:member.questions@unos.org) or call [844-395-4428](tel:844-395-4428).

As a reminder, our IT Customer Service Desk is available 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. EST. Contact [unethelpdesk@unos.org](mailto:unethelpdesk@unos.org) or [800-978-4334](tel:800-978-4334).

The Organ Center is available around the clock and can be reached at [800-292-9537](tel:800-292-9537).

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## Quick links

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [The American Society of Transplantation](#)
- [The Transplantation Society](#)
- [The Association of Organ Procurement Organizations](#)
- [Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network](#)

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