



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MOAB REGIONAL HOSPITAL PREPARES FOR COVID-19 PATIENT SURGE**

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**MOAB, UTAH** – Moab Regional Hospital would like to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to the community of Moab and surrounding region for the many sacrifices that have been made to slow the spread of COVID-19. The extra time has allowed MRH to prepare their staff and facility for a possible patient surge and has protected the most vulnerable citizens of our community.

Six weeks ago, on March 6<sup>th</sup>, when the first positive COVID-19 case was reported in Utah, MRH enacted their Incident Command System (FEMA structure used for emergency management) in order to organize all levels of preparation and management for a possible patient surge in Grand County. Six weeks ago, MRH had the capacity to care for four COVID patients. They now have the capacity to care for 23 thanks to a multi-disciplinary team effort from both staff and community members.

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, MRH opened a Respiratory Evaluation Tent, which allows patients to be cared for without exposing other patients and staff to infectious respiratory disease like COVID-19. Drive by nasal swab testing is now available for anyone exhibiting even one of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle weakness
- Decreased sense of taste or smell

The COVID-19 test is free to everyone, whether you have insurance or not.

MRH will have reputable antibody testing from the Mayo Clinic available by the end of the week. Antibody testing guidelines require that individuals are symptom free for at least three days and that it's been at least **THREE WEEKS** since the onset of symptoms.

The nasal swab test and antibody test are both important tools that will be used to gain a more complete understanding of how coronavirus is moving through the community.

MRH is encouraging as many community members as possible to get tested. MRH is also working in partnership with the Southeast Utah Health Department and the Utah Department of Health to test certain community groups who are asymptomatic, but have a high risk of exposure or routine contact with high risk groups.

Increased testing and continued monitoring will be critical to preventing the kind of COVID-19 patient surges that have overwhelmed other areas. Knowing more about how coronavirus is (or isn't) moving through our community can help guide decision-makers as they plan for when and how we can safely open up our community.

Interestingly, Grand County has had only one positive COVID-19 case. We now know that a considerable portion of the population can be silently spreading COVID-19 with no symptoms or very mild symptoms.

When planning for a surge in COVID-19 patients, one of the hospital's biggest concerns continues to be the regional (Salt Lake City, Grand Junction, etc.) capacity for transferring critical patients. To increase their ability to

manage very sick patients on-site during a patient surge, MRH has partnered with University of Utah and now has access to their Tele-ICU services which will offer essential clinical guidance to MRH staff who may be required to care for critically ill patients that would typically be transferred to larger regional facilities.

Sadly, MRH has NOT been able to increase our capacity to ventilate COVID-19 positive patients. We continue to have only two ventilators that apply the right kind pressure and oxygen that a critically ill COVID-19 patient would need. We have additional ventilators on order, but, due to global supply-chain issues, there is no estimated ship date.

Since early March, MRH has been drafting and implementing many new safety procedures to protect patients and staff from COVID-19, a highly infectious respiratory disease. Anyone entering the hospital for any reason (patients, staff, delivery personnel, etc.) are now REQUIRED to wear a mask and get their temperature taken.

Many industrious local seamstresses have made it possible to begin this important safety precaution by supplying much-needed washable masks to the hospital. MRH is deeply grateful to their generosity of time and materials – particularly the staff at Canyonlands Quilts.

As an added safety precaution, MRH does not allow any visitors at this time, except for Obstetrics and Hospice, which are considered on a case by case basis.

In order to conserve supplies such as masks and gowns, which are in short supply due to the supply chain disruption in China, MRH has temporarily suspended elective surgeries. However, they remain open to care for patients in Urgent Care and Family Medicine, which have been integrated.

For the safety of both patients and staff, MRH has switched many of their clinic visits to remote care through telehealth, however, providers are seeing patients in person in the clinic when medically necessary. Clinic visits have been structured to minimize patient to patient contact in waiting room or hallway areas.

All respiratory patients are referred to the Respiratory Tent for evaluation and care. To streamline patient access to care, MRH has a hotline staffed with a nurse 24/7, who will navigate patients to the appropriate point of care. Please call 435-719-3998 before arriving at the hospital for any reason or with any healthcare questions. If it is an emergency, please dial 9-1-1.

MRH continues to ask employers to let your employees come back to work without requiring a doctor's note. If an employee has left work because of sickness, it is okay for them to return to work as long as they have been:

- Fever free for 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medications; AND
- Shown improvement in their respiratory symptoms; AND
- At least 7 days have passed since symptom onset.

MRH continues to prepare for the anticipated medical needs of patients affected by COVID-19. However, limited resources and critical care capabilities mean that MRH can quickly be overwhelmed if Moab sees a significant surge in patients. Social distancing, sheltering-in-place, and strong personal hygiene practices continue to be the only effective tools that slow the spread of this disease.

Moab Regional Hospital is a 17-bed not-for-profit Critical Access Hospital and Level IV Trauma Center located in Moab, Utah, and is the leader in healthcare in southeastern Utah. Our mission is to put our patients first, deliver quality, cost-effective healthcare, and to promote wellness to all we serve.

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