



AG's Message	Ask the AG
Contact OAG	About OAG
OAG News	OAG FAQs
OAG Library	Employment
OAG Grants	Proposed Rules
OAG History	Services A-Z

Governor's Office
Otras Noticias en Español (OAG)
Civil Rights (Division of)
Consumer Affairs (Division of)
Criminal Justice (Division of)
Election Law Enforcement Comm.
Gaming Enforcement (Div. of)
Highway Traffic Safety (Division of)
Insurance Fraud Prosecutor (Office of)
Juvenile Justice Commission
State Police (Division of NJ)
Law (Division of)

For Immediate Release:

March 23, 2020

Office of The Attorney General

- Gurbir S. Grewal, *Attorney General*

Department of Health

- Judith M. Persichilli, *Commissioner*

Division of Consumer Affairs

- Paul R. Rodriguez, *Acting Director*

Communicable Disease Service

- Dr. Ed Lifshitz, *Medical Director*

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AG Grewal, DOH Commissioner Persichilli Announce Guidance for Healthcare Providers on Safely Evaluating Patients for COVID-19

COVID-19 Outpatient Provider Guidance

Newark – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and Department of Health Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli announced today their Departments have issued guidance to thousands of health care professionals statewide on how to safely evaluate patients who may have COVID-19 and to care for patients who have COVID-19 in an outpatient office setting.

Doctors, nurses, physician assistants, and respiratory care therapists are advised to follow best practices set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health when treating patients for COVID-19-related concerns or symptoms.

Those practices include using telephone consults to triage patients prior to scheduling office visits, wearing appropriate personal protective equipment when evaluating symptomatic patients during in-person visits, and maximizing the delivery of health care services through telemedicine and other alternative methods.

“As gatekeepers to the health care system, office-based health care professionals are vital to responding to the threat posed by COVID-19 and helping to flatten the curve of infections,” said Attorney General Grewal. “By providing guidance to New Jersey practitioners, we are acting to ensure they follow best practices for evaluating and treating patients during this worldwide pandemic.”

“It is essential that practitioners are mindful of the critical need to avoid overwhelming the health care system by recommending inappropriate referrals or testing,” said State Commissioner Persichilli. “Practitioners’ clinical judgement will be of the greatest value to patients and will help to best conserve our health resources at this critical time.”

The **guidance** was developed by the Communicable Disease Service within the Department of Health and the Division of Consumer Affairs within the Department of Law & Public Safety.

In guidance emailed to all health care professionals licensed by the Division's Board Medical Examiners, Board of Nursing, and Board of Respiratory Care, practitioners received information on the types and availability of tests that look for the COVID-19 virus.

They were also provided with step-by-step guidance on how to address concerns of asymptomatic patients, how to assess the severity of symptomatic patients, and how to determine treatment based on those assessments, in accordance with CDC best practices.

"Our health care professionals are facing new and unfamiliar challenges every day as they seek to evaluate and treat their patients, while minimizing the risk of exposure to themselves, their colleagues and staff, and their other patients," said Paul R. Rodríguez, Acting Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs. "The Division and its professional boards are working to provide guidance and support to those on the front lines of this pandemic response in every way that we can."

To learn more about what the Division is doing to help consumers and licensees stay safe amid the COVID-19 emergency, visit the Division's Covid-19 Resources Page at <https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/COVID19/Pages/default.aspx>.

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[News Index Page](#) | [top](#)

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