

Texas physicians in desperate need of [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) will soon get the supplies they've been asking for. The [Texas Medical Association](#) (TMA), in collaboration with state agencies, county medical societies, and other statewide health organizations, is establishing an online portal where health professionals can apply for shipments of PPE. The announcement follows months of frustration for physicians and clinics who have grown increasingly desperate for PPE to safely care for patients under the threat of COVID-19. TMA President David C. Fleeger, MD, said the new PPE distribution project is a result of Texas' increasing access to PPE and sharing the data and stories of struggling physicians with the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) [State Operations Center](#).

"Chief Nim Kidd of the [Texas Division of Emergency Management](#) has assured us that a growing share of the state's expanding inventory of PPE soon will be going to those who need it the most," Dr. Fleeger said. "We still have some logistical hurdles to jump, but with a little bit of luck we can get a significant amount of PPE flowing to doctors this week."

The new portal will allow TMA to forward applicant data through eight designated [Hospital Preparedness Programs \(HPPs\) and Regional Advisory Councils \(RACs\)](#) that, in turn, will make the supplies available for county medical societies and other organizations to distribute. The programs and councils coordinate regional health care and the movement of needed supplies and trauma support during a natural disaster. TMA will continue to refine the distribution process and guidelines to prioritize which medical practices get PPE based on their current supply of N95 respirators and other supplies, their typical daily usage, medical specialty, patient population, and other factors. Each county will be asked to develop a fair, transparent, and equitable distribution process to ensure accountability.

"The goal is to ensure those who need it the most will get top priority without anyone being accused of playing favorites," Dr. Fleeger said. "All licensed Texas physicians can participate."

Many county medical societies and other local health groups have organized their own PPE donation drives, coordinated regional bulk purchases, and served as clearinghouses for doctors whose usual suppliers ran out of PPE. If a county medical society wishes to maintain its existing PPE acquisition arrangement with its local partners, the new system will not replace it.

"The ultimate hope is that this program will get us through until we are all obtaining PPE through our normal vendors," Dr. Fleeger said.

TMA is the largest state medical society in the nation, representing more than 53,000 physician and medical student members. It is located in Austin and has 110 component county medical societies around the state. TMA's key objective since 1853 is to improve the health of all Texans.

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