



**April 17, 2020**

## **Pennsylvania Waives Certain Licensing Requirements for Military Medical Personnel During Coronavirus Emergency**

### **Summary:**

The U.S. Army has mobilized 1,275 Reserve medical specialists to reinforce civilian hospitals in areas of the country that are experiencing a surge in coronavirus cases. These soldiers have been grouped into 15 "Urban Augmentation Medical Task Forces," each capable of providing services equivalent to a 250-bed hospital. One such unit arrived in Pennsylvania on April 16.

Pennsylvania's military medical task force consists of 14 physicians, including an infectious disease specialist and four respiratory specialists; 16 medics; 13 nurses; five physician assistants; two dentists; four pharmacists; two clinical psychologists; one psychiatrist; two occupational therapy specialists; four dietitians and other supporting staff that can perform low-triage care and COVID-19 testing.

Although each soldier holds at least one state license, or a federally granted license from the United States Armed Forces, to practice in their respective field, the Department of State had to ensure that they possess the necessary occupational licensing credentials to lawfully provide medical and other health care services in Pennsylvania.

The Military Occupational Specialties of most members of the task force fall under existing Pennsylvania statutes that exempt these practitioners from the state's licensure requirements. This includes medical doctors (M.D.s), doctors of osteopathic medicine (D.O.s), dietitians, registered nurses, certified registered nurse practitioners, psychologists, physical therapists and occupational therapists.

For those health care professionals in the task force who did not immediately qualify for state licensure -- including practical nurses, dentists and pharmacists -- the Department of State requested, and Governor Wolf granted, a waiver to practice in Pennsylvania as long as they are employed by the Armed Forces of the United States, the U.S. Public Health Service, the Department of Veterans Affairs or the federal government.

The military medical personnel in the task force may provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic in any health care facility, state veterans home, alternate care site or community-based testing site established or licensed by the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency or any other state agency or any commonwealth political subdivision.

Under Pennsylvania law, licensed physicians (M.D.s and D.O.s) can delegate the performance of medical services to other health care practitioners as well as to unlicensed technicians under certain circumstances. Similarly, an M.D. or D.O. who is not licensed by a Pennsylvania board but who is in the medical service of the U.S. Armed Forces, the U.S. Public Health Service or the Department of Veterans Affairs, or is a federal employee, may delegate medical service to a health care practitioner or a technician. Such delegation expands the pool of technicians available for patient care in hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities and other health care facilities during the expected surge in COVID 19 cases in Pennsylvania.

Any federal medical personnel that do not require a license, such as technicians designated as “medics” by the Department of Defense, may perform tasks and carry out any duties delegated to them by civilian M.D.s and D.O.s. Similarly, U.S. Armed Forces M.D.s and D.O.s may delegate medical services to civilian health care practitioners and technicians. And while M.D.s and D.O.s need not be on-site to delegate, any delegation that does occur must be consistent with the standards of acceptable medical practice embraced by the medical doctor community.

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