

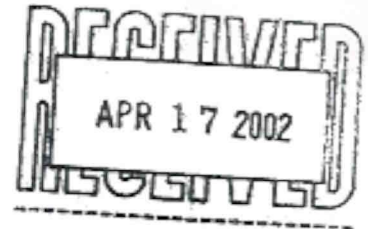


State of New York  
**Department of Health**  
Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12237

ANTONIA C. NOVELLO, M.D., M.P.H., Dr. P.H.  
*Commissioner*

Phone: (518) 474-2011  
Fax: (518) 474-5450

April 8, 2002



Dear Hospital CEO:

With the increased attention and commitment to emergency preparedness, we must refocus our efforts on the continuing issue of hospital overcrowding. Hospitals and emergency departments that are overcrowded can directly impact a hospital's ability not only to meet community needs but also to respond to peak periods of critical need.

Emergency Departments must remain open to ambulances and must maintain the capacity to accept new emergent patients to ensure that the capabilities of our health care system as a whole can, when called upon, respond. As you are aware, overcrowding and diversion affect ongoing service delivery, and can have a negative impact on the quality of patient care. The enclosed guidelines have been prepared in conjunction with the Department's Ad Hoc Task Force on Emergency Department Overcrowding to advise hospitals of expectations and responsibilities in regard to maintaining the capacity to respond to and manage emergency health care needs throughout the year.

Please review the enclosed document and ensure that your institution has in place appropriate policies and procedures to implement these responsibilities. Your direct and ongoing attention to this critical matter is of utmost importance. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H.  
Commissioner of Health

Enclosure