

News for Immediate Release

Feb. 1, 2010

Governor Rendell Says Pennsylvania Coordinating Medical Care for Some Haiti Earthquake Victims

Harrisburg – Pennsylvania is ready to provide medical and humanitarian care for some critically injured Haitian earthquake victims, Governor Edward G. Rendell announced today after sending a letter to the U.S. departments of Health and Human Services and Homeland Security.

“Pennsylvania is keenly aware of the dire situation faced by so many Haitians who were critically injured during the January 12 earthquake and its aftershocks,” Governor Rendell said during a news conference. “We recognize the need to act fast, as more Haitians continue to suffer. The commonwealth is ready to support the federal government in this life-saving operation.”

The Governor was joined at the news conference by Department of Health Secretary Everette James and Carolyn F. Scanlan, president and CEO of The Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania.

The state departments of Health, Public Welfare and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency are coordinating planning efforts to receive Haitian patients in response to the federal government’s request.

The Department of Health is working to identify hospitals willing to accept earthquake victims. Pennsylvania hospitals have already been participating in both outbound and inbound medical humanitarian missions.

Prior to their arrival in the commonwealth, the Department of Health will receive information about the patients, including the type and degree of injuries, so they can be matched to the appropriate medical facility, such as trauma or burn centers.

The department is prepared to coordinate medical assessments at the airports, work with regional EMS councils to provide transport to the hospitals, and communicate with the hospitals regarding available beds.

All patients will be assessed for medical needs and assigned a patient tracking number upon arrival in the commonwealth. Patient escorts will also be assessed for basic health needs. Patients and escorts will be reunited before being transported to the hospital.

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare has identified housing resources that are immediately able to shelter patient escorts. And, local government and social service agencies are ready to assist with mental health, translation and food and clothing needs.

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Editor's Note: A copy of Governor Rendell's letter to secretaries Sebelius and Napolitano follows.

February 1, 2010

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Sebelius and Secretary Napolitano:

Pennsylvania is keenly aware of the dire situation faced by thousands of Haitians traumatically injured as a result of the January 12, 2010 earthquake. We stand ready to support your on-going efforts to assist Haitian nationals in need of immediate medical care. Since receiving a call on Wednesday, January 27, 2010 from the U.S. Transportation Command at Scott AFB requesting that Pennsylvania accept Haitian trauma patients, we have brought together local and state government, hospital and social service partners to plan for receiving patients.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health is prepared to coordinate medical assessments at the airports, transportation to the hospitals, and communicate with the hospitals regarding available beds. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare has identified housing resources that are immediately able to shelter the family members. Local government and local social service agencies are ready to assist with mental health, translation and food and clothing needs.

Hospitals in Pennsylvania have already stepped up to care for injured Haitians and have brought patients into their system through privately funded humanitarian organizations.

Pennsylvania has surveyed hospitals and several are willing to accept patients immediately despite a lack of clarity regarding federal reimbursement for services and how and when that will be provided. However, many more hospitals have the capacity and capability to address the significant needs of the Haitian patients and are willing to assist if federal reimbursement is available for some of the medical care costs.

Pennsylvania stands ready to support these severely injured Haitian patients and their families *regardless of federal reimbursement*, however we request that you consider providing guidance regarding immigration status for the Haitians entering the U.S. and available federal funding for medical care, housing and other benefits. Pennsylvania recognizes, and knows you do as well, the need to act fast, as more Haitians continue to suffer for our delay. We support Florida Governor Crist's request to activate the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) to provide needed funding and coordination for this operation.

Please let me know how Pennsylvania can assist in this life-saving operation.

Sincerely,
Edward G. Rendell
Governor

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