



To: COAD Members
From: Susan Round, Interim CEO, American Red Cross, Greater New York Region

Date: March 19, 2020

Re: Severe Blood Shortage

The American Red Cross now faces a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

- **In New York State, 187 blood drives have been canceled, resulting in 5,111 fewer blood donations.** These numbers are growing rapidly each day, with more than 100 additional drives already pending cancellation in the state.
- **The need for blood is constant – every 2 second, someone in the United States needs blood.** This blood shortage could impact patients who need surgery, victims of car accidents and other emergencies, or patients suffering from cancer, creating another health care crisis on top of the coronavirus.
- **Donating blood is safe. The U.S. Surgeon General has said, “(Y)ou can still go out and give blood. We’re worried about potential blood shortages in the future.”** ([CNN](#))

As colleagues committed to support more resilient communities, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of protecting and preserving an adequate blood supply. I write to request your assistance in **sharing these important messages** around donating blood.

1. **New Yorkers who are healthy and feeling well to make an appointment to donate as soon as possible** by visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) to schedule an appointment. If a Red Cross blood drive is not available in your area, please visit www.aabb.org to find a blood bank near you.
2. **Donating blood and social distancing are not mutually exclusive.** Blood drives have the highest standards of safety and infection control—and do not fall in the category of “mass gatherings”. We are following social distancing practices whenever possible at all drives.
3. **Donating blood is a safe process and healthy people should not hesitate to give.** The Red Cross has implemented new measures to ensure blood drives and donation centers are even safer for our donors and staff, including:
 - Checking the temperature of staff and donors *before* entering a drive to make sure they are healthy.

- Providing hand sanitizer for use before the drive, as well as throughout the donation process.
- Spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices between blood donors.
- Increasing enhanced disinfecting of surfaces and equipment.
- At each blood drive and donation center, Red Cross employees already follow thorough safety protocols to help prevent the spread of any type of infection, including:
 - Wearing gloves and changing gloves with each donor.
 - Routinely wiping down donor-touched areas.
 - Using sterile collection sets for every donation.
 - Preparing the arm for donation with an aseptic scrub.
- There is no data or evidence that this coronavirus can be transmitted by blood transfusion, and there have been no reported cases of transfusion transmission for any respiratory virus including this coronavirus worldwide.

For statewide letter include:

4. **Urge New York businesses, community organizations, government agencies, fire houses and schools to continue hosting blood drives.** These are controlled events with trained staff and appropriate safety measures to protect donors and recipients.

We can provide language for social media as well as graphics if helpful. You can also follow us and share the information we post at [@redcrossny](#):

I am so grateful for your partnership to support New Yorkers through this crisis and many others. Our commitment is tested every year with unexpected weather and illness events—it is during this time that we must hold tighter to our humanity and protect the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you for your steadfast support. We will continue to update you on our response at [RedCross.org](#). Please contact me at Susan.Rounds@redcross.org if you would like more information or further materials to amplify these messages.