

Innovation in COVID-19 Response: ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map

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In late February 2020, the first death of a patient on chronic hemodialysis from COVID-19 was reported in Washington state. Shortly thereafter, surges of patients with COVID-19 appeared in “hot spot” cities throughout the United States. As acute kidney injury increasingly became a prevalent comorbidity of the COVID-19 virus, the demand for nurses and other patient care providers qualified to provide kidney care replacement therapies, such as hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and continuous kidney replacement therapies, quickly exceeded local supplies. In addition, there was minimal evidence available on how to best prevent transmission of the virus and how to care for patients and protect the health care professionals who cared for them. The knowledge that was available changed from day to day, leaving people uncertain on how to proceed, yet the American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) knew the association had to intervene to support nephrology nurses on the frontlines.

ANNA Provides Resources

The ANNA COVID-19 web page was set up on the ANNA website with resources and was updated as new information became available (<https://www.annanurse.org/covid>). The *Nephrology Nursing Journal* (NNJ) interviewed the chief nursing officer and medical director from the hemodialysis unit that experienced the first known case of COVID-19 in a patient on hemodialysis and quickly disseminated their knowledge and recommendations on how to care for patients and staff (Ulrich, 2020; Ulrich et al., 2020). NNJ also published information gathered from nephrology health care professionals on their COVID-19 experiences, challenges, and best practices.

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The COVID-19 pandemic began with uncertainty in how to care for patients and protect staff. The American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) immediately recognized the need to provide its members and others in the nephrology community with as much information as possible. Resources were collected and disseminated in many forms (e.g., publications, webinars, virtual conference sessions). As COVID-19 surges began occurring across the country and staffing reached a crisis level, ANNA collaborated with other organizations to find potential solutions. One solution developed by ANNA was the ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map – a process to connect the areas in high need with skilled and available staff. This article describes the ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map, which has continued to help address COVID-19 staffing challenges.

Key Words:

COVID-19, coronavirus, pandemic, patient surge.

ANNA collaborated with the kidney community, providing webinars and disseminating guidelines and infection prevention practices as knowledge advanced.

The ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map

In April 2020, ANNA heard from kidney organizations and government entities across the United States about the dire need for nephrology nurses, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), and patient care technicians (PCTs) to provide care to patients with kidney failure (including dialysis) in COVID-19 hot spot areas. Many patients being

admitted to hospitals with COVID-19 were experiencing kidney injury. The first calls to ANNA for experienced dialysis staff occurred on April 13, 2020, when the ANNA national office received calls from the New York State Department of Health, DaVita Kidney Care, and The National Forum of End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Networks. ANNA was told about the intensifying crisis in New York City and other large cities, such as New Orleans and Chicago, caused by the shortage of staff trained to perform life-saving dialysis in these cities' hospitals.

The American Nephrology Nursing Association convened an emergency meeting on April 17, 2020, of 33 dialysis leaders and public health agencies to address the issue. This meeting led ANNA to develop a process to connect the areas in high need with skilled and available staff. Within 48 hours of the meeting, the ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map was launched (see Figure 1).

Objectives and Outcomes

The objective of the ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map project was to connect health systems and dialysis employers across the United States with skilled and available staff by developing a real-time, visual tool and process to meet an urgent need. It is not possible to redeploy staff from non-dialysis settings to perform dialysis due to the unique skills and education possessed by this group of health care providers. It also is not possible to quickly educate and train staff to perform dialysis therapies; this training often takes 3 to 6 months to complete under preceptorship and direct learning and supervision. Therefore, when there was an urgent need in COVID-19 hot spots, the only solution was to link staff with strong dialysis skills to the areas with a high demand for these skills.

Using the ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map

The ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map can be used by organizations with needs and nephrology staff who are willing to help meet the need. Organizations provide their name, location, type of health care professionals needed, and specific practice areas they need to fill. Nurses and other nephrology patient care staff can search the map by state to identify and contact facilities with needs. States with needs are highlighted in red on the map. Available staff select a state either via the map or the state selector and review a list of opportunities by organization along with their contact information. Organizations seeking staff also had the ability to remove their need from the Surge Support Map at their discretion. This one-stop tool and webpage was designed to make the connection easy for the available staff and organizations in need.

The American Nephrology Nurses Association also included information on free and discounted travel, lodging, and food resources for health care providers on the Surge Support Map information webpage. Additional information about current licensure regulations and the Nursing Licensure Compact was provided because many staff would be traveling to different states.

Problem and/or Issued Addressed

The American Nephrology Nurses Association is the only professional nursing association in the United States dedicated to providing care to patients across the kidney care spectrum, and this includes dialysis therapies. As the sole association in this nursing specialty and position, ANNA leaders felt the responsibility to swiftly rise to the occasion to meet an urgent request for skilled nephrology nurses, dialysis nurses, and patient care technicians in areas of high need. Inaction meant patients would die in higher numbers without dialysis, and performing dialysis required skilled and knowledgeable staff.

Reach of Project

The American Nephrology Nurses Association collaborated with other kidney and nursing associations, health care systems, and kidney care providers to publicize the Surge Support Tool. Association leaders, staff, and volunteers performed extensive outreach through their networks via personal emails, newsletter articles, and website and social media posts.

The American Nephrology Nurses Association Director of Communications and Media Relations wrote a press release (<https://annanurse.org/42120-launches-online-tool-get-nurses-covid-19-hotspots>) that was sent to more than 400 nursing, health care, nephrology, and public media points. The Director also personally contacted her network of reporters and editors, encouraging them to share information on this important life-saving tool. Several outlets, including the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Campaign for Nursing's Future, *Minority Nurse*, Elite Healthcare, Healio, blogger Nurse Keith, and others shared links and information or wrote articles about the Surge Map. ANNA leaders also described the tool during print and podcast interviews in 2020.

Fourteen states have been represented on the map with several facilities in each state, with a total of 39 facilities and organizations posting staff needs and 9,362 page or map views. It is difficult to determine the exact number of placements that occurred from Surge Map matchings because once the matchings were made, future communication occurred between the nephrology staff and the organizations who had a staffing need. ANNA received feedback that placements were made, and staff were deployed to hot spot areas, but specific data on placement sites and the number of deployed staff were not collected.

The American Nephrology Nurses Association has considered "retiring" the Surge Map since shortly after its inception, but has not done so due to continued COVID-19 spikes in several areas across the country that lead to new postings.

Embodying the Power of Associations

The American Nephrology Nurses Association promoted the COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map via a banner image on the ANNA Forum's website, articles in the association's newsletter and professional nursing jour-

Figure 1
ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map

Nephrology Nursing COVID-19 Surge Support

Nephrology Nurses Needed for COVID-19 Hot Spots Across the U.S.

The American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) has heard from kidney organizations and healthcare providers across the United States about the dire need for nephrology nurses, advanced practice nurses, and patient care technicians to provide care to patients with kidney failure (including dialysis) in COVID-19 hot spots. ANNA has developed the tool below that identifies areas in need.

States highlighted in red below are designated as areas of need. Simply select the state (either via the map or the state selector) where you would be willing to lend a hand and you will see a list of opportunities. Click an opportunity for more details and for information on how to contact the organization.

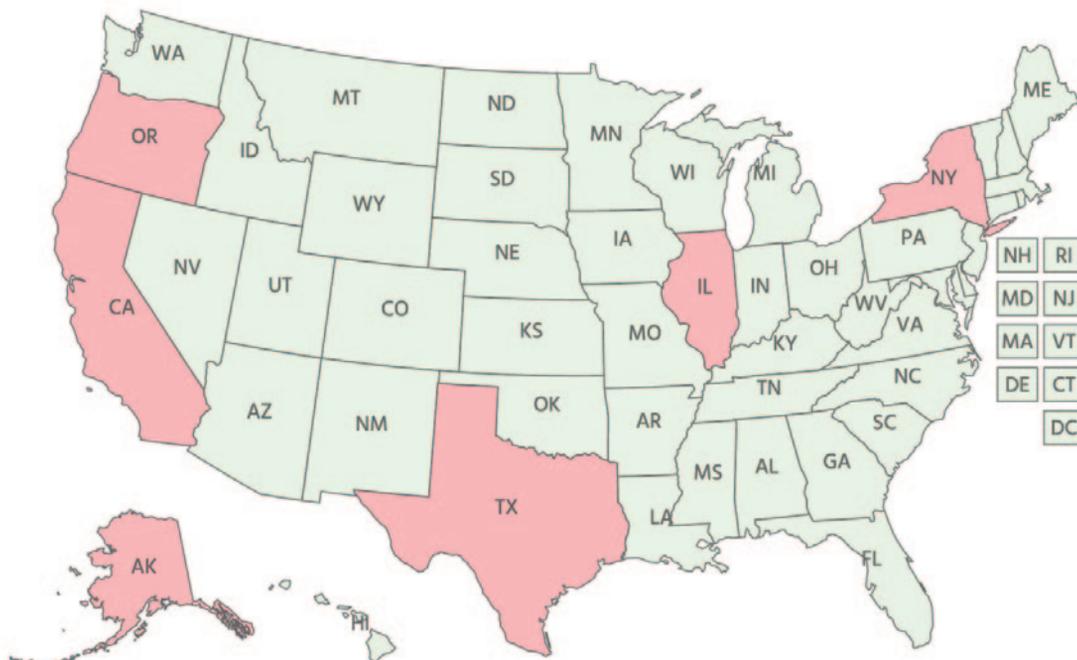
For information about current licensure regulations and the Nursing Licensure Compact, visit the NCSBN Nursing Licensure Compact page.

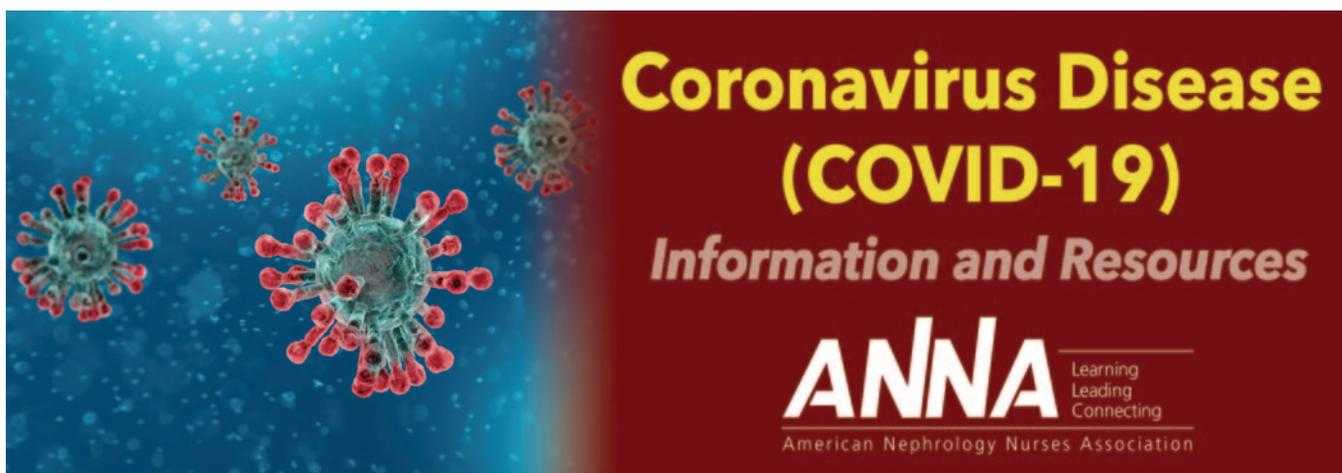
[NCSBN Nursing Licensure Compact Information](#)

In This Together!

The American Nephrology Nurses Association

State





nal, a banner during two 2020 virtual conferences, announcements on webinars, and by sending a link directly to other associations, such as the American Society of Nephrology, the American Nurses Association, the Renal Healthcare Association, the National Forum of ESRD Networks, and many additional nursing and kidney community contacts. ANNA also engaged with the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) and the Renal Healthcare Association (RHA) to share COVID-19 and kidney disease information via webinars and email blasts.

Announcements about the COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map were made prior to webinars in April, May, and June 2020 provided by ANNA, ASN, and RHA. In July 2020, ANNA's Executive Director was invited to present information to The National Forum of ESRD Networks on the goals and reach of the COVID-19 Surge Support Process and Map. The National Forum of ESRD Networks is a group of 18 ESRD organizations under contract to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that serve as liaisons between the Federal Government and the providers of ESRD services. ANNA is also a member of the Kidney Community Emergency Response (KCER) Program, under the contract with the

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. KCER aims to provide timely emergency preparedness, response, and recovery for the kidney community. ANNA's liaison to KCER provided information and updates on the Surge Map during monthly meetings.

The Need for the ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Project and Map Continues

While the original plan assumed the Surge Map would only be needed for a short time, the need has continued, and at times, expanded. As a result, ANNA continues to house the Surge Map on the association's primary COVID-19 web page and the Surge Map webpage. As cases of COVID-19 surged in 2020-2021, ANNA saw webpage activity increase as more facilities posted needs. During times when COVID-19 leveled off, the organizations would remove their facility's needs from the map.

Recognition

In August 2021, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) named ANNA a 2021 "Power of A" Gold Award winner for its ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Project and Map. The ASAE "Power of A" Awards recognize and celebrate the extraordinary contributions associations make to society by enriching lives, creating a competitive workforce, preparing society for the future, driving innovation, and making a better world.

Conclusion

The American Nephrology Nurses Association is the only professional nursing association in the United States that provides care to patients across the kidney care spectrum. ANNA felt the responsibility to swiftly rise to the occasion to meet an urgent request for skilled nephrology nurses, nurses caring for patients requiring dialytic therapies, and patient care technicians in areas of high need.

The innovative approach of the ANNA COVID-19 Surge Support Project and Map has offered and continues to offer the nephrology community a way to connect the areas in high need of experienced nephrology staff with skilled and available staff who could provide care.

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