

Guidelines for IndeVets Practicing During COVID-19 Transition Phases

Overview

We know the world is changing daily. In the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, we disseminated protocols for our IndeVets to follow to keep them and our partner hospitals safe while practicing veterinary medicine. Now our world is starting to change again. As states start to ease restrictions and others see a spike in cases, our IndeVets may see some changes in the partner hospitals where they work. This document was written to help our IndeVets adapt to changes, while still retaining safety protocols.

State Differences

IndeVets work in many different states and each of these states has been hit differently by COVID-19. Because of this, some IndeVets will see restrictions while others work in states with climbing cases and increased restrictions. The state government is the authority for determining when veterinary practices can enter different phases and how that will change the way an IndeVet will interact with staff and clients. As always, we recommend IndeVets remain familiar with their state's current phase and visit their state governor's website for updates. AVMA members can look at the state-by-state spreadsheet that outlines the differences among states since the start of the crisis. Please find the spreadsheet here (you must be logged in to access it): <https://ebusiness.avma.org/misc/stateorders.aspx>

General Guidelines for Our IndeVets' Safety

These guidelines are based on recommendations from the CDC, the AVMA and state government websites on how to remain safe as we transition to a new normal. For example, we may see certain hospitals beginning to allow clients into the building, especially as the weather becomes hotter, and the COVID-19 cases in certain states are declining. Just because this is happening doesn't mean it can't be done safely.

Engineering Controls for our IndeVets

1. **DO NOT go to work if you are sick in anyway.**
 - a. Report any symptoms to your manager and the scheduling manager as soon as possible. We will work to get another IndeVet to take your shift or cancel the shift.
 - b. We will advise you to see your own doctor or consult a doctor via telehealth.
2. **Become familiar with your state government's reopening plan and current transition phase.**
 - a. Follow regulations from state veterinary boards and governments regarding acceptable procedures and policies. *For example, most states are now allowing elective procedures and appointments.*
 - b. Use your personal and professional judgement when working in our partner hospitals as to the necessity of appointments and the adherence to guidelines for proper infection minimization.

Administrative Controls for Our IndeVets

1. **Ask the partner hospital where you are working if they have updated their COVID-19 Protocols.**

2. Some hospitals may choose not to change any protocols and continue all current curbside appointments, appropriate social distancing of staff when possible and appropriate use of PPE and disinfection practices.
3. ***If clients are being allowed in the hospital:***
 - a. They should be screened prior to their appointment to confirm they are not COVID-19 positive, have not been exposed to COVID-19, nor are they residing in a home with a COVID-19 positive person.
 - b. They should wear a mask/face covering as per state regulations.
 - c. Only 1 person should accompany each pet (exceptions may be related to euthanasia appointments).
 - d. The number of clients allowed in the building at one time should be limited by the size of the lobby and the ability to practice social distancing.
 - e. ***Social distancing of 6+ feet should continue to be practiced.***
4. **Please continue taking and logging your temperature prior to your shift each day.**
 - a. If it is 100.4 or higher, please notify your manager immediately and do not report to work.
5. Practice social distancing with clients (6 feet or more away) if you are talking to them in person.
6. Practice social distancing with staff members as much as possible when not working directly with an animal.
7. Enforce disinfection of the exam room or treatment table, etc. after every case. Ensure 5 minutes of contact time for the disinfectant, or as appropriate based on the disinfectant manufacturer's guidelines.

PPE (this section has not changed from our original guidelines)

1. When working directly with an animal and a staff member wear at least gloves (a new pair for each case) and a surgical mask/KN95 mask/face covering. If hospitals have disposable gowns, we recommend using those as well as per their use protocol. If gloves can't be used, please make sure to wash your hands for 20 seconds before and directly after handling an animal.
 - i. We understand that each hospital has a different amount of PPE. If reusing a mask, wash your hands before and after putting the mask on and taking it off; keep the mask in a clean place if not using it.
 - ii. Also consider wearing a washable surgical gown during your shift and placing it in the laundry at the hospital before you leave. Replace the gown sooner if it becomes soiled or wet.
2. We also recommend the staff members helping you utilize the same PPE protocol.
3. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before and after every case, after touching any surfaces and before touching your face or the surgical mask you are wearing.
4. Continue using additional protective gear when working with a cat with respiratory disease or any animal from a COVID-19 positive household

Non-Work-Related Out of State Travel

As restrictions in various states continue to ease, many of our IndeVets are starting to return to some sort of "normal" routine. In some cases, this may mean choosing to travel out of their home state for non-work-related purposes (such as for vacation, visiting family, etc.).

IndeVets

Our IndeVets are advised that traveling out of state for purposes other than work may impact their ability to work scheduled shifts in our partner hospitals upon their return. Some partner hospitals require quarantine after traveling outside of their home state. Other partner hospitals do not. If our IndeVets choose to travel, they are doing so at their own risk. They may be unable to work for a quarantine period upon returning from their trip, depending on the protocols at the partner hospitals at which they are scheduled. It is their responsibility to know a partner hospital's requirements prior to traveling.

If you have any concerns or questions about non-work-related out of state travel, please ask.

Who to Contact

Our IndeVets' safety and well-being are our first priorities. If you have any concerns at all about your safety or these protocols, please contact Marisa Brunetti by phone (484-832-4831) or email (marisa.brunetti@indevets.com). We will work together to find a solution.

Conclusion

We know that life and work have been unpredictable over these many months, but all of you have shown an amazing resilience and strength in adapting to the new way of working during this pandemic. These transition phases are meant to bring us back to a new normal way of working, but we must take care to not become too lax too quickly. This is especially important as COVID-19 cases rise in some states and fall in others. Stay safe and healthy!

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