

Governor Jim Gibbons



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GOVERNOR AUTHORIZES USE OF ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES, INCLUDING DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS, TO ASSIST IN PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Carson City, NV—Governor Jim Gibbons has instructed Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Mike Willden to use all available resources at the State's disposal to put as many trained medical surveyors in the field as necessary to complete Bureau of Licensure and Certification (BLC) Focus Surveys as quickly as possible. In addition, the Governor has authorized DHHS to request the use of the State Disaster Relief Fund, if necessary, to assist the Nevada State Health Division in ongoing efforts to address public health concerns regarding unsafe medical practices at ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs) throughout Nevada.

"We are facing a public health crisis not only in the sense of certain facilities not adhering to common sense medical practices and thus placing patient safety in jeopardy, but also the perception from the general public that it is not safe to have procedures done that help save lives, namely a colonoscopy exam," Governor Gibbons said.

"Even after the state has taken multiple steps to inform medical professionals through issuing a Technical Bulletin and following up with personal phone calls to all ambulatory surgical centers in Nevada, not to mention the intense media coverage surrounding these events, I have been informed that BLC staff continues to see deficient procedures being performed during recent inspections."

"Government's most basic responsibility is to ensure public safety. With the health of so many Nevadans seemingly at risk, as Governor, I feel it is imperative that we act swiftly and decisively to help restore public trust and to ensure that unsafe medical practices are halted immediately. We must act decisively on several fronts: complete surveys of centers performing these types of procedures as quickly as possible, provide additional education to practitioners charged with protecting the public health, and empower patients to ask tough questions of their service providers to help alleviate fears associated with this crisis. "

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Governor Gibbons said he has received commitment from both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to lend immediate support to the State as it works with county health agencies to act swiftly to protect public health. The CDC is sending federal Infection Control and Epidemiology Inspectors to Nevada to team up with BLC Surveyors, and CMS has authorized funding to help pay for the temporary hiring of additional Surveyors and for overtime. CMS will also ask surrounding states for assistance by providing Nevada with additional trained surveyors.

Earlier today, Governor Gibbons approved emergency regulations promulgated by the Nevada State Health Division in relation to ASCs. Those regulations mandate strict adherence to manufacturer's recommendations for the use of medications.

A Focus Survey—conducted by two Registered Nurse Surveyors who have successfully completed specific training in observing and questioning surgical protocols, procedures, and practices—concentrates on specific procedures. An individual Focus Survey requires 4-6 hours of onsite observation of a specific facility, whereas a Full Survey requires two days and is usually completed by three Surveyors.

For more information on what is being done at the State Health Division, go to http://health.nv.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=622&Itemid=1394.

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