

March 20 UNOS update on COVID-19

UNOS is committed to supporting the donation and transplant community as you meet the challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak. We have plans and contingencies in place to ensure the uninterrupted operation of the UNetSM system and the Organ Center, and are coordinating with membership and public health officials to assess risk and provide up-to-date, accurate information, as needed, to the community. Please check our [UNOS COVID-19 resources page](#) frequently for updates and share this resource with your colleagues. As always, please contact us if you have any questions or information to share.

New CMS guidance: adult elective surgery and procedure guidelines

Transplant surgeries should be considered high priority and should not be postponed during the COVID-19 pandemic, if possible, according to [new guidance issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#). The guidance recommends limiting all nonessential planned surgeries and procedures until further notice, but identified transplants as Tier 3b procedures that should not be postponed.

Organ donation and transplant town hall

On March 23, transplant organizations from around the world will participate in a [town hall webinar](#) to share their experiences and respond to questions about the impact of COVID-19 on organ donation and transplantation. The webinar has reached its limit of 1,000 registrants; if you were unable to register for the event, a recording of the webinar will be available Monday evening on the [UNOS COVID-19 resources page](#) and the AST YouTube channel. The event is being organized by AST, ASTS, AOPO, CST, ESOT, ISHLT, NATCO, TTS and UNOS.

Program inactivation and patient notification

Due to the national crisis, members may be considering whether to opt to inactivate an individual candidate, a program's waitlist, or a transplant program or living donor component. Different

scenarios involve different requirements. Find option-specific information to assist transplant programs in determining the approach that will work best for their program on the [UNOS COVID-19 resources page](#).

Outcome and performance measurement

Some members have asked about how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect established OPTN review of activity and outcomes reviews for hospitals and OPOs. We realize the current situation strains the resources of all healthcare providers. It also requires making difficult clinical judgements without long experience and thorough research; and that places physicians, professionals, and patients alike in a world of uncertainty.

The OPTN Membership and Professional Standards Committee and the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients will work together to make changes to the outcomes metrics that reflect the challenges of this unique environment. While we are determining how or whether to conduct reviews of this period, please continue to make the best clinical decisions regarding your donors and patients. We will provide updates as we have more specific information to share.

OPTN data entry guidance

In order to ensure that candidates' allocation scores are not negatively impacted by challenges with clinic visits and laboratory testing, the OPTN Executive Committee approved an emergency policy to protect candidates' status on the transplant waitlist. Details can be found in the [related policy notice](#) and in the [system notice](#).

A data entry guidance document is available in UNet that explains how to operationalize this emergency policy when new data are required to maintain or extend a candidate's current medical urgency status or score, and your program is unable to obtain updated tests or observations for the candidate due to COVID-19. Find the link at the top of the main page after logging into [Secure Enterprise](#).

Donor testing for COVID-19

Many hospital systems and commercial laboratories are expanding the availability and response time of COVID-19 testing. At this time, however, availability of timely testing remains a challenge in many areas.

We are working closely with the community to share the best clinical information and guidance available regarding care of transplant candidates and recipients, and screening of potential organ donors at risk of COVID-19. Please refer to resources available from the [American Society of Transplantation](#), [The Transplantation Society](#) and the [Association of Organ Procurement Organizations](#). We will continue to update the [UNOS COVID-19 resources page](#) as guidance is developed and enhanced.

Reporting issues

The OPTN is collecting information about challenges and issues created by the outbreak in order to evaluate further improvements or assistance that HHS, the OPTN and UNOS can provide. Please use this [survey tool](#) to report interruptions or issues.

OPTN committee meetings

All OPTN committee meetings through April 21 have been converted to virtual meetings. Meetings later than that date are being evaluated.

More information

UNOS is compiling the best available information about COVID-19 on a resource page, including advice from CDC, AST, AOPO and other sources. The [UNOS COVID-19 resources page](#) is refreshed regularly with the most current sources.

If you have any additional questions, please contact member.questions@unos.org or call 844-395-4428.

As a reminder, our IT Customer Service Desk is available 8 am – 7 pm EST. Contact unethelpdesk@unos.org or 800-978-4334.

The Organ Center is available around the clock and can be reached at 800-292-9537.

[Member information regarding COVID-19](#)



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