



*Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics*

July 20, 2020

**COPAFS Statement on New COVID-19 Guidance for Hospital Reporting**

The Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS) takes issue with the recent directive<sup>1</sup> from the White House to shift all reported hospital data on COVID-19 to the Department of Health and Human Services and leave the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) out of the reporting structure completely. For the past 75 years, the CDC has been the nation's trusted source for health-related guidance and, over the past six months, has effectively tracked the spread of COVID-19 throughout the US, utilizing data received from hospitals, laboratories, and acute care centers. CDC researchers are uniquely qualified to process and review these data, ultimately providing sound guidance on what will keep Americans safe.

The CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network employs critical data quality mechanisms to ensure the transparency of the data collection and processing. These mechanisms corrected past reporting issues openly and publicly; however, there is no indication that these same mechanisms will be integrated into the new reporting structure. This fact alone will erode Americans' confidence in the validity of the data that is reported.

To remove these responsibilities without cause or meaningful rationale is troublesome indeed. Attempting to shift the data to a new system during one of the worst public health crises the US has ever experienced is misguided. Doing so will delay the reporting of COVID-19 hospital cases during a time when these data should be made available to stakeholders as quickly as possible. This decision also threatens the consistency and the validity of the data reporting process making comparisons over time potentially problematic.

We encourage HHS to reverse its decision, and to resume reporting COVID-19 data to the National Healthcare Safety Network to ensure that the researchers and scientists at CDC continue to play a central role in fighting this virus.

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<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 Guidance for Hospital Reporting and FAQs For Hospitals, Hospital Laboratory, and Acute Care Facility Data Reporting, Updated July 10, 2020 [<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/covid-19-faqs-hospitals-hospital-laboratory-acute-care-facility-data-reporting.pdf>]