



Advancing Transfusion and
Cellular Therapies Worldwide

Association Bulletin #20-02

Date: March 19, 2020

To: AABB Members

From: Beth H. Shaz, MD - President
Debra BenAvram - Chief Executive Officer

Re: Recommendations for Providing a Safe Environment for Blood Donation During the COVID-19 Epidemic

Association Bulletins provide a mechanism for publication of documents that have been approved by the Board of Directors for distribution to individual and institutional members, such as:

- Standards that were adopted after publication of the most recent edition of *Standards*.
- Statements of AABB policy intended for distribution to members.
- Guidance, recommendations, and reports that have been developed by AABB Committees or National Office staff for distribution to members.

This Association Bulletin recommends blood collection establishments implement, at a minimum, a combination of strategies to protect the availability of blood nationally. It was developed with input from the AABB COVID-19 Working Group with members from the Donor Health and Safety Committee, Regulatory Affairs Committee, Transfusion Transmitted Diseases Committee, and the Donor History Task Force, and approved by the AABB Board of Directors.

Summary

This Association Bulletin contains information and strategies designed to:

- (1) Promote a safe environment for blood donation necessary to protect both donors and staff,
- (2) Address public perception, misinformation, and growing concerns regarding risk of infection transmission during donation, and
- (3) Encourage blood donation during the current COVID-19 outbreak through a demonstrable commitment to safety.

These voluntary recommendations are based on a review of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations to protect individuals from the spread of the virus, and current practices shared by AABB members. The adoption of some or all of these strategies will help to demonstrate the commitment of blood collection organizations to the safety of their donors.

Recommendations

In light of the unprecedented challenge to blood collections and the expectation for continued public concerns in the coming months, AABB recommends blood collection establishments act promptly to implement a combination of strategies described below:

1. Communicate to donors about new safety measures implemented in response to the outbreak.
 - a. Consider use of online communication tools.



**Advancing Transfusion and
Cellular Therapies Worldwide**

- b. Develop and post signage encouraging self-deferral for individuals who do not feel well or meet critical eligibility criteria, including any temporary COVID-19 deferral criteria.
2. Provide instructions and training to staff to support safe practices defined by CDC.
3. Adopt measures that allow prospective donors to maintain the recommended distance of 6 feet of separation between themselves and other prospective donors and/or staff during their time in the center.
 - a. These considerations should be extended to the screening, collection, and refreshment areas, with particular attention to parts of the center that are frequent points of congestion due to physical barriers or administrative checkpoints.
 - b. Consider altering the placement of furniture and equipment as possible/appropriate.
 - c. If not possible to reconfigure the space to allow for the recommended distance of 6 feet, consider staggering appointments.
 - d. Implement appointment and distancing strategies on bloodmobiles by limiting collections, such as collecting from only two donors at a time.
4. Address safety of staff.
 - a. Consider daily temperature checks.
 - b. Provide training on signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
 - c. Monitor and follow CDC recommendations for the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Blood center staff are not health care workers and donors are not suspected or known to be positive for COVID-19. Therefore, the use of additional PPE in response to the current epidemic is not currently recommended.
5. Limit donor center access to prospective donors and to those who have a normal temperature when checked at the time of arrival at the donation site.
 - a. Some centers may prefer to control the flow of foot traffic in the center by moving to appointment-only donations.
 - b. Centers may also ask prospective donors to wait outside of the center, if doing so can be accomplished while observing the recommended distance of 6 feet of separation between the donor and others, and to await a text message or phone call.
 - c. Discourage donors from being accompanied by family members.
6. Encourage donors to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after donation.
7. Follow procedures for cleaning and disinfecting and increase frequency of these activities, to include:
 - a. The donor bed and other surfaces in the collection area after each donor.
 - b. The donor screening and refreshment areas.
 - c. Restrooms, doorknobs, and other surfaces.
 - d. Donor screening tools such as clipboards, tablets, pens, and styluses.
8. Empty waste bins more frequently.
9. Protect supplies in the refreshment area by:
 - a. Limiting donor access to the supply of snacks and drinks.
 - b. Serving each donor individually wrapped snacks and drinks.

Conclusion

Blood centers should continue to adapt and consider implementation of recommendations to ensure public safety during the current COVID-19 outbreak. As new recommendations emerge, and as warranted by the current pandemic, AABB will continue to urge adoption of these and other practices by the blood collection community.