ON THE FRONT LINES:
ELEVATING TEST, TRACE AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES

Regardless of business size or industry, the coronavirus outbreak has pushed organizations' crisis response plans beyond what most were designed to handle. As the pandemic persists, leaders face tremendous pressure to continue to protect their communities, employees, students and faculty, physicians, and front-line staff in new and different ways. A strong suppression strategy based on **testing, tracing and treatment** is critical to reducing infection rates and mitigating the risks of operating amid a global health crisis. The fourth and ongoing aspect of this crisis is a **turnaround** strategy for how organizations look beyond recovery to restore volume and reposition for the future.

Starting With Holistic Strategy

The crisis response strategies and programs organizations activated at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic now have a more permanent place in daily operations. As the pandemic persists, organizations are feeling the urgency to enhance or scale their existing programs, but many have limited experience with programs this comprehensive. Among the critical and complex components — funding, testing, communication, partnerships, contact tracing, treating, biosurveillance and data analysis.

Regardless of where organizations are on their journey in the battle against COVID-19, there are key elements that any suppression program should have in place. Comprehensive, people- and community-focused strategies that engage stakeholders along the continuum of testing, tracing and treating consumers are essential to combating the spread of COVID-19 and future health threats.

Test

Demand for coronavirus testing is soaring as public health officials and organizational leaders urge people to get tested if showing symptoms of the virus and, in some cases, even if they are not showing symptoms. While much of public concern has focused on the availability of testing, there are a number of key components that must come together to scale testing operations that are capable of supporting the volume and complexity of testing needed within communities and organizations.

In any community or setting, COVID-19 testing is a collaborative and highly coordinated effort inclusive of multiple entities and populations. Activating strong partnerships with providers,

payors, employers and community-based organizations is critical and will serve as the foundation for addressing strategic and operational concerns, including funding, supplies, communication and staffing.

Below are several key questions organizations should be able to answer when **developing testing programs**:

- What is our target population? Who are we testing and why? How often do we test?

- What messaging is being used to engage the priority populations or communities?

- Do we have adequate supplies and a reliable supply chain?

- Do we understand our lab capacity and projected turnaround times for testing?

In a large metropolitan community, Huron worked with local officials and multiple entities to activate testing programs at the peak of the city's outbreak. For this community, priorities included lab capacity assessment and support, clinical staffing analysis and coordination for hospitals and post-acute care, hotel clinical development, COVID-19 pop-up testing site setup and operation, and project management of mobile testing sites.

Trace

Tracking the coronavirus is as important as testing for the virus. However, as coronavirus infection rates climb, the operational, human and technological challenges of contact tracing are becoming increasingly difficult to scale. HIPAA compliance, adequately trained workforces, quality assurance, reporting and analytics, and contact management are critical components of contact tracing programs. While some organizations may have expertise in one area or another, most are not prepared to execute fully in every area.

Below are several key questions organizations should be able to answer when **developing a comprehensive contact tracing program**:

- Is our customer relationship management (CRM) or other platform capable of supporting our tracing efforts? How well will our platform integrate with other systems?

- Do we have adequate staff to operate and manage our program? Are they trained in consumer-centric approaches that will engage the patient and community in a positive way?

- How are we ensuring we stay compliant with state and federal guidelines? Are we prepared to protect patient privacy?

Contact tracing efforts across the U.S. face a number of issues, including lack of patient or consumer trust, inadequate funding, confusing protocols and information privacy gaps. The most successful contact tracing programs will be those that are able to unite people, operations and technology into a seamless, data-driven and consumer-centric approach.

Treat

Fighting the coronavirus has pushed governments, educational institutions, health systems and businesses to rethink every aspect of how they protect and care for people. From shortages in personal protective equipment to major shifts in patient volume to ramping up virtual care overnight to preventing clinician burnout, there seems to be no end to challenges healthcare organizations face on the front lines of treating COVID-19 patients, all while still providing care to other patients. In other industries, leaders grapple with elevated safety protocols, isolation strategies and communication plans, as well as the development of ancillary programs to support their employees, students and faculty.

Below are several key questions organizations should be able to answer when **building strategies to care for COVID-19 patients and their families**:

- What methodology is in place to support the isolation, treatment and care of COVID-19-positive patients, both within and outside of formal care settings?

- How are patient care, cost and safety factors being prioritized to support our methodology design or implementation?

- How does our care delivery model need to change in the short term and long term to meet demand?

- What strategies and communication plans are in place to keep people engaged with us following positive or negative COVID-19 test results?

Inside and outside of formal care settings, organizations have struggled with adequate protocols to treat the surge of COVID-19 patients. In the days ahead, leaders will need to stay focused on clinical efficiency, patient experience and strong communication strategies to fulfill their missions amid this crisis.

Turnaround: Restoring Volume, Returning to Growth

Battling this public health crisis has been and will continue to be a cycle of response and recovery, threatening to tie up organizational resources indefinitely. Recent Huron research of the healthcare industry found that 66% of executives' short-term plans and 77% of executives' long-term plans will remain mostly unchanged. The key will be accelerating certain elements of existing strategies that can help mitigate financial losses while positioning the organization to excel once the crisis ebbs. Short-term adjustments will be necessary for organizations to continue operating safely while stabilizing financially. Beyond that, leaders have an opportunity to embrace a changing market.

Despite the turmoil, it is possible that the crisis can better position an organization for the future. Lessons learned within their own business and those experienced across industries are allowing leaders to re-imagine their future and make bold moves aimed at long-term stability.

Below are several key questions organizations should be asking when **developing recovery and repositioning plans**:

- What additional revenue enhancement activities are being reviewed or acted on to support the financial health of our organization?

- How has demand changed in my community or market? How are we positioned to meet that demand?

- What measures or steps are being taken to ensure cost-savings goals are being met to support the organization?

- How are cost, efficiency and value metrics being used to support business decisions?

- Which investments make the most sense for our organization right now? What elements of our strategic plan should be accelerated? What should be de-prioritized?

For more on how your organization can quickly scale the funding, testing, tracing and treatment programs needed to thrive amid COVID-19, contact a Huron expert or visit our Stimulus Relief Gateway to get started.

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