



Homeland Security Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response

Many physical therapists in private practice are struggling with the question of whether or not to stay open from an ethical perspective. The question pertains to whether or not we, as private practice business owners, are contributing to the rise of the infection curve, versus supporting the flattening of it, by remaining open to see our patients.

We are writing to share a memorandum from the US Department of Homeland Security issued on the list of **essential infrastructure workers** (see page 5 of the memorandum). It may be argued that it is our duty to continue to care for our patients' physical therapy needs during this time of crisis.

The guidance from the memorandum states that:

If you work in a critical infrastructure industry, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply, you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule.

If your clinic is able to practice within the recommended CDC guidelines and follow your local government mandates, consider that community-based physical therapists assist in keeping people healthy. According to Dr. Matos, an expert in biologic surety and the management of select agent programs at federal facilities:

Physical therapists are essential in flattening the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic. They play a key role in keeping people they can help out of the doctor offices and ER's. This will not only free up the medical teams to treat those impacted by COVID-19, but also limit the exposure of those seeking the care of the physical therapist.

Dr. Matos is an advisory group in Chemical, Biological, Radiological, And Nuclear Defense. Dr. Matos has experience working with the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center, Department of Defense Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System, and the CDC. He has served as a public health emergency officer for 14 Department of Defense installations and has participated in multiple disease and epidemiologic investigations. Dr. Matos has received extensive training in risk communication in a public health emergency and in exposure investigations.

[Access the Memorandum Here](#)