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*Lt. Governor*

SHEREEF M. ELNAHAL, MD, MBA  
*Commissioner*

September 12, 2018

To: Chief Executive Officers

From: Shereef M. Elnahal, MD, MBA  
Commissioner

Re: Plain Language Emergency Alerting

Back in 2004, nearly all of New Jersey's acute care hospitals and most long-term care facilities adopted a standard set of facility emergency notification codes. The new practice, used widely across the U.S., is to use plain language alerts. An expert group organized by the New Jersey Hospital Association developed a toolkit for healthcare facilities to implement this important initiative. The Department endorses this concept and I want to encourage you to adopt this practice.

Since 2004, additional codes were added for new and emerging threats, such as active shooter. "Code confusion" can and does occur, which potentially leads to negative outcomes with the continued use of this once-cutting edge system. Plain language emergency alerts will allow quick, efficient, and appropriate response to critical situations; use will also promote transparency, enhance patient and visitor safety, and contribute to a resilient safety culture.

The plain language system will help to improve response to facility emergencies, align New Jersey with national standards, and promote institutional resilience. It will also contribute to enhancing patient safety and providing quality healthcare throughout the state. The Department and I believe that the adoption and use of plain language emergency alerts will help achieve the goals and objectives stated here.

Thank you for improving the state of healthcare in New Jersey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shereef M. Elnahal".

Shereef M. Elnahal, MD, MBA