



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

January 27, 2010

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

Since January 12, 2010, the State of Florida has been actively engaged in supporting the humanitarian efforts following the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Unfortunately, communication with an appropriate federal lead agency and the lack of coordination by federal authorities has been challenging. However, Florida's "Operation Haiti Relief" team has done everything we can to ensure repatriated citizens are smoothly transitioned through international airports, their medical evacuation flights are coordinated, and they are directly admitted into Florida hospitals.

As a result, Florida's health care system is quickly reaching saturation, especially in the area of high level trauma care. We will not be able to sustain these efforts alone. Therefore, the State of Florida is respectfully requesting that you activate the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) to assist in distributing these critically ill medical patients to other states and ensure states are appropriately reimbursed for their services.

Our response efforts have involved many public and private agencies at all levels. The Florida Department of Children and Families, in collaboration with the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, has coordinated management of repatriated citizens at the designated airports. These services have included, but are not limited to meals, provision of emergency cash assistance, arrangement of connecting flights, overnight hotel accommodations, and transportation assistance. Additionally, the Florida Department of Health has coordinated medical screenings for repatriated citizens including onsite care, emergency medical service transports to acute care hospitals for further evaluation, and hospital admissions.

Initially, the flights were medical evacuation flights into the South Florida area, primarily Miami-Dade and Broward counties. As repatriation flights began and increased in number, Sanford International Airport in the Orlando metro area was added. Medical support for these flights includes onsite medical

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assessment/triage staff, emergency medical services for transport to acute care facilities, and inter-hospital coordination. Florida's "Operation Haiti Relief" team has worked with deployed staff, 24 hours a day, at key sites throughout the state. This is an effort of unprecedented scope and the following is a snapshot of Florida's activity to date:

- 15,411 repatriation passengers on 660 flights
- 436 have been admitted to hospitals, greater than 90% of these patients have been multiple trauma
- 25% of these patients have been under the age of 18

Recently, we learned that federal planning is underway to move between 30-50 critically ill patients per day for an indefinite period of time. Florida does not have the capacity to support such an operation. Additional factors complicate Florida's current healthcare system capacity and we are at current peak from winter tourism and seasonal residence migration.

Florida has fully supported the federal mission during this crisis, but we need you to assist us by establishing a process through NDMS to better manage and support these critically injured patients. Through the engagement of collaborative planning with our federal and state partners, we will be able to address the long term care needs of these patients and associated financial issues.

I appreciate your favorable consideration of this request within the next 48 hours.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist

cc: Florida Congressional Delegation
Senate President Jeff Atwater
House Speaker Larry Cretul

Great to talk with you yesterday!