

Healthcare Capacity Building: Alternative Care Sites and Federal Medical Stations

Alternate Care Sites (ACS) are buildings or structures of opportunity converted to provide additional capacity and capability for healthcare delivery outside the walls of a traditional, established healthcare institution. All ACS options need to be considered for increasing healthcare capacity and capability during this pandemic.

Understanding the Difference Between Alternative Care Sites and Federal Medical Stations

- ACS can serve various patient types (e.g., COVID or non-COVID) and purposes (e.g., non-acute or acute care).
- An ACS can be configured into many different footprints (e.g., hotel or arena) to meet the local community's needs.
- In all cases, the ACS will require significant logistical wraparound services, as well as appropriate medical staffing.
- Federal Medical Stations (FMS) **are one specific type of pre-packaged ACS** that is deployed, managed, and supported by the federal government out of the Strategic National Stockpile.
- FMS may be a familiar capability due to previous disaster response experiences.
- For the COVID-19 pandemic response, FMS provide a limited capability and may not be available to meet every community's needs.

Planning Resources for Alternative Care Sites

The Federal Healthcare Resilience Task Force has released an [Alternate Care Site Toolkit](#) to support the implementation of ACS in the community. This toolkit provides detailed information for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments (SLTTs) and healthcare systems on how to select sites, set up and operate an ACS.

In addition to the toolkit, ASPR TRACIE has a number of resources available on ACS available at the [ASPR TRACIE COVID-19 Alternate Care Site Resources](#) page. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also has additional information on the [USACE Alternate Care Site webpage](#) regarding a variety of potential ACS footprints that can be established.

Federal Support for Establishing Alternative Care Sites

To discuss ACS needs in your community and for technical inquiries, please contact your [FEMA Regional Administrators](#) and HHS Regional Emergency Coordinators through State Health Departments and Emergency Management Agencies. These federal representatives can discuss your specific needs and work with you to determine the best available resources.



FEMA



Quick Reference to Understand ACS and FMS

	Alternative Care Sites	Federal Medical Stations
What it is...	Any building or structure modified for healthcare delivery to provide additional capacity and capability for an affected community	One type of ACS
Where it's located...	ACS can be temporary structures (e.g., tents or trailers) located on or near the grounds of one hospital. They can also be established in other buildings of opportunity (e.g., hotel or arena).	FMS must be established in buildings of opportunity (e.g., hotel or arena). A site survey is conducted by HHS and community partners to ensure a suitable location is selected.
Who operates it...	ACS are typically established, staffed, equipped, supplied, and operated by healthcare systems or state, local, tribal, and territorial governments.	FMS are equipped, supplied, and operated by the federal government (at the request of a community).
Who pays for it...	ACS established and operated by state, local, tribal, and territorial entities and certain private non-profit organizations (eligible applicants) to expand capacity for COVID-19 are eligible emergency protective measures under FEMA's Public Assistance Program . Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) COVID-19 Emergency Supplemental Funding may be used to expand health care surge capacity for COVID-19. Funds may be used for staff to set up and/or operate ACS; however, funding may not be used for clinical care or for staffing to provide clinical care.	FMS mission assignments are subject to the direct federal assistance cost share as designated by the President for each emergency declaration.

Additional Resources:

[ASPR TRACIE Hospital Surge and Immediate Bed Availability Topic Collection](#)

[Medical Surge Capacity and Capability: A Management System for Integrating Medical and Health Resources During Large-Scale Emergencies](#)