

PPE Supplies: Making Sure We're Prepared

Q&A with Lisa Wallace, Corporate Director of Supply Chain

We asked our Corporate Director of Supply Chain, Lisa Wallace, to share how Goodwin House is sourcing our personal protective equipment (PPE) and planning ahead so that we are protected if there are surges of COVID-19 in the fall and winter.



**Lisa holds her award for
Employee of the Year**

Q. What was the supply chain sourcing for PPE before the pandemic?

A. Before the pandemic, our PPE sourcing needs were minimal. Our basic PPE stock consisted of isolation gowns, isolation masks, gloves and a few face shields. Fortunately for us, we also had 1,200 of the 3M™ N95 respirator masks in our emergency stock. This type of mask filters at least 95% of airborne particles and is a staple PPE item in healthcare settings.

Q. What happened to our supply chains in the early months of the pandemic?

A. During the early months of the pandemic, the healthcare supply chain in the US and abroad was in complete chaos because approximately 80% of all PPE is produced in Asia. At that time, Asia was experiencing its COVID-19 peak so their governments were keeping most of the PPE produced in the region for themselves. Domestically, the big medical supply distributors kept the vast majority of their inventory for the federal government and the large hospital chains, and they put the entire PPE category on “allocation status”. Being on allocation status means that your chances of getting PPE not purchased before the pandemic are slim to none. It also means that the distributor’s existing PPE stock will be distributed to their customer’s based on their order history. With that being said, I had to make a strategic decision to outsource PPE myself, rather than use the big distributors.

In April, we coordinated a large group buy of surgical masks for 53 other senior living and healthcare organizations in the area. There is an article on the GH blog that tells [the full story](https://www.goodwinhouse.org/blog/goodwin-house-sources-critical-ppe-with-group-buys/). (<https://www.goodwinhouse.org/blog/goodwin-house-sources-critical-ppe-with-group-buys/>)

Even though we made group buys through reputable importers and brokers, it still took us several weeks to get supplies.

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Q. What has changed more recently regarding suppliers, costs, etc.?

A. Things are a lot calmer now because we have been able to secure and sustain what I consider to be comfortable inventory levels. We also expanded our vendor matrix to include not only our primary and secondary medical suppliers, but also more non-traditional vendors, direct importers and brokers.

Prices have also started to decrease, so we can actually competitively “shop” now for certain items. The key is that we have to do it quickly!

Q. What is Goodwin House’s strategy for PPE procurement going forward, recognizing that it could be six to eight months before a vaccine is in widespread distribution?

A. Our goal is to keep a six- to 12-month supply of PPE in stock. In order to house that inventory, we have leased space in a local, climate controlled warehouse. As buyers, we constantly monitor our inventory levels and make adjustments. We also have to pay close attention to what’s happening in the global market. Professional Supply Chain organizations such as The Association for Health Care Resource & Materials Management (AHRMM) and the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) provide us with great information about the global supply chain and they also provide us with excellent resources for sourcing supplies.

Q. Are any other organizations involved in our purchases?

We procure our PPE directly from medical suppliers, non-traditional vendors and regional and national Group Purchasing Organizations (GPO). Occasionally we also do “special buys” from importers coordinated by GPOs and brokers.

We also reach out to a select group of fellow LeadingAge Virginia members. (LeadingAge is an association of not-for-profit aging services organizations.)

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Lisa Receives Highest Award Given by the Healthcare Council of the National Capital Area:

In July, Lisa was named an Employee of the Year by the Healthcare Council of the National Capital Area (HCNCA).

The award recognizes employees for contributing to extraordinary efforts in creating efficiencies, improving processes and contributing to customer satisfaction.

Congratulations, Lisa!



Q. Are we able to support other organizations that may be challenged to obtain PPE?

A. We have supported many local organizations, including The Lewinsville Retirement Residences with products and sourcing. We will definitely continue to do that. (GHI is the management agent for The Lewinsville Retirement Residences, Inc., which serves low-income older adults in McLean and Great Falls, Virginia.)

Q. How has the price of masks and other PPE changed over the course of COVID?

A. Although the prices for PPE remain inflated, they are starting to go down as the manufacturers' orders are now beginning to level out.

About Lisa:

Lisa has a Bachelor of Science degree in Merchandising and Buying Operations from the University of Louisiana-Monroe. She is a Certified Purchasing Professional and a Certified Green Purchasing Professional. Lisa serves on the Supply Chain Advisory Council for the Healthcare Council of the National Capital Area and is an active member of three professional Supply Chain organizations, including the Institute of Supply Management (ISM), the Association for Healthcare Resource and Materials Management (AHRMM), and the American Purchasing Society (APS).

Quantity Purchased of Key PPE Items (since March 1, 2020):

- **3ply Surgical Masks** = 315,000
- **N95 Respirator Masks** = 14,000
- **Face Shields** = 20,000
- **Isolation Gowns** = 57,000
- **Gloves** = 1,205,000 (all departments)

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Are you wearing your mask correctly?



Make sure your mask completely covers your nose and mouth.

To avoid contamination, whenever you need to take off your mask remove it completely rather than tucking it below your chin.



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