



Iowa Health Care Association
Iowa Center for Assisted Living
Iowa Center for Home Care

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Vendor Vetting Best Practices – 8/5/2020

With increasing demands for personal protective equipment (PPE) due to COVID-19, finding a consistent and reliable supply source has become increasingly difficult for providers. The Iowa Health Care Association (IHCA) has consulted with supply procurement specialists, including specialists from Iowa State University’s Center for Industrial Research and Service, to develop best practice guidance on vetting PPE vendors for IHCA members.

This guidance is to be used as a resource as providers evaluate vendor options when supply is no longer available through their ordinary supply chain. This document is merely an additional resource and is not intended to replace the provider’s own due diligence processes. Providers should still ask their own questions and only place orders with suppliers they feel comfortable with.

Key Questions to Ask Prospective Suppliers

- Has their product been tested, if so by who and against which standard?
- Is their product certified for use within the U.S. by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)? (Note: non N95 masks do not require certification.)
- Is their product approved for use under and FDA’s Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?
- How many units are immediately available? Where (physical location) is this inventory?
- What material is their product made from? What are the specific blends (e.g. if a cotton blend what are the other materials)?
- Who is the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and at what plant (location) was it manufactured?

The product may not (or need to) be certified, but the sales representative from the supplier should be able to provide quick, clear answers to each question. The purchaser should also evaluate if the quoted lead-time, purchase price, minimum order quantities, etc. are reasonable.

Flags to Watch For

Yellow Flags – Proceed with Caution if the Supplier is...

- A small or medium size enterprise purchasing PPE individually. These small or medium size enterprises are not likely going to be able to source quantities in volume or at a price any better than established PPE suppliers and industrial distributors in the USA.
- Offering a deal that looks too good to be true. Then it probably is.

Red Flags – Would Not Recommend Proceeding if the Supplier...

- Requires payment upfront.

- Does not have any U.S. based representation.
- Does not have any inventory in the U.S. (i.e., all their stock in in China or some other foreign location.)
- Requires the order before they will manufacturer the product.
- Cannot answer questions about their product in a timely manner.
- Cannot deliver within a reasonable time.
- Offers to purchase PPE is unsolicited.
- Communicates in a way that is not in a normal business appropriate format and/or grammar is unclear or makes it hard to understand exactly who you are buying product from or who you are paying, etc.

Additional Resources:

Regulatory PPE Pages:

[U.S. Food & Drug Administration Personal Protective Equipment EUAs](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention NIOSH Approved Mask Information](#)

Legal Company Summaries of Purchasing PPE:

[Holland & Knight Legal Insights on the Import of PPE and Other Medical Supplies Vital to Fighting COVID-19](#)

[China Law Blog: Buying Face Masks and Other PPE form China: Not for the Faint of Heart](#)