

Jennifer Reyes  
Director of Clinical Operations  
Victory Medical  
[www.victorymed.com](http://www.victorymed.com)  
Austin, Texas

Make A Mask Austin Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/MakeAMask>  
Make A Mask Austin Website: <https://www.makeamaskaustin.org/>

**Can you tell us more about the current situation at your center?  
What are the COVID-19 efforts you and your team are handling on the frontlines?**



I am the Director of Clinical Operations for the Victory Medical Family Practice and Urgent Care Centers in the Austin, Texas area. Up until 2 weeks ago, I had a team of almost 170 staff and only had 5 N95 masks and about 50 surgical masks to try and protect them while taking care of potential COVID positive patients. It is very difficult to look your employee in the eye and say... "I know we are busy... I know I can't protect you the way that I should be able to .... I know you are at risk of taking something back to your family .... but I need you to come to work each and every day right now because our community needs us more than ever." We are actively testing for COVID and seeing positive after positive results come back using the nasopharyngeal swabs. In addition, I'm excited to announce that we went live with the first COVID point of care tests in Austin, in which we will now be able to see if you have antibodies of the coronavirus via a finger prick blood test in under 10 minutes. Protocols change on a daily basis to allow for the safety of our patients and our staff to the best of our abilities. With an unknown turnaround time for the government to get us the protective supplies we needed, I turned to social media as a desperate plea for help from my community. I needed them to HELP US... so we could HELP THEM. I created the Make-A-Mask Facebook page at 11pm on a Friday night, as we had just gone through our last box of surgical masks in clinic that day, and by Saturday morning it had been shared over 75 times. To this day, my initial post has been seen more than 47,000 times.

**Your listserv post specifically mentioned that thousands of sewn masks are being sent to Austin as you started a Make a Mask initiative. Can you expand on what is happening in this area?**



Thank you for the masks!! We are now able to donate our Medical masks to help health care providers. Thank you again for your time and generosity!! ❤️

I absolutely invite you to go visit our viral Facebook page to see the power of social media during a time when you feel like your world is upside down:

<https://www.facebook.com/MakeAMask>. Also, our completely volunteer designed website

[www.makeamaskaustin.org](http://www.makeamaskaustin.org) will give you lots of great information as well. Sewing masks gives those who are social distancing and following the "stay in" guidelines an opportunity to help when they so desperately want to. Currently, it is estimated that through the Make-A-Mask platform we have brought in over 7,000 sewn masks and distributed them to over 90 healthcare

facilities in the Austin and surrounding area as a temporary solution for the lack of PPE supplies in this area. We have #MakeAMaskSewers all over the United States contributing to this "call for help" and have now been featured on many media outlets. Since the FB page debut just over 2 weeks ago, we have also partnered with another Austin based mask sewing Facebook group Care Mask Covers for COVID-19

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/caremaskcoversforcovid19>) and a national volunteer group Masks for Docs (<https://masksfordocs.com/>) in which they are providing 3D printed face shields for every healthcare facility that registers on our website. Our Facebook page is loaded with pictures of healthcare workers receiving their masks and their overwhelming heartfelt thanks expressed in their posts.

860 frames packaged up and ready to send out to over 40 different organizations around Travis county. Senior care, hospitals, firefighters, police officers, ERs, and small clinics. We did it! Plastic binder covers in tomorrow for the win! Great effort!!!



Here is how we have advised healthcare facilities to roll out with the SEWN mask protocol:

It is advised that medical staff NEVER wear these as primary masks or only as a last resort. Our goal and instructions are for the sewn masks to be worn OVER a surgical or N95 mask. Kind of like a cover if you will. You can switch out the sewn mask in between each patient and prolong the life of your medical grade mask for a much longer period. Then, with the sewn masks, you can soak...launder... and reuse. We are working in unexplored territory at this time, and this is a temporary solution until medical grade masks become more available.

### **Is there a unique challenge your center has faced, and overcome, during this time?**

As a family practice and urgent facility, generally we don't eat, breathe, or sleep in an infectious disease world on a daily basis. Do we practice infection control, sure, but not on the magnitude of this level. Education for my teams is crucial on a daily basis to allow for the awareness of cross contamination and how to prevent it. EVERYDAY there are changes. Changes to workflow... changes to testing process... changes to where we see patients... changes to what questions we ask before letting anyone in the building... changes to how we use our PPE... changes to how far apart people can stand in our lobby... and even changes on how we see patients, now with the capability of doing telemedicine visits.

Individuals living in a healthcare world feel beat down on a daily basis as they try to adapt to the daily changes that are put in front of them. As a Director, even with 21 years of experience, I have turned to the COVID forums, national press conferences, and fellow colleagues to help guide me to the changes and protocols I needed to set within my own clinics.

### **Media Coverage:**

- KVUE (ABC, Austin): <https://www.kvue.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-austin-homemade-masks-healthcare-workers/269-b1fbb5f5-06a8-4e6d-9ea1-dc837017bf61>
- Community Impact Newspaper: <https://communityimpact.com/austin/southwest-austin-dripping-springs/coronavirus/2020/03/27/dripping-springs-residents-pool-efforts-to-create-masks-for-the-austin-area-with-make-a-mask-austin/>
- Fashionably Austin: <https://www.fashionablyaustin.com/austinites-sew-masks-for-local-healthcare-workers/>
- Telemundo Austin: <https://telemundoaustin.com/news/local/grupo-de-austin-recluta-costureras-para-hacer-mascaras-para-profesionales-de-la-salud>



