COVID-19 RESPONSE

PATIENT SELF-SORTING SIGNAGE SYSTEM

How to Rethink Wayfinding to Increase Infection Control and Decrease Patient Stress
Three Ways to Guide Hospital Visitors Seeking Coronavirus Care

As hospitals across the world flex to meet a surge of coronavirus cases, they are rapidly adapting their facilities to accommodate testing, infection control and inpatient care. However, navigating to, around, and in a hospital — particularly under these quickly-evolving circumstances — can be stressful and challenging.

Studies show high levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, can decrease memory and critical thinking skills. Even during normal circumstances, 30 percent of hospital visitors find it difficult to get to the right place because they get lost. Today, some people with coronavirus symptoms, many severely ill or under duress, enter the hospital without alerting staff before they are triaged, potentially exposing others unnecessarily to the illness and requiring staff to then isolate them, triage them and disinfect any spaces that may be contaminated.

1. Deploy a comprehensive wayfinding system for COVID-19.
Given this urgency, it's critical to employ a consistent wayfinding system for COVID-19 to help direct patients to the right place. The good news is hospitals can quickly improve the patient experience now with a comprehensive set of environmental graphics that address a visitor's spectrum of interactions — from pre-arrival to discharge — with unified elements such as simple shapes, unique colors and a list of COVID-19 symptoms. Here are a few items to consider when creating signage for the crisis.

Graphic design and content recommendations
Keep signage simple to decrease anxiety. Graphic design treatments such as using the color pink, which is unique from typical hospital signage colors, can help important messages pop. Recognizable shapes like circles or squares are both noticeable and simple. Much like retail stores, such as Ikea with its clear, visible and instantly recognizable signage, hospital wayfinding that relies on repetition, standardization and familiar shapes can help people quickly orient themselves and lead them through a space in an intuitive way.

Reduce text to only the essentials so directions are easy to digest. Outline primary symptoms of the coronavirus to help visitors differentiate between other illnesses like the flu. For example: "Follow the pink circles if you have COVID-19 symptoms such as a dry cough, fever and shortness of breath." Signs for non-COVID medical conditions could include language such as: "Follow the green square for non-viral treatment or care."

Consistent visuals and content should be carried through all steps of a hospital visitor's journey, from pre-visit information online to outdoor signage at arrival, to indoor navigation once visitors are through the hospital entrance. It is key for hospitals to utilize a wayfinding system that is easy for patients and healthcare staff to understand and follows a unified theme.

Website notices
To better welcome and inform visitors before they get to the hospital, it's crucial to incorporate coronavirus-related wayfinding graphics into pre-visit messages. These should use the same colors and shapes as on hospital signage for COVID-19, so there is a consistent look and feel when a visitor arrives on site. Pre-visit information can include online notices featured on the top of a hospital's homepage, on social media, or a dedicated landing page that can be regularly updated. For example, using a URL like "www.HospitalName.com/coronavirus" will rank higher in search results when patients query "Hospital Name Coronavirus."

In addition, be sure to address: Where should people go to get tested? Are directions to the campus straightforward and concise? Provide these details succinctly up front to clarify any confusion. Given the highly-contagious nature of the coronavirus, this can help ensure visitors who may present with COVID-19 understand any special protocols ahead of arriving at the hospital to help keep the public and caregivers safe.

2. Prioritize signage location.
It's important to consider the placement of signage to help guide visitors before and when they step foot into the hospital. Signage allows patients to self-triage prior to entering the hospital. It streamlines the process for emergency departments, reduces patient stress upon arrival and increases the ability to identify infectious patients, making arrival safer for all. It also provides guidance for patients that may not have seen pre-visit information online or forgot the instructions.

Moreover, wayfinding should accommodate various modes of arrival. Consider the hospital setting and what type of transportation people use to get there. For example, suburban hospitals tend to have more visitors arriving via car versus urban hospitals, where many people travel by foot, public transportation and rideshare. Accommodate each mode accordingly. People in personal vehicles with coronavirus symptoms can be directed to designated parking lots to wait, queue and even be tested from their car before entering the hospital. Meanwhile, visitors arriving by foot can be guided to special coronavirus sheltered triage areas outside of the emergency department.

Signage locations can include highways, vehicular entrances to the hospital campus, outside hospital doors and more.

Adjacent highway signage.
For drivers, temporary highway notices about COVID-19, mounted near existing hospital signage, can help visitors capably navigate with confidence.

Site threshold informational signage
Signs placed before entering the hospital campus can separate visitors with coronavirus symptoms from non-COVID-19 medical conditions.

Onsite directional signage.
Signs mounted to existing infrastructure outside of the hospital, such as light poles, can provide parking or walking directions for visitors. These signs could also include a list of COVID-19 symptoms.

Onsite A-frame signage.
Additional graphics, movable by staff, can provide further instructions to visitors, like which entrance to use or any safety precautions to take, before stepping into the hospital.

Interior wayfinding signage.
Temporary wall signage allow staff to direct the flow of patients and identify critical supply locations as needed. Floor decals spaced six or more feet apart can also ensure proper social distancing and direct patients to exam or isolation rooms. Slim interior stanchions can also be helpful, but should be properly secured so they remain in place.
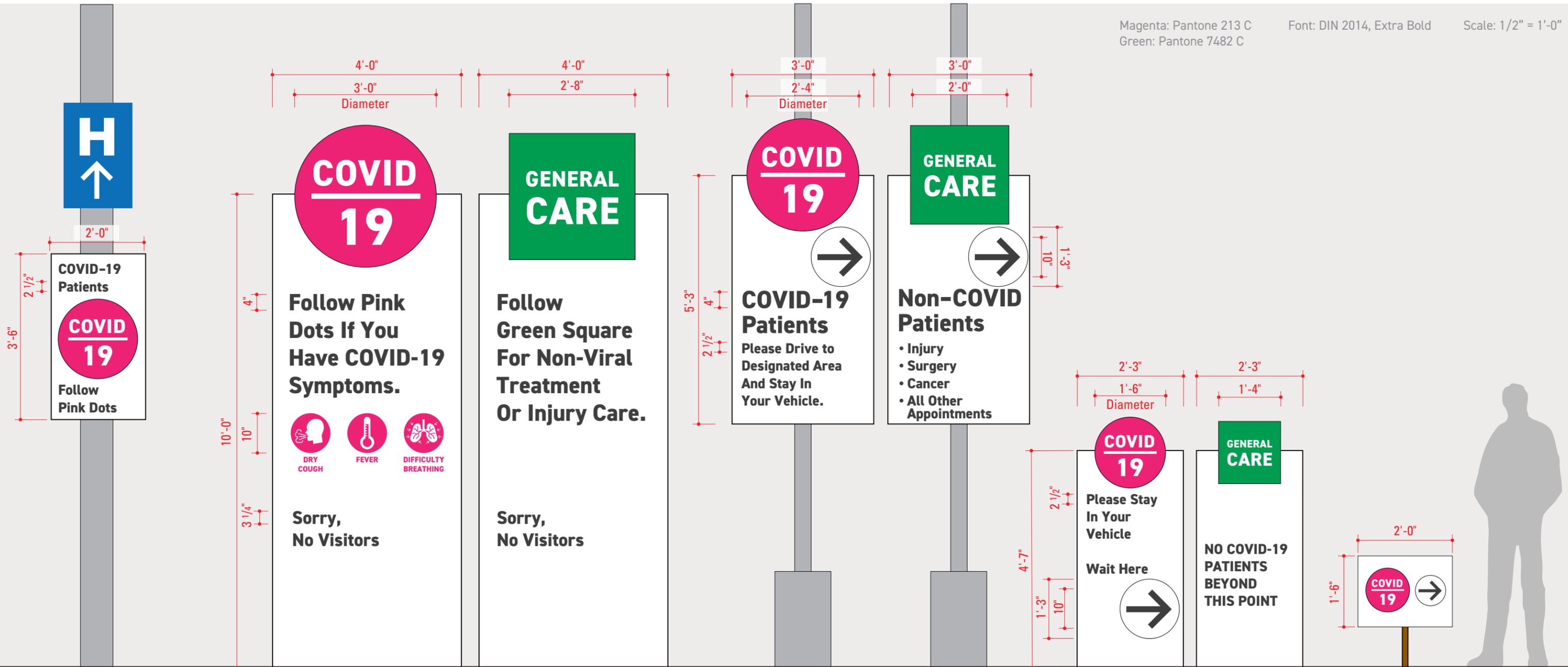
3. Address accessibility.
Just as hospitals are designed to accommodate accessibility, wayfinding systems should too. Special graphic design treatments like dark outlines and clearly-recognizable shapes can help visitors with color blindness navigate a facility. Meanwhile, using iconography — visual symbols and images — can improve comprehension for non-English speakers.

By employing a wayfinding system that is simple, bold, and inclusive — produced with minimal logistics and a low implementation cost — hospitals can create a calming, safer and streamlined experience for visitors, patients and healthcare staff during the coronavirus pandemic, and also be prepared for future events that require specialized navigation.

Exterior Wayfinding

Magenta: Pantone 213 C   Font: DIN 2014, Extra Bold   Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"
Green: Pantone 7482 C

H ↑

2'-0"
2 1/2"
3'-6"

COVID-19 Patients

COVID 19

Follow Pink Dots

4'-0"
3'-0"
Diameter

COVID 19

Follow Pink Dots If You Have COVID-19 Symptoms.

DRY COUGH   FEVER   DIFFICULTY BREATHING

Sorry, No Visitors

4"
10'-0"
10"
3 1/4"

4'-0"
2'-8"

GENERAL CARE

Follow Green Square For Non-Viral Treatment Or Injury Care.

Sorry, No Visitors

3'-0"
2'-4"
Diameter

COVID 19

→

COVID-19 Patients

Please Drive to Designated Area And Stay In Your Vehicle.

5'-3"
4"
2 1/2"

3'-0"
2'-0"

GENERAL CARE

→

Non-COVID Patients

- Injury
- Surgery
- Cancer
- All Other Appointments

1'-3"
10"

2'-3"
1'-6"
Diameter

COVID 19

Please Stay In Your Vehicle

Wait Here

→

2 1/2"
4'-7"
1'-3"
10"

2'-3"
1'-4"

GENERAL CARE

NO COVID-19 PATIENTS BEYOND THIS POINT

2'-0"
1'-6"

COVID 19 →

Adjacent Highway Signage

Accompanies typical DOT "H" signage.
Phenolic panel mounted to existing pole with nylon zip-ties

Site Threshold Informational Signage

4x10 sheets of plywood with full digital print graphics.
4x4 lumber uprights set into packed earth footings.

On-site Directional Signage

Phenolic panel with digital print graphics.
Mount to existing infrastructure (e.g. light poles) with heavy-duty nylon zip-ties.
Arrows attached to panel with Velcro to allow user to determine pointing direction.

On-Site A-frame Signage

A-board product with digital print graphics.
Moveable by staff.
Arrows attached to panel with Velcro to allow user to determine pointing direction.

Ancillary Site Directional

White Coroplast "Political Campaign" type sign.
Wooden-stake upright.
Direct digital printing.
Arrow attached with Velcro to allow user to determine pointing direction.

Entrance Wayfinding

Magenta: Pantone 213 C   Font: DIN 2014, Extra Bold   Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"
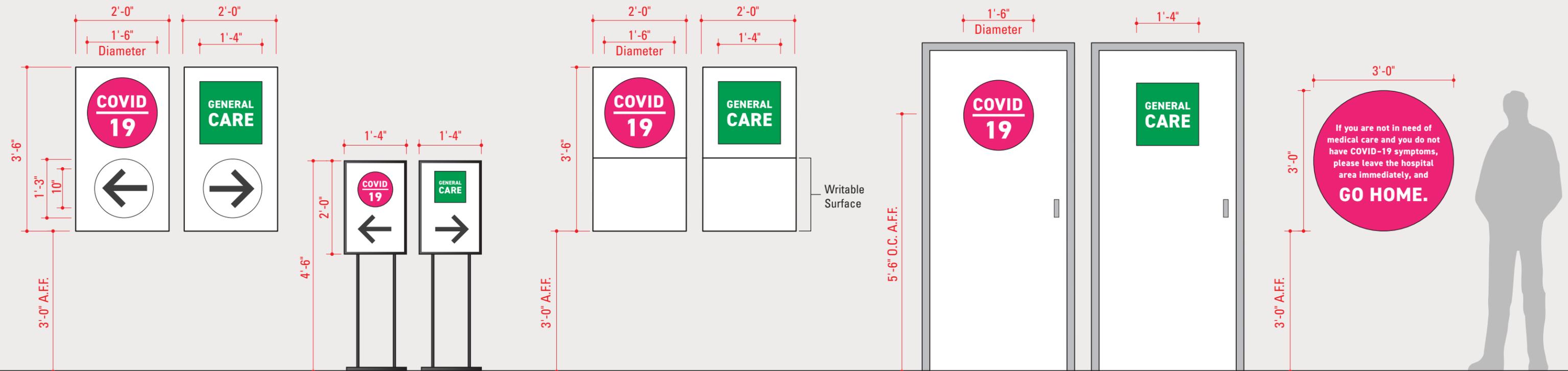Green: Pantone 7482 C
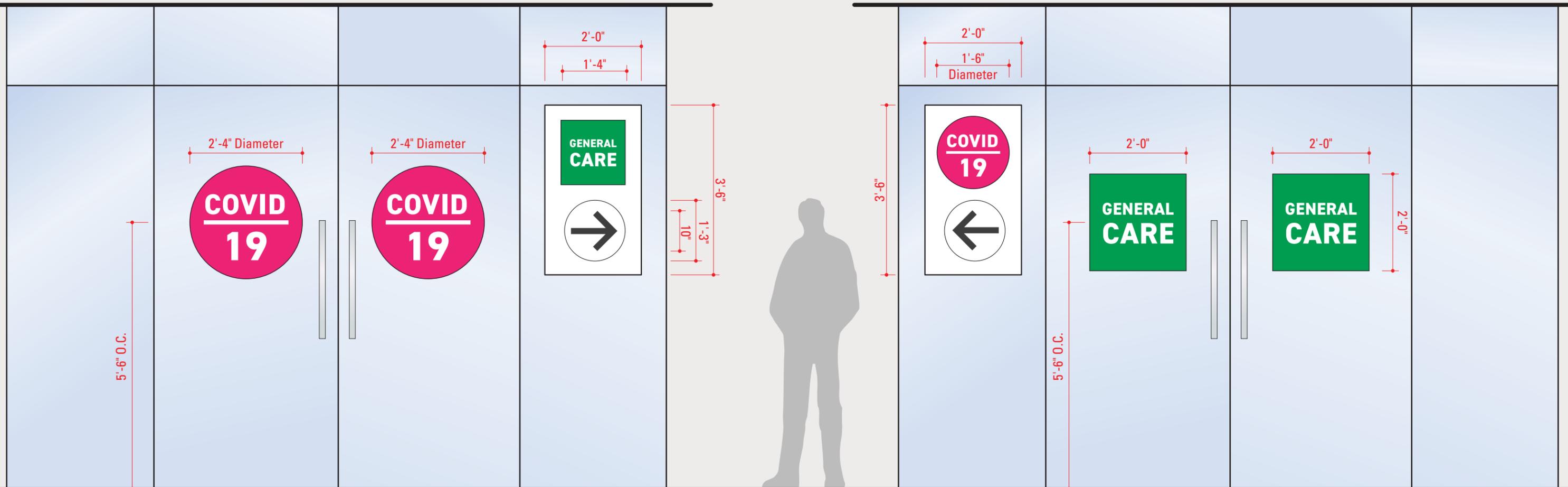
Entrance Signage and Directional

White 3mm Sintra with direct digital print,
mount with VHB tape.

Interior Wayfinding

Magenta: Pantone 213 C   Font: DIN 2014, Extra Bold   Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"
Green: Pantone 7482 C

Interior Directional Signs

3mm white sintra.
Direct digital print mount with
3M Command strips.
Bottom of sign 3'-0" above floor.
Arrow attached with Velcro to allow
user to determine pointing direction.

Interior Directional Signs (Alternate)

Floor Standing Sign Holder.
Paper insert.

www.uline.com
Floor Standing Sign Holder

Customizable Informational Sign

3mm white sintra. Direct digital print.
"Dry-erase" film on lower portion of sign to allow staff
to write custom messages.
Mount with 3M Command strips.

Door Identifiers

3mm white sintra.
Direct digital print.
Mount with 3M Command strips.

Go Home Sign

3mm white sintra.
Direct digital print.
Mount with 3M Command strips.