April 3, 2020

ILLSINOIS HEALTH AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
MEMORANDUM

TO:  Chief Executive Officers, Member Hospitals and Health Systems
     Chief Operating Officers
     Chief Medical Officers
     Chief Nursing Officers
     Chief Quality Officers
     Chief Financial Officers
     Emergency Preparedness Contacts
     Emergency Department Directors
     Behavioral Constituency Section
     Government Relations Personnel
     In-House Counsel
     Public Relations Directors

FROM:  A.J. Wilhelmi, President & CEO
        Tim Nuding, Senior Vice President, Member Services & Corporate Finance
        Keneatha Johnson, Director, Quality, Safety, and Health Policy

SUBJECT:  IHA COVID-19 Update – April 3, 2020

Following is a brief recap of today’s top developments.

Situational Awareness
At today’s press briefing, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced 1,209 new COVID-19 cases, for a total of 8,904 cases in 64 counties statewide. Fifty-three new deaths were reported for a total of 210 deaths.

McCormick Place Alternate Care Facility Opens
The press briefing took place at the McCormick Place alternate care facility (ACF) where Governor J.B. Pritzker announced that the first unit with 500 beds to care for low-acuity COVID-19 patients has been completed. The ACF will be led by Dr. Nick Turkal, a former Advocate Aurora Health Care CEO. Turkal will be joined by Martin Judd, who will serve as Chief Operating Officer, and Dr. Paul Merrick, who will serve as clinical advisor for the facility. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot thanked numerous people and organizations who have been assisting the state and city in the fight against COVID-19 and the development of the ACF including: IHA, Rush University Medical Center, and Mercy Hospital & Medical Center, among others.

The Governor also announced that the state is acquiring the former Vibra Hospital in Springfield to expand capacity in central Illinois.
The state provided a statewide update as of 10 a.m. today on the number of open beds (11,502); available ICU beds (806); available ventilators (1,517); COVID-19 patients in ICU (935); and COVID-19 patients in the hospital but not in ICU (2,049).

**CDC Recommends Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Public**
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today issued a [recommendation](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/mmwrhtml/mm6905a1.htm) on wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. The CDC says the cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.

**CDC: Social Distancing Key to Preventing COVID-19 Transmission**
The CDC says stringent preventive measures, including social distancing, were crucial steps after early cases of COVID-19 were identified in a Seattle independent/assisted living facility. Three in four residents who tested positive for COVID-19 had no symptoms, according to the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Symptom-based screening may overlook asymptomatic positive cases, underscoring the importance of following CDC guidance to prevent COVID-19 transmission in senior living communities.

**AACN COVID-19 Resources for Nurses**
The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses has developed a coronavirus [webpage](https://www.aacn.org/Patient-Resources/COVID-19) containing a variety of free resources, including guidance on how to optimize personal protective equipment (PPE).

**CMS Enhances Guidelines for Nursing Homes**
Yesterday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), in consultation with the CDC, issued recommendations to state and local governments, as well as nursing homes, to help mitigate the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in nursing homes. The recommendations build on and strengthen recent guidance from CMS and CDC related to effective implementation of longstanding infection control procedures. See CMS’ press release.

IHA is working with long-term care facility associations to put together Illinois-specific transfer protocols.

**FDA Actions on COVID-19**
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [announced](https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-update) it is leading an effort, working collaboratively with government, industry and academic partners, to develop and implement a protocol that will provide convalescent plasma to patients in need who may not have access to institutions with clinical trials in place. Convalescent plasma has the potential to lessen the severity or shorten the length of illness caused by COVID-19. The FDA anticipates that the effort will be able to move thousands of units of plasma to patients who need them in the coming weeks.

The FDA posted a [FAQ](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/respirators-and-accessories/respirators) on whether respirators approved under standards used in other countries, such as KN95s, can be used in the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. The short answer is yes.

In response to continued respirator shortages, the FDA also issued a [new Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for non-NIOSH-approved respirators made in China](https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-update), which makes KN95 respirators eligible for authorization if certain criteria are met, including evidence demonstrating the respirator is authentic.

The FDA [revised an immediately in effect guidance](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/respirators-and-accessories/respirators) to help expand the availability of general use face masks for the general public and respirators (including N95 and KN95) for health care professionals during this pandemic.

**MIPS Submission Deadline Extended to April 30**
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) extended the March 31 Merit-based Payment System (MIPS) data submission deadline by 30 days to April 30, 2020. The MIPS automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy will apply to MIPS eligible clinicians who do not submit their MIPS data by the April 30 deadline. MIPS eligible clinicians who do not submit any MIPS data by April 30 do not need to take any additional action to qualify for this policy. Such clinicians will be automatically identified and receive a neutral payment adjustment for the 2021 MIPS payment year. CMS has updated the QPP Participation Status Tool, which eligible clinicians can use to see if the policy has been automatically applied to them already.

CMS is also reopening the MIPS extreme and uncontrollable circumstance application for individuals, groups, and virtual groups. Applications submitted between April 3 and April 30, 2020 citing COVID-19 will override any previous data submission. Individuals and groups should submit an application if they started, but are unable to complete, their data submission. See CMS’ fact sheet.

CMS Call for Hospital/Health System Leaders Postponed to Saturday at 11 a.m. CDT
CMS has postponed a call originally scheduled for today to Saturday, April 4 at 11 a.m. CDT. CMS will provide updates on its actions to increase hospital capacity; expand the healthcare workforce; and promote telehealth. CMS says it is interested in hearing from hospital and health system leaders on addressing the workforce challenges during these unprecedented times.

- CMS Audio Webcast — Click here to register. You must register for the audio webcast to participate.
- Attendee Dial In: 877-251-0301
- Conference ID: 8527456

CDC Warning on Phishing Emails During an Epidemic
CDC security officials have been working with multiple law enforcement agencies to track a campaign of phishing emails claiming to be from the CDC that reference a flu pandemic. The body of the email instructs the user to open an attached Microsoft Office document for details on how to prevent the spread of influenza. This email is not legitimate but is actually from a malicious actor hoping to install malware on victim computers. More on COVID-19 phishing/phone scams is available here.

IDPH Email Portal for Receiving Hospital Questions, Comments, Ideas
To send questions, comments or ideas to IDPH, email dph.hospitaladmin@illinois.gov. A team of staff assigned from the IDPH Director’s Office is reviewing the emails, with a goal of responding in 24 hours.

SIREN
To register for the State of Illinois Rapid Electronic Notification System (SIREN), go to https://siren.illinois.gov/agreement.php or email dph.siren@illinois.gov

Resources
- IDPH webpage on COVID-19
- Illinois COVID-19 website for the public - coronavirus.illinois.gov
- CDC Homepage for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- Chicago Department of Public Health COVID-19 webpage
- IHA webpage on COVID-19

If you have questions or comments, please contact Tim Nuding, Senior Vice President, Member Services and Corporate Finance at 217-541-1164 or tnuding@team-iha.org