April 7, 2020

ILLINOIS 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
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SUBJECT: IHA COVID-19 Update – April 7, 2020

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

**Situational Awareness**
The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced 1,287 new COVID-19 cases and 73 additional deaths, the highest number of deaths statewide in a 24-hour period thus far. The total number of cases in the state is 13,549 in 77 counties, with a total of 380 deaths. More than two-thirds of COVID-19 cases are in people younger than 50 years of age, while 80% of COVID-19 deaths are in people 60 years of age and older.

**IDPH Issues Guidance on Transfers from Hospitals to LTC Facilities**
IDPH issued guidance on the transfer of patients from hospital settings to skilled and intermediate long-term care facilities. For the past two weeks, IHA has been working with partners across the continuum from the Illinois Health Care Association, LeadingAge Illinois and Health Care Council of Illinois to craft protocols for the transfer of patients from the hospital to the post-acute setting. The guidance sets protocols which ensure the ability of hospitals to transfer patients to the post-acute setting, regardless of COVID-19 status. While this guidance may not be a panacea to addressing every issue hospitals are facing with discharge to the post-acute setting, IHA believes these guidelines offer hospitals a strong stance when meeting with resistance by facilities accepting transfers. Key elements of IDPH’s guidance include:

- Hospitals should be assessing for COVID-19 prior to transfer but patients with no clinical concern for COVID-19 do not need to be tested prior to transfer;
- Skilled long-term care facilities should be prepared to accept transfers of both COVID-positive and COVID-negative patients;
• Patients with COVID-19 can be discharged from a healthcare facility whenever clinically indicated; and
• Meeting criteria for discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions is not a prerequisite for discharge.

**IDFPR Expands List of Out-of-State Healthcare Professionals for COVID-19 Crisis**

At the urging of IHA, the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) has expanded the categories of healthcare professionals licensed and in good standing in other states who can provide healthcare in Illinois during the COVID-19 public emergency under the direction of IDPH and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, suspending the requirements for permanent licensure. The additional categories include: dietitian nutritionist, clinical professional counselor, professional counselor, physical therapist, physical therapist assistant, social worker, occupational therapist, occupational therapist assistant and pharmacist. See IDFPR’s “Proclamation to Modify Professional License and Certification Statutes for Certain Out-of-State Professions”.

**Update on Hospital Utilization and Ventilator Capacity**

Governor J.B. Pritzker reported this afternoon that statewide, a total of 43% of regular hospital beds, 35% of hospital ICU beds and 57% of ventilators are available. The administration also made public for the first time regional data for ICU bed capacity across the state’s 11 regions – ranging from 16.7% in the northeast suburbs to 75.9% in the Marion area. Governor Pritzker thanked California Governor Gavin Newsom for overnighting 100 ventilators to Illinois. The federal government has sent the state 600 ventilators, with 300 of those ventilators for use in Chicago. The state has ordered more than 3,600 ventilators from manufacturers, with an initial delivery of ventilators expected later this month. See Governor Pritzker’s press release for more details.

**IDPH Guidance on Use of Masks by General Public, N95s**

IDPH has issued guidance on the use of masks by the general public. Following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) recommendation, IDPH says that “All Illinoisans should wear a mask or face covering when they must leave their home or report to work for essential operations and they either cannot or it is impractical to maintain 6 feet of physical distance between themselves and others.” The IDPH guidance also outlines best practices for homemade masks or face coverings.

IDPH has released a summary of updated N95 guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for optimizing the supply of N95 respirators. The update describes changes to conventional, contingency and crisis capacity strategies.

**Hospitals Collaborate on Assisting Shapiro Development Center**

Representatives from the Illinois Dept. of Human Services (IDHS), Riverside Healthcare, AMITA Health St. Mary’s Hospital, the Kankakee County Health Department and Shapiro Development Center leadership are working together on plans to best meet the resident and employee needs at the Center related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group has been meeting regularly to develop protocols to support Shapiro’s on-site clinical staff to provide care for residents as their symptoms require, up to the level requiring hospitalization. Shapiro, which is operated by IDHS, provides 24 hour-a-day, seven day-a-week residential support and services for 477 adults with intellectual disabilities. Read more here.

**HFS Relaxes DME, HH, Therapy Prior Authorization**

The Dept. of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) announced that it is temporarily lifting certain prior authorization requirements to promote social distancing and enhance access to care during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Effective March 1, 2020 through the end of the emergency period, HFS will remove prior authorization requirements for specific CPT/HCPCS codes used to report physical, occupational, and speech therapies; home health (HH) agency and local health department services; and durable medical equipment (DMS) and supplies. See HFS’ Provider Notice.
**IDHS Resumes All SOPH Admissions**
The Illinois Department of Human Services has announced that admissions at Chicago Read Mental Health Center, Elgin Mental Health Center, and McFarland Mental Health Center will resume immediately. For more information on the State Operated Psychiatric Hospital protocols, click [here](#).

**CMS COVID-19 Medicare Telehealth Forum April 8**
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will host a forum addressing CMS’ changes to Medicare telehealth coverage on Wednesday, April 8. The call is scheduled from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. CDT. Dial-in information: 1-888-455-1397; participant passcode is 3535324. CMS asks that participants call in 15 minutes ahead of time. A recording and transcript of this call will be made available [here](#).

**CMS Issues More Guidance for Telehealth and ASCs**
CMS has released a video that answers frequently asked questions about expanded Medicare telehealth coverage under 1135 waiver authority and the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act. Specifically, Medicare will pay for office, hospital, and other visits furnished via telehealth across the entire country, whether urban or rural, and in all settings, including in patients' homes. For more information on expanded services, see IHA's summary [here](#).

CMS has released guidance for processing attestations from ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs) that temporarily enroll as hospitals during the COVID-19 public health emergency. CMS recognizes that ASCs have existing infrastructure to provide inpatient and outpatient hospital services for patients requiring a higher level of care. The guidance outlines the necessary steps for processing attestations and certification kits for existing Medicare certified ASCs.

**Medicaid MCO Telehealth Webinar April 8**
The Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans (IAMHP) will host a webinar on April 8 at 12 - 1 p.m. CDT to provide details on telehealth billing for Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). Please [click here](#) to register for this complimentary webinar. IHA issued a memo last week summarizing the Department of Healthcare and Family Services’ expanded guidance on telehealth billing for both fee-for-service Medicaid and HealthChoice Illinois (Managed Medicaid). See also an IAMHP notice.

**Executive Order on SNAP**
Gov. Pritzker issued an executive order that suspended the audio recording of an applicant’s verbal attestation during a telephone application for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The order also allows for a verbal attestation to be accepted by telephone in lieu of a signature on applications received by mail unsigned and applications for public assistance taken over the phone.

**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.

**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