March 18, 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
    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 – March 18, 2020

To support hospitals and health systems in their ongoing efforts to care for patients potentially exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19, IHA is continuing to provide updates on the latest developments and other important information about the novel coronavirus. We know that you and your teams are preparing for a surge of COVID-19 patients, and we commend all of you for your leadership and exemplary efforts. During this extraordinary time, we know that hospitals and health systems will continue to work together and provide mutual assistance whenever possible to get through this crisis.

Situational Awareness
This afternoon, Governor J.B. Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced an increase of 128 positive, confirmed COVID-19 cases in the state. That brings the total number of Illinois cases to 288 in 17 counties. IDPH has requested the state’s full allocation of medical supplies from the federal Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). This afternoon, the state launched a new website, coronavirus.illinois.gov, with information and resources for the public.

IHA Advocacy for Members With State and Federal Officials
IHA is in regular contact with the Governor’s Office, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Chicago Mayor’s Office, and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) to help coordinate planning and responses and to share information and concerns, including issues raised by our members. Recent efforts have included:

- With Illinois hospitals and health systems facing enormous costs and financial challenges in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis and its impacts, IHA is aggressively pushing for funding and flexibility for members in ongoing discussions with state and federal officials. Most recently, on
Tuesday, March 17, IHA held a call with key staffers of members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation to update them on the hospital community’s preparations and response to the COVID-19 crisis and to strongly urge the delegation to support hospitals with federal funding and flexibility in the next Congressional COVID-19 package and in 1135 waivers (see details below).

- IHA is working with members, the Governor’s Office, IDPH and CDPH on critical supply issues, especially PPE, to assess demand and look for potential solutions.
- On Sunday, March 15, IHA held conference calls for members with the Governor and IDPH and with Chicago Mayor Lightfoot and CDPH.
- Earlier this month, IHA sent a letter to every member of the Illinois General Assembly to update legislators on the hospital community’s efforts. We plan to send state legislators another update by the end of this week.

**Federal Advocacy Alert**
In a separate email to you today, we sent a federal advocacy alert asking you to contact your U.S. Representatives and Senators to urge them to include direct funding and support for hospitals in the third COVID-19 response legislation. Hospitals must have a direct infusion of funds to combat COVID-19, including preparing for surge capacity, infrastructure investments, purchasing equipment and supplies, managing the safety of the healthcare workforce, meeting enhanced staffing needs, among numerous other urgent and costly actions to keep the public safe and care for patients with the virus. [Click here](#) to see the alert.

**Federal 1135 Waivers for Illinois Hospitals and Health Systems**
President Trump’s declaration of a national emergency under the National Emergencies Act combined with the Secretary of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) declaration of a public health emergency, authorizes the Secretary of HHS to waive or modify certain Medicare, Medicaid, and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) requirements. This authority, sometimes referred to as an “1135 waiver,” is frequently used in emergencies and disasters to enable hospitals and health care workers more flexibility under laws and regulations to more effectively treat patients and care for communities. Thus far, several blanket waivers, including waivers of certain HIPAA, EMTALA and telehealth laws and regulations have been issued. IHA is working with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to submit a statewide Section 1135 waiver request on behalf of all Illinois hospitals to waive even more regulatory burdens to support our hospitals’ efforts to respond quickly, efficiently and innovatively during the duration of the outbreak. The waivers, which will be requested, have been informed by hospitals’ in-house counsel, government relations, clinical and emergency preparedness teams’ recommendations and perceived needs. As soon as the waiver has been approved, IHA will ensure that hospitals are aware of the additional waivers available to them.

**IHA Member Surveys on COVID-19**
We greatly appreciate the outstanding response of members to several surveys that we have sent to you over the past several days. Here is an update on the status of those surveys:

*Survey on IDPH’s 10 Questions*
IDPH’s 10 questions were originally included in the notice for the Sunday night call with the Governor and the Department. Nearly 150 hospitals and health systems have responded so far. The results are being shared with IDPH to help inform the coordination of the state’s response to COVID-19.

*IHA Readiness Survey* – 147 unique responses representing 140 hospitals and health systems; key results include ([click here](#) for complete results):

- Your organization’s greatest concerns in dealing with COVID-19:
1. Supply shortages
2. Emergency Department overcrowding/surge
3. Public fear
4. Staffing issues
5. Healthcare worker fear

Top areas of hospitals’ focus in preparing for the Coronavirus
1. Providing situational awareness to staff: 88%
2. Contacting their supply chain: 79%
3. Reviewing/updating policies and plans: 78%
4. Designating specialty rooms: 67%
5. Conducting clinical huddles: 65%
6. Purchasing additional emergency supplies: 64%

The survey results also include best practices/lessons learned on communication, testing, policies/procedures, PPE, and staffing from the 37 responding hospitals/health systems which have already received a Person Under Investigation or confirmed COVID-19 case (as of March 13).

Testing Survey
More than 30 hospitals and health systems across the state indicate they are doing COVID-19 testing in their own laboratory or with a commercial lab.

Chicago Hospital Employees’ Child Care Needs Survey
This survey will close at 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 19. Click here to complete.

IDPH COVID-19 State Hotline (1-800-889-3931)
The statewide hotline, operated by the Illinois Poison Center, is now receiving about 2,100 calls a day. IPC has increased staffing levels to handle the surge in calls.

Status of Hospital Assessment Program Redesign and State Legislative Session
IHA continues to engage in intense discussions and meetings with the Legislative Medicaid Work Group and HFS to finalize the model for Phase 2 of the Hospital Assessment Program. The latest meeting occurred earlier today. While the General Assembly’s spring session has been temporarily suspended during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, legislative leaders are considering calling back lawmakers for a short, one-day session in the very near future to consider and act on must-pass proposals, including the assessment program and the state budget. Earlier today, the Illinois House announced that next week’s session days have been canceled, but members were told that they should be prepared to return to Springfield to address urgent matters. As soon as we have details on the assessment program model, including hospital-specific impacts, we will be sharing them with the membership.

Special Hospital Leaders Call Friday, March 20
IHA plans to hold a special Hospital Leaders Call on Friday, March 20. As soon as we have final details on the time of the call and the call-in number, we will send that to you.

Latest Resources and Guidance
- IDPH webpage on COVID-19
- CDC Homepage for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- Chicago Department of Public Health COVID-19 webpage
- IHA webpage on COVID-19
IDPH is issuing updates and alerts on COVID-19 via the State of Illinois Rapid Electronic Notification System (SIREN), a secure web-based messaging and alerting system that leverages email, phone, text, pagers and other messaging formats to provide 24/7/365 notification, alerting, and flow of critical information. To register for SIREN, go to https://siren.illinois.gov/agreement.php.

For other testing questions, additional information or other questions, please contact your local health department. If they are not available, please contact the IDPH Communicable Disease Section at 217-782-2016. If they cannot be reached, use the IDPH after hours number 800-782-7860. Local health departments should contact IDPH for consultations on Persons Under Investigation (PUIs).

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.