March 24, 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
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Keneatha Johnson, Director, Quality, Safety, and Health Policy

SUBJECT: IHA COVID-19 Update – March 24, 2020

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

**Situational Awareness**
At today’s press briefing, the Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) announced 250 new COVID-19 cases, for a total of 1,535 cases in 32 counties statewide. Four new deaths were reported for a total of 16 deaths. IDPH Director Ngozi Ezike, M.D., said thus far, 16% of COVID-19 cases in Illinois required hospitalization, with 4% requiring ICU admission. Approximately 92% of the deaths in Illinois involve those 60 years of age and older.

**State Actions**
At the same press briefing, Governor J.B. Pritzker gave an overview of the state’s efforts to increase COVID-19 testing capacity. In addition to the state labs, there are four commercial labs and 15 hospital labs processing COVID-19 test specimens. Currently about 2,000 tests are being processed daily in Illinois. The Governor said the state is looking to increase daily testing capacity by 2,800 by providing labs with equipment it needs to process more tests.

The Governor said his administration is working with hospital leaders and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) to increase healthcare capacity statewide. Thus far, 66 hospitals have set up triage tents with IEMA or on their own, and 26 hospitals are in the process of setting up triage tents. In addition, hospitals are retrofitting their buildings and off-site locations to increase bed capacity. The Governor also said he has spoken to President Trump, who has committed to sending 300 ventilators and 300,000 N95 masks to the state in the coming days. (See the Governor’s press release for more details.)
Chicago Guidance on Discharge of High-Risk Individuals
In a new health alert, the Chicago Dept. of Public Health provides guidance to city hospitals about disposition of COVID-19 persons under investigation and confirmed cases who are unstably housed or returning to homeless shelters and other high-risk settings. The alert also provides resources available to discharge planners.

Reporting COVID-19 Deaths in Cook County
The Office of the Medical Examiner of Cook County notified hospitals that any COVID-19 death should be immediately reported to the office by calling 312-666-0200.

New IHA Resources on COVID-19 – Legal, Telehealth and PPE
Today, IHA released its COVID-19 Legal Resource, a compilation of federal, state and local issues and legal resources for members. It will be updated and distributed to members periodically.

FDA Guidance on Ventilators and Respiratory Devices
On March 22, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published guidance providing flexibility around and expanding the availability of ventilators and other respiratory devices to treat patients during the COVID-19 public health emergency. While the FDA expects providers to use FDA-cleared ventilators when possible, it will not object to limited modifications without premarket notification for and approval of those devices. More information can be found here.

NIH Educational Resources for Workers at Risk for Exposure to COVID-19
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has launched a website with educational resources to protect workers involved in emergency response and cleanup activities who may be at risk for exposure to COVID-19.

SOPH Reimbursement Update
The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) requested that IHA share its Communication Alert with hospitals regarding State-Operated Psychiatric Hospital (SOPH) COVID-19 protocols and reimbursement. IHA negotiated this agreement for hospitals providing inpatient psychiatric care to uninsured patients in qualifying regions. DHS has a tentative goal of restarting patient admissions at all three SOPHs currently diverting patients to community hospitals by March 30.

6.2% FMAP Increase for States for COVID-19 Crisis
Today, the Trump Administration took steps to implement provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Public Law 116-127) that provide states with enhanced federal Medicaid funding during the COVID-19 national emergency. Section 6008 of Act provides for a possible 6.2% increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for each state and territory. A guidance document provides answers questions on various aspects of the FMAP increase.

Possible FEMA Funding for COVID-19 Expenses
As part of President Trump’s emergency declaration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was directed to assist eligible entities, including hospitals, with the health and safety actions they take on behalf of the American public. FEMA has indicated that it will be waiving the 30-day deadline that is usually required and will accept applications
through the duration of the Public Health Emergency. IHA advises members to consider tracking and documenting all services, resources and supplies used as part of their response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This documentation will be needed should it be determined eligible expenses exist. More details can be found in an IHA memo.

New Helpline for Essential Workers Seeking Emergency Child Care
The Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) has launched a dedicated help line so Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) can help connect essential workers’ families to emergency child care. Call toll-free (888) 228-1146. This helpline is designed to be the “go to” resource for essential workers who do not have alternative options for care within their own family, and need child care in order to serve their community and their state.

Hospital Child Care Survey Reminder: IHA is working closely with the Governor and IDPH as they coordinate the state’s preparations for and response to the COVID-19 crisis. They are seeking information about the potential demand for and use of childcare services for healthcare workers. Please complete a brief survey (click here) by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 25.

DHS Guidance on State-Funded Grants
On March 23, the Illinois Dept. of Human Services (DHS) issued a Communication Alert with contracted providers on sustaining funding for organizations that are unable to provide services or only able to provide limited services due to the public health emergency. DHS is following federal guidance that permits grantees to continue to charge salaries and benefits for active grants.

IDPH Email Portal for Receiving Hospital Questions, Comments, Ideas
At the request of IHA, IDPH established an email portal: dph.hospitaladmin@illinois.gov. This designated email address is reserved to receive questions, comments, and ideas from the hospital community and IHA. A team of staff assigned from the IDPH Director’s Office is reviewing the emails, with a goal of responding within 24 hours.

SIREN
Hospitals and physicians are urged to sign up for SIREN, the State of Illinois Rapid Electronic Notification System, which IDPH uses to send COVID-19 alerts and guidance. To register for SIREN, go to https://siren.illinois.gov/agreement.php or send an email to 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