March 25, 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 25, 2020

We commend all of you and your teams as your hospitals and health systems continue to prepare and care for patients and communities during this unprecedented pandemic.

Governor’s Office Request
As part of their collaboration with the hospital community in responding to the pandemic, the Governor’s Office and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) are periodically utilizing the IHA as a conduit to generate feedback and information that is critical to their planning and response processes. Often, those requests come in the form of surveys put forward by IHA.

The Governor’s Office is urging IHA and our members to treat these requests as critically urgent matters as they are attempting to generate information and data that is guiding the state’s response. We recognize that you are receiving many inquiries from multiple entities, but urge everyone in the hospital community to be as responsive as possible to the state’s requests. For future reference, IHA will note the requests that fall into this category. Thank you for your cooperation as we continue to work hard, on your behalf, to maintain a positive and productive working relationship with our partners in state government.

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

Situational Awareness
At this afternoon’s press briefing, the Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) announced 330 new COVID-19 cases, for a total of 1,865 cases in 35 counties statewide. Three new deaths were reported—a Kane County man in his 90s, a Cook County man in his 60s, and a Will County woman in her 50s—for a total of 19 deaths.
U.S. Senate Poised to Pass Sweeping COVID-19 Bill
The U.S. Senate today reached bipartisan agreement on a nearly $2 trillion stimulus package to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Senate is expected to vote on the sweeping legislation later today, and the U.S. House could vote as early as tomorrow, although the timing could shift.

The IHA-supported package includes numerous provisions to provide direct funding and support to hospitals and health systems, including:

- $100 billion in emergency funding for hospitals and other eligible healthcare providers through the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund to reimburse for healthcare-related expenses or lost revenues not otherwise reimbursed and directly attributable to COVID-19;
- Suspension of the Medicare sequester from May 1 through Dec. 31, 2020;
- Expansion of the existing option for hospitals to request and receive “accelerated” Medicare payments. These payments are essentially an advance on future payments and are also available to Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and children’s hospitals. The bill increases the amount most hospitals could receive to 100%, while CAHs could receive up to 125%. Recoupment would begin after four months; however, hospitals would have at least 12 months to pay off the amounts in full; and
- Elimination of Medicaid disproportionate share hospital (DSH) program cuts in 2020 and part of 2021.

State Offers Economic Help During COVID-19 Crisis
Gov. J.B. Pritzker and other state officials this afternoon outlined actions the state is taking to help residents, businesses, and healthcare providers during the COVID-19 crisis. The Governor said that the state income tax filing deadline is being extended from April 15 to July 15.

Concerning the state’s large backlog of unpaid bills, Treasurer Michael Frerichs announced that his office is taking steps so the Comptroller can pay medical bills and move money to healthcare providers:

“We have rolled over $200 million in investment notes or loans [to help] the state comptroller pay medical bills. My office can invest up to $2 billion in the state of Illinois bill backlog at a reduced market based rate, as opposed to the nine or 12% late payment interest rate penalty. During this time of need, this authority not only saves money, it gets more cash out the door to our healthcare providers. We are continuing our discussions with the Comptroller and the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget about ways to support the state’s cash flow using legal tools we already have.”

Hospital Resource Calculator for COVID-19
Rush University Medical Center has created a tool that allows hospitals to predict resource utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic. The tool is meant to be a rough guide to predict hospital resources such as beds, ventilators, and PPE utilization for a few weeks. The tool allows hospitals and health systems to plug in their own numbers and generate a prediction of their potential needs. The tool can be found here (use Google Chrome or Firefox browsers) and user instructions be found here.

Triage Guidelines for Surgical Care
The American College of Surgeons (ACS) continues to provide guidance for surgeons on curtailing elective surgical procedures to preserve the necessary resources for care of critically ill patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ACS today released “COVID-19: Elective Case Triage Guidelines for Surgical Care,” a new surgical triage document developed following expert review in several specialties, that provides information from the most current best evidence available.

Nebraska Medicine Resources for Providers
Nebraska Medicine and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, nationally recognized leaders in the treatment, training and quarantine methods for highly infectious diseases since caring for patients during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, have developed a webpage compilation of COVID-19 resources for providers.
CMS Prioritizes Survey Activities
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued a memo to state survey agency directors on its prioritization of survey activities. The memo notes that complaint/facility-reported incident surveys, targeted infection control surveys and self-assessments are the only types of surveys that will be prioritized and conducted from March 20 through the following three weeks.

DHS Cybersecurity /FEMA Calls Tuesdays and Thursdays
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Office of Business, Industry, Infrastructure and Integration (OB3I) are holding conference calls every Tuesday and Thursday from 2-3 p.m. (CT). These calls focus on the current situation and supply chain issues and provide regional updates along with an open forum for questions and answers. The call number is: 800-593-7177; PIN: 7963614.

NLM Expands Access to Coronavirus Scientific Papers
The National Library of Medicine (NLM) announced today that it has expanded access to scientific papers on coronavirus for researchers, care providers, and the public, and for text-mining research. This work makes use of NLM’s PubMed Central (PMC), a digital archive of peer-reviewed biomedical and life sciences literature. PMC currently provides access to nearly 6 million full-text journal articles.

United Center Being Repurposed as Emergency Relief Hub
This afternoon, the Chicago Blackhawks announced that the United Center will be repurposed to serve as a COVID-19 Emergency Relief Hub. The arena and outside campus will be transformed into a logistics hub for front line food distribution, first responder staging and the collection of critically needed medical supplies.

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 COIVD-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