March 29, 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
      Tim Nuding, Senior Vice President, Member Services & Corporate Finance
      Keneatha Johnson, Director, Quality, Safety, and Health Policy

SUBJECT: IHA COVID-19 Update – March 29, 2020

Following is a brief recap of top developments from this weekend.

Situational Awareness
At today’s press briefing, the Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) announced 1,105 new COVID-19 cases and 18 additional deaths for a total of 4,596 cases, including 65 deaths, in 47 counties statewide.

Governor Pritzker said the state is working to substantially ramp up testing capacity to 10,000 tests a day in the coming days. He said current capacity is about 4,000 tests a day at three state labs and 30 hospital and clinical labs. The Governor praised hospitals for their work and for canceling elective surgeries, acknowledging that they are losing money.

Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle announced at a press conference this morning that there are 2,613 COVID-19 cases in the county. County officials also said that the Forest Preserves of Cook County remain open, but specific locations have been closed that do not allow visitors to follow social distancing and other public health guidelines for COVID-19.

COVID-19 Patients from State Facilities
IHA is aware that hospitals in communities with state facilities, including prisons and developmental centers, are receiving many COVID-19 patients from those facilities. IHA is in communication with the Governor’s office about this issue and is urging the state to provide or increase healthcare services within those facilities.
Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payment Program During COVID-19 Crisis

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) existing Accelerated and Advance Payment Program has been expanded and modified under the CARES Act. Offered in circumstances such as national emergencies, CMS is authorized to provide accelerated or advance payments during the COVID-19 public health emergency to any Medicare provider or supplier that submits a request to the appropriate Medicare Administrative Contractor and meets the required qualifications. For details, see an IHA memo; also see JHA’s fact sheet on Federal Funding Opportunities for Hospitals under the CARES Act.

National Government Services (NGS) has a hotline, 1-888-802-3898, to answer provider questions about accelerated/advance payments related to COVID-19. The hotline is available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Central Time.

Medicare Telehealth Claims Processing

On March 27, NGS issued an update regarding claim submission and payment of Medicare telehealth services. On March 17, CMS announced that fee-for-service (FFS) Medicare coverage was expanded for telehealth services, allowing for reimbursement of previously covered telehealth services when provided to beneficiaries in their home environments, regardless of geographic location. This expanded coverage is effective March 6, 2020, and on March 27 NGS announced it is now accepting and processing such claims.

NGS does not anticipate claim rejections and denials relative to telehealth services provided to beneficiaries in their home environment. If claim rejections and denials do occur, providers are urged to notify NGS and IHA, immediately. More information can be found here.

IHA has not received similar notification from Wisconsin Physician Services (WPS). When we receive similar communication from WPS, we will forward it to all hospitals and health systems.

U.S. Dept. of Labor – Who is a “health care provider” who may be excluded by their employer from paid sick leave and/or expanded family and medical leave

The U.S. Department of Labor has issued new FAQs (click here) defining health care providers to include anyone who works at a hospital, who may be exempted from paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave by their employer under the FFCRA (CV1). To minimize the spread of the virus associated with COVID-19, the Department encourages employers to be judicious when using this definition to exempt health care providers from the provisions of the FFCRA. Hospitals with fewer than 500 employees can use this exemption.

Reminders re: EMResource

All hospitals and health systems are urged to respond to and update their data and information in EMResource on a daily basis. IDPH’s Office of Preparedness and Response also asks that hospitals regularly check their capacity numbers to make sure they are kept up to date and are never less than what they report for daily availability. In some cases, IDPH indicates they have seen availability numbers that are higher than capacity numbers. Thank you for your efforts in this area.

New Resource for Hospitals: COVID-19 Clinical Pathways

University of Chicago Medicine has successfully deployed several COVID-19 clinical pathways within their electronic health record and is offering to share that content with other IHA members interested in leveraging these efforts. These and other COVID pathways can be deployed and customized within any Cerner or Epic patient record using the AgileMD clinical decision support platform or on the internet for other EHR users within a few days at no cost to the health system. To see the latest version of the pathways, go to: https://hdsi.uchicago.edu/uchicago-medicine-covid-19-pathways/

For more information, contact Gena Bezdek at gena.bezdek@agilemd.com or 805-895-9150; or go to: https://agilemd.docsend.com/view/iebcn5s
Prototype Emergency Ventilator Developed by University of Illinois and Carle Health
A team led by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s Grainger College of Engineering and Carle Health has produced a prototype emergency ventilator to help address the expected surge in the need for respiratory care associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Illinois RapidVent, as the emergency ventilator is known, would plug into the oxygen source available in most hospital rooms or could plug into a tank of oxygen. The prototype has run for more than 75 hours, which is more than 125,000 breathing cycles. Find out more about the prototype at [http://rapidvent.grainger.illinois.edu](http://rapidvent.grainger.illinois.edu).

Rural Health Resources
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released a recording of its “Update for Rural Partners, Stakeholders and Communities on the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Response” held on March 23. Questions about rural public health issues, including those related to COVID-19, may be sent to [ruralhealth@cdc.gov](mailto:ruralhealth@cdc.gov). Also, the Rural Health Information Hub has compiled a guide of resources focused on the rural response to COVID-19.

Resources for Health Centers
The Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) is updating a variety of COVID-19 resources and communications on its [emergency response webpage](https://www.hrsa.gov/coronavirus/).  

State Working to Expand/Expedite Medicaid Coverage for Uninsured and Insured Illinois Residents
On Saturday, Governor Pritzker announced the "Care Comes First" action plan, a series of efforts led by the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to expand medical coverage for residents across the state. The state has submitted two federal waivers requesting increased flexibilities around Medicaid coverage.  If approved, the flexibilities will ensure that individuals, whether uninsured or insured, can receive Medicaid coverage for treatment if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19.  Illinois has also taken steps to request from the federal government the authority to make Medicaid available to cover the costs to treat COVID-19 for every uninsured resident, regardless of income. An additional request seeks authority for Medicaid to help cover out-of-pocket expenses for insured residents, as a secondary payer for COVID-19 treatment costs.  For more details, see the Governor’s press release.

IDPH Email Portal for Receiving Hospital Questions, Comments, Ideas
At the request of IHA, IDPH established an email portal: [dph.hospitaladmin@illinois.gov](mailto: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 the State of Illinois Rapid Electronic Notification System (SIREN), which IDPH uses to send COVID-19 alerts and guidance.  To register for SIREN, go to [https://siren.illinois.gov/agreement.php](https://siren.illinois.gov/agreement.php) or send an email to [dph.siren@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.siren@illinois.gov)

Resources
- IDPH webpage on COVID-19
- Illinois COVID-19 website for the public - [coronavirus.illinois.gov](https://www.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](mailto:tnuding@team-iha.org)