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, Senior Director, Quality, Safety and Health Policy

SUBJECT: IHA COVID-19 Update – May 19, 2021

Following is a brief recap of the most recent top developments.

Situational Awareness – Virus vs. Vaccine
The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced today 1,633 new confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases and 28 deaths. The total number of cases in the state is 1,370,342, with a total of 22,494 deaths. IDPH says that in the past 24 hours, 67,166 test specimens have been processed, with a positivity rate of 2.43%. The preliminary 7-day statewide positivity rate for cases as a percent of total tests from May 12-18 is 2.3%, and the 7-day test positivity rate is 2.7%. Statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations in the past 24 hours increased from 1,503 patients to 1,518 patients. Of that figure, 405 were in the ICU, with 224 patients on ventilators.

A total of 10,551,158 vaccines have been administered in Illinois as of last midnight. The seven-day rolling average of vaccines administered daily is 62,884 doses. Yesterday, 117,381 doses were reported administered in Illinois. The daily number includes the past several days of doses administered by pharmacies that had not been reported due to server delays.

IHA Survey on Hospital Transition to Post-Pandemic Operations – Closes This Friday
In an effort to better understand how hospital leaders are thinking about transitioning operations as the COVID-19 environment improves, the IHA Board of Trustees has asked that a survey be distributed to all IHA members in an effort to identify what safety protocols and restrictions remain in place, which protocols are being transitioned or relaxed, and what thinking is happening surrounding when further loosening of existing restrictions will take place. Additionally, questions regarding hospital experiences with vaccination of staff and hospital plans for staff vaccination in the future are also covered.

The survey can be accessed here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IHAPostPandemicSurvey

The survey is open until 5:00 p.m., Friday, May 21. A summary of the results of the survey will be shared with all survey participants. Individual responses, unless permission to share information is granted, will be kept confidential. If you have questions regarding the survey, please contact Tim Nuding at tnuding@team-iha.org or 217-541-1164. Thank you for your assistance with this survey that
will generate information about your peers’ collective thinking on these items to help inform you in your decision-making on key reopening issues.

**State, Chicago Align Mask Guidance with CDC**
On Monday, Governor J.B. Pritzker and IDPH *announced* that Illinois is aligning its mask guidance with the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for fully vaccinated people and is rescinding IDPH emergency rules enforcing masking and distance. The CDC issued updated guidance which states that fully vaccinated people can stop wearing a mask and practicing social distancing in most indoor and outdoor settings. The CDC continues to require masks for everyone in healthcare settings, in congregate settings and on public transit – which is specifically noted in the Governor’s *new executive order*. The city of Chicago is following the state in *updating its mask guidance* allowing fully vaccinated people to go without wearing masks in most indoor and outdoor settings. Businesses, which cannot regulate who is and is not vaccinated, are being advised to keep a mask requirement in place.

**IDPH Seeking PCPs in Vaccination Efforts**
As part of their continuing efforts to ramp up vaccinations across the state and “meet people where they are,” Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) are encouraging primary care offices to order and administer COVID-19 vaccines in the exam room and urging hospitals to administer vaccines in their ambulatory networks. See a *letter* that IDPH has been distributing to various professional societies encouraging primary care providers to enroll as vaccine providers in I-CARE and improve vaccine uptake by sharing with patients the reason they chose to get vaccinated and offering the vaccine in the exam room. Also see IDPH’s “*COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Guidance for Providers*” and “*Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccine Wastage.*”

**Chicago COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit**
In Chicago, as eligibility expands and outreach continues to contact those who have not yet been vaccinated, the City is looking to its partners for support. The city has developed a *communications toolkit* with information about the vaccines and how to make an appointment in Chicago. The flyers in the toolkit can be edited to include an organization’s logo and can be *downloaded* in English and Spanish. Partners are asked to identify and contact patients who have not yet received the vaccine and share information from the toolkit. In addition, the City is encouraging employers to partner with vaccine providers to set up onsite vaccine clinics for their employees and families.

**Vaccination Disparities between Rural, Urban Counties**
Residents of rural communities are at higher risk of severe COVID-19-associated morbidity and mortality than residents in urban communities, but vaccination coverage is lower in rural counties. That’s according to a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Adult COVID-19 vaccination coverage was lower in rural counties (38.9%) than in urban counties (45.7%) overall and among adults aged 18–64 (29.1% rural, 37.7% urban), those 65 years and older (67.6% rural, 76.1% urban), women (41.7% rural, 48.4% urban), and men (35.3% rural, 41.9% urban).

The CDC says disparities in COVID-19 vaccination access and coverage between urban and rural communities can hinder progress toward ending the pandemic. Public health practitioners should collaborate with healthcare providers, pharmacies, employers, faith leaders, and other community partners to identify and address barriers to COVID-19 vaccination in rural areas.

**CDC HCP Study: Vaccines 94% Effective**
A new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study shows that the Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines protect health care personnel (HCP) against COVID-19. According to findings released in a new *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, the vaccines reduced the risk of getting sick with COVID-19 by 94% among HCP who were fully vaccinated. Data for this assessment come from a network covering 500,000 HCP across 33 sites in 25 U.S. states (including Illinois), collected during January-March 2021.
The assessment compared vaccination status of participants who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 (cases) with vaccination status of those who tested negative (controls). The assessment found that COVID-19 symptomatic illness was reduced by 94% among HCP who were fully vaccinated, seven or more days after receipt of a second vaccine dose, and by 82% among those who were partially vaccinated, 14 days after receipt of dose one through six days after dose two.

**Vulnerable People Forgoing Mental Health Care and Substance Use Disorder Services**

On Friday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released data showing from March through October 2020 Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries have foregone millions of primary, preventive, and mental health care visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to the same period in 2019.

The number of mental health services utilized by children under age 19 declined by 34% and by adults aged 19 to 64 by 22%. This translates to approximately 14 million fewer mental health services for children and 12 million fewer mental health services for adults. There are also preliminary reports of increased drug-related mortality due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, with substance use disorder service utilization dropping by 3.6 million services (a 13% decline).

To help address the mental health and addiction crises that have hit the country during the pandemic, Illinois will receive more than $100 million in federal grants. The grants were announced Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of $3 billion in American Rescue Plan funding for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grants. In addition, to help close the gap in services, CMS is emphasizing mental health care in its Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign.

**Illinois Receives Emergency Home Visiting Funding**

The Illinois Department of Human Resources has been awarded more than $1.1 million in COVID-19 emergency home visiting funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration to provide services and supplies, such as diapers, food, water, and hand sanitizer. Families who cannot access home visiting services due to the pandemic will be provided technology to participate in virtual home visits. The funds will also be used to train home visitors on emergency preparedness and response planning for families and on how to safely conduct virtual intimate partner violence screenings.

**Biden Administration Announces $7 Billion for Public Health Workers**

On Thursday, the Biden administration announced it will invest funds from the American Rescue Plan to recruit and hire public health workers to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for future public health challenges. That includes $4.4 billion for states and localities to expand their public health departments with additional staff to support COVID-19 response efforts and $3 billion for a new grant program to expand, train, and modernize the public health workforce for the future.

**FEMA Financial Assistance for COVID-19-Related Funeral Expenses**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is providing financial assistance for COVID-19-related funeral expenses incurred after January 20, 2020. For more information, see a FEMA flyer, FAQs, and video. FEMA’s COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Helpline is 1-844-684-6333.

**Resources**

- IDPH COVID-19 webpage and 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.