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
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SUBJECT: IHA COVID-19 Update – May 26, 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 1,139 new confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases and 27 deaths. The total number of cases in the state is 1,378,388, with a total of 22,676 deaths. IDPH says that in the past 24 hours, 57,402 test specimens have been processed, with a positivity rate of 1.98%. The preliminary 7-day statewide positivity rate for cases as a percent of total tests from May 19-25 is 2.0%, and the 7-day test positivity rate is 2.6%. Statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations in the past 24 hours decreased from 1,419 patients to 1,395 patients. Of that figure, 351 were in the ICU, with 181 patients on ventilators.

The 7-day rolling average of vaccines administered daily is 71,215 doses. Yesterday, 59,494 doses were administered in Illinois. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 66% of Illinois adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 49% of Illinois adults are fully vaccinated.

Upcoming COVID Hospital Data Reporting Updates
On Thursday (May 27), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will release the next update of the COVID-19 Guidance for Hospital Reporting and FAQs with an implementation date of June 10. The updated guidance will be posted at the same link as the March 19 version. In the new version of the guidance, the influenza fields (fields 33-38) and Therapeutics B fields for bamlanivimab alone (fields 39 c-d) will be optional. These are the only substantive changes in this update—more substantive changes incorporating feedback are expected in the next update, anticipated in approximately one month.

HHS OIG Addresses COVID-19 Vaccination Incentives
On Monday, as part of FAQs on the “Application of OIG's Administrative Enforcement Authorities to Arrangements Directly Connected to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency” the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General addressed a question about COVID-19 vaccination incentives. Question: Would the offer or provision of cash, cash-equivalent, or in-kind incentives or rewards to Federal health care program beneficiaries who receive COVID-19 vaccinations during the public health emergency violate OIG's administrative enforcement authorities?
The answer reads in part: **OIG is aware that a broad range of entities are offering a wide variety of incentives and rewards (e.g., food and beverages, tickets to concerts and baseball games, cash) to individuals who receive the COVID-19 vaccine. We recognize that effective, expeditious, and widespread vaccine administration is crucial to the COVID-19 pandemic response. We also understand that certain incentives and rewards may promote broader access to and uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations.**

**Because Medicare and other Federal health care programs reimburse for COVID-19 vaccine administration, the offer or provision of incentives and rewards to beneficiaries of these programs who receive the vaccine from a particular practitioner, provider, or supplier implicates the Federal anti-kickback statute and the Beneficiary Inducements CMP. Indeed, OIG has longstanding and continuing concerns about the provision of anything of value to Federal health care program beneficiaries intended to induce the utilization of reimbursable items or services-remuneration that likely would violate the Federal anti-kickback statute on its face.**

**FDA: Pfizer Vaccine Can Be Stored in Refrigerator for up to One Month**

Based on a review of data from Pfizer, the Food and Drug Administration is *authorizing* undiluted, thawed Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine vials to be stored in the refrigerator at 2°-8°C (35°-46°F) for up to one month. Previously, undiluted, thawed vaccine vials could be stored in the refrigerator for up to five days.

**Update on COVID-19 Vaccines for Adolescents**

On Tuesday, Moderna *announced* that its COVID-19 vaccine produced the same immune response in young people (ages 12-17) as adults, and it plans to submit the data to U.S. regulators early next month. If authorized, the vaccine would become the second available for adolescents as young as 12.

The American Academy of Pediatrics continues to *recommend* that adolescents get vaccinated while health officials investigate a small number cases of myocarditis in adolescents who received an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. AAP urges pediatricians and other clinicians to report any health concerns/heart inflammation cases that arise after vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.

**HHS Announces More Funding for COVID-19 Testing for Uninsured**

On Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services *announced* it is dedicating $4.8 billion from the American Rescue Plan to support the HRSA COVID-19 Uninsured Program. This funding will allow the program to continue reimbursing providers for testing uninsured individuals for COVID-19. As of May 19, the program has issued nearly $4 billion in testing reimbursements to providers.

**Building COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Resources**

On May 13, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Office of Minority Health (CMS OMH) hosted a Building COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence partner webinar to provide information and resources to help partners address vaccine hesitancy in their communities. The webinar *recording* and *slide deck* are now available on the CMS OMH webpage. Resources include a *handout* on outreach information and educational materials and a Vaccinate with Confidence *fact sheet* on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s tools and technical assistance to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake.

**CDC Report on COVID-19 Breakthrough Cases**

On Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* providing new data on breakthrough cases of COVID-19 in people who have been fully vaccinated. A total of 10,262 breakthrough infections had been reported in the U.S. as of April 30. Among these cases, 6,446 (63%) occurred in females, and the median patient age was 58 years. As of April 30, approximately 101 million persons in the U.S. had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

**CDC COCA Call on Underlying Medical Conditions & Severe COVID-19**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will hold a Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) call on Thursday (May 27) at 1 p.m. CDT on “Underlying Medical Conditions and Severe
COVID-19: Evidence-based Information for Healthcare Providers.” While age is the strongest risk factor for severe COVID-19 outcomes, studies have shown COVID-19 does not affect all population groups equally. The risk of severe COVID-19 (e.g., hospitalization, admission to the ICU, intubation or mechanical ventilation, death) increases with the number of underlying medical conditions. Presenters will update clinicians on the underlying medical conditions associated with severe COVID-19, describe the methods used to rate the evidence linking conditions to severe COVID-19, review the evidence on risk for conditions, and provide resources for providers caring for patients with underlying medical conditions. For more information, including webinar link and dial-in details, click here.

Illinois Summit on Antimicrobial Stewardship July 13
Save the date for the virtual Illinois Summit on Antimicrobial Stewardship on Tuesday July 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00pm. The summit will provide an overview of the regulatory and national landscape for antibiotic stewardship, discuss the impact COVID-19 on antimicrobial stewardship programs, and identify tools and resources healthcare facilities can use for implementing stewardship programs. Registration for the virtual event will be available in the coming weeks. IDPH is looking for organizations to share successes and innovations in antimicrobial stewardship in a poster session at the summit. To be considered for a poster session, hospitals must submit a Poster Session Abstract, which includes a brief description of the project/topic (200 words or less), by June 7 to DPH.DPSQ@Illinois.gov. For more information, see an IDPH flyer.

CMS Updates Medicare COVID-19 Data Snapshot
Last Thursday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services released its update of data on the impact of COVID-19 on the Medicare population for the period January 1 to March 20, 2021. The data show over 4.1 million COVID-19 cases among the Medicare population and over 1.1 million COVID-19 hospitalizations. Rural areas had 6,743 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 beneficiaries, while urban areas had 6,537 cases per 100,000. By racial characteristics, the case numbers per 100,000 were: American Indian/Alaskan Native 9,924; Hispanic 9,059; Black 8,087; White 6,110; and Asian/Pacific Islander 4,571.

State to Monitor Wastewater for COVID-19
On Monday, IDPH and the Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) announced a statewide system to monitor the virus that causes COVID-19 and its variants in wastewater, providing early warnings of a potential outbreak on a county-by-county basis. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is detectable in human waste nearly from the onset of infection, while symptoms may not appear for three to five days. IDPH and DPI will implement the program in phases, starting in 10 counties, expanding to 35 counties in mid-summer, and to all 102 Illinois counties by the end of the year. The initial 10 counties include Carroll, Cass, Franklin, Fulton, Jefferson, Lawrence, Livingston, Macon, Montgomery, and Vermilion.

State Launches Vaccine Clinics for Travelers
Ahead of the Memorial Day weekend, the state is launching several vaccination clinics for travelers. With the help of Amtrak, Walmart, TravelCenters of America, Wally's, and HyVee, the state will host vaccination clinics at Union Station in Chicago and at travel centers in Mt. Vernon, Troy, Effingham, Bloomington, and Pontiac. The clinics will offer the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

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.