May 5, 2021

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, Senior Director, Quality, Safety and Health Policy

SUBJECT: IHA COVID-19 Update – May 5, 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 2,410 new confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases and 30 deaths. The total number of cases in the state is 1,346,398 with a total of 22,096 deaths. IDPH says that in the past 24 hours, 77,670 test specimens have been processed, with a positivity rate of 3.1%. The preliminary 7-day statewide positivity rate for *cases* as a percent of total tests from April 28- May 4 is 3.3%, and the seven-day test positivity rate is 3.9%. Statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations in the past 24 hours decreased from 2,074 patients to 2,060 patients. Of that figure, 496 were in the ICU, with 249 patients on ventilators.

The seven-day rolling average of vaccines administered daily is 71,219 doses, a nearly 50% decline since the peak level just over three weeks ago. Yesterday, 96,415 doses were reported administered in Illinois, including approximately 40,000 doses that were not reported by pharmacies over the weekend because of a national system issue. Additional doses could also be added. IDPH says 60% of Illinois adults and 80% of seniors have received at least one dose of vaccine.

**IDPH Issues Revised Guidance for Elective Surgeries/Procedures**
Last Friday, IDPH issued via SIREN *revised guidance* for elective surgeries and procedures. The revised guidance provides some relief from pre-operative COVID-19 testing requirements for elective surgeries and procedures for fully vaccinated patients and patients who have recovered from COVID-19 within 90 days of the scheduled procedure. Additional flexibility is provided in the types of testing that may be used for patients undergoing low to moderate risk procedures.

**New Reimbursement Program for Non-Covered COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Fees**
On Monday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) *announced* a new program covering costs of administering COVID-19 vaccines to patients enrolled in health plans that either do not cover vaccination fees or cover them with patient cost-sharing. Since providers cannot bill patients for COVID-19 vaccination fees, this new program, the COVID-19 Coverage Assistance Fund (CAF), addresses an outstanding compensation need for providers on the front lines vaccinating underinsured patients.
To address these gaps, the CAF will compensate providers for eligible claims at national Medicare rates which increased in March to reflect newer information on the true costs associated with administering the vaccines. The CAF also builds on the HRSA COVID-19 Uninsured Program, which has been reimbursing providers for vaccine administration fees associated with uninsured individuals.

The CAF will accept eligible claims from providers dated on or after December 14, 2020 at the CAF portal. Claims must be submitted electronically and are subject to available funding. Learn more here. Provider webinars will held May 6 at 1 p.m. CDT (register here) and May 12 at 1 p.m. CDT (register here).

CMS Updates Toolkit on Vaccine Coverage, Reimbursement
Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released an update to the Coverage and Reimbursement of COVID-19 Vaccines, Vaccine Administration, and Cost Sharing under Medicaid, CHIP, and BHP vaccine toolkit. This revised toolkit discusses a variety of updates including:

- Expansion of the mandatory benefit for vaccine and vaccine administration coverage to nearly all Medicaid beneficiaries as required by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP).
- Enhanced 100% federal match for COVID-19 vaccines and their administration under the ARP.
- The authorization of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine.

CMS says the toolkit will be updated in the near future to reflect additional Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act declarations by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

IHA to HHS: Release PRF Money, Extend Utilization Timeline
IHA is again urging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to release remaining Provider Relief Fund (PRF) distributions and extend the timeline hospitals and health systems have to use funds. In a letter sent yesterday to HHS Secretary Becerra, IHA President & CEO A.J. Wilhelmi wrote:

"To date, disbursements from the PRF have been a financial lifeline to providers by helping to offset unprecedented financial losses and expenses incurred during the first half of 2020. However, Illinois hospitals and health systems experienced deep financial losses and increased expenses during the second half of 2020 and first quarter of 2021, putting numerous hospitals in an extremely tenuous financial position as they await the Phase 4 General and rural distributions required by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act. We urge you to quickly release remaining PRF funds."

IHA shared the letter with the Illinois Congressional delegation. On March 12, IHA sent a letter to HHS outlining numerous issues and questions related to the relief fund.

HHS Announces Nearly $1B for Rural COVID-19 Response
The U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) yesterday announced the availability of nearly $1 billion – under the American Rescue Plan – to strengthen COVID-19 response efforts and increase vaccinations in rural communities. The Health Resources and Services Administration will increase the number of vaccines sent to rural communities, expand testing and other COVID-19 prevention services, and work to increase vaccine confidence by empowering trusted local voices with additional funding for outreach efforts in underserved communities. The funding allocations include $398 million to existing grantees of the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program to work with about 1,730 small rural hospitals – those with fewer than 50 beds – and Critical Access Hospitals on COVID-19 testing and mitigation; and $560 million to rural health clinics for testing and addressing health equity gaps.

State Announces New Mobile Vaccination Site, Incentive
Governor J.B. Pritzker yesterday announced a new mobile vaccination site will open at the Worldwide Shooting and Recreation Complex (WSRC) in Sparta. Anyone who receives the vaccine at the WSRC mobile site will receive 100 free targets of trap, skeet, or sporting clays for use at the WSRC. The site will be operated by the Illinois National Guard in coordination with the Randolph County local health department and will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 14-15 for adults 18 and over.
Pritzker, Lightfoot Give Reopening Update, Announce Return of Auto Show
On Tuesday, Governor J.B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot announced the return of the Chicago Auto Show, the first large convention to take place in the city since the pandemic began. The Governor and Mayor also discussed the state’s upcoming move to the less restrictive “Bridge Phase” of the Restore Illinois Reopening Plan and Chicago’s “Open Chicago” initiative to safely reopen. Pritzker says the state is on track to be in Phase 5 in July. Lightfoot says her goal is to have the city fully reopened by July 4.

Governor Re-Issues COVID-19 Executive Orders
On Friday, Governor J.B. Pritzker issued a new COVID-19 disaster proclamation and re-issued a series of executive orders, in effect through May 29. The orders include those related to telehealth, healthcare worker background checks, actions by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation for licensed professionals engaged in disaster response, hospital capacity, and IDPH regulatory activities.

President’s Updated Vaccination Goal
On Tuesday, President Biden announced a goal for 70% of the U.S. adult population to have one vaccine shot and 160 million U.S. adults to be fully vaccinated by July 4th “so that life can start to look closer to normal.” The President is directing thousands of pharmacies in the federal pharmacy program to offer walk-in appointments; redirecting Federal Emergency Management Agency resources to support more pop-up clinics, smaller community vaccination sites, and more mobile clinics; shipping new allocations of the vaccine to rural health clinics; and providing more funding to help communities do outreach.

FCC COVID-19 Telehealth Funding Application Portal Closes This Friday
The Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) application portal (www.fcc.gov/covid19telehealth) for Round 2 of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program closes at 11 a.m. CDT on Friday, May 6. About $250 million in funding is available. Information on the program is here. An FCC press release is here. Email questions about the application process to Round2TelehealthApplicationSupport@usac.org.

ASPR TRACIE “Be a COVID-19 Vaccine Champion” Webinar May 12
ASPR TRACIE and New York City Health + Hospitals will host the “Be a COVID-19 Vaccine Champion” webinar on Wednesday, May 12 at 12:30 p.m. CDT. Speakers will discuss this local initiative to build confidence in vaccines, provide information about current FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines and their safety and effectiveness, and share effective communication strategies to encourage friends, family, colleagues and the community to get vaccinated. For more details and to register, click here.

FDA Revokes EUA of Battelle Decontamination System
On Friday (April 30), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) revoked the emergency use authorization (EUA) of the Battelle CCDS Critical Care Decontamination System, which was authorized for use in decontaminating compatible N95 respirators for multiple-user reuse by healthcare personnel. The FDA says decontaminated respirators and respirators that have undergone bioburden reduction should be used only when there are insufficient supplies of new filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs) or any new respirators. Last month, the FDA issued a letter to healthcare providers recommending transitioning from use of decontaminated disposable respirators.

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.