

March 5, 2024

**ILLINOIS HEALTH AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
M E M O R A N D U M**

**SUBJECT: IHA Update: Behavioral Health Notices & Notifications**

Below are several updates concerning hospital and health system behavioral healthcare, including an opportunity for hospitals to test the new Illinois service access portal for youth designed by Google, recent state advocacy on mental health policy, and opioid settlement fund recommendations based on member feedback.

**State Offers Hospital Testing of BEACON Portal**

As a follow-up to IHA’s [Jan. 18 memo](#) on state notices and resources to aid in hospital boarding, the opportunity has arisen for hospital staff involved in youth placement in behavioral health settings to volunteer as a user tester for the upcoming state’s [BEACON](#) (Behavioral Health Care and Ongoing Navigation) service access portal. Hospital staff currently input over 20% of youth applications within the pilot portal, while 45% of youth in the portal itself are currently in a hospital setting. User input is central to the BEACON development process. Throughout the project, there will be multiple user testing opportunities, which will be used to shape the final application.

Leadership from Illinois’ Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation initiative will hold a series of testing engagements, including a one-hour demo by Google, followed by an asynchronous assignment with specific instructions for what to test and a questionnaire about the experience. Overall, it represents an estimated time commitment of about two hours. The testing groups will take place from March through June, and you can volunteer to be a tester by signing up [here](#). Specific dates, testing topics and user groups are below.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Testing Topic</b>	<b>User Groups</b>
March 15	Public Portal Workflow	Parents, Providers, Other Users
April 12	Agency Portal Workflow	State Agency Staff & Partners
May 10	Systems Integration	<a href="#">SPIDER Staff</a> & Dept. of Children and Family Services Data Warehouse Staff
June 7	Reporting/Data	Legislators, Agency Leadership & Public Partners

**Behavioral Health Policy Recommendations Presented to Illinois Leaders**

On Jan. 30, IHA presented to Illinois’ Chief Behavioral Health Officer, David Jones, and his kitchen cabinet of advisors, which includes state agency and other key Illinois behavioral health

leaders. IHA shared background on the current hospital and health system behavioral health landscape in Illinois, including financial challenges, post-hospitalization service access needs, workforce shortages, hospital inpatient psychiatric bed changes since 2019, and emerging scrutiny on Medicaid prior authorizations. To address these concerns, the association was asked by state leaders to share policy priorities to address these critical needs.

Developed through feedback from IHA's Behavioral Health Advisory Forum and statewide input from hospitals and health systems, priority was placed on state opportunities that primarily did not require legislative intervention. First, the timely development of Illinois' BEACON service access portal was encouraged, as well as opportunities for hospital staff to provide feedback on portal development, like the series detailed above. Consideration for portal expansion to the adult population with behavioral health service needs was also suggested, specifically for patients facing access barriers in hospitals that result in stays beyond medical necessity.

Focusing on opportunities in the Medicaid program, state leaders were encouraged to codify telehealth rules established during the COVID-19 pandemic (89 Ill. Adm. Code 140.403(e)); remove a requirement for hospitals to offer inpatient psychiatric services if they are seeking to offer outpatient services; modify intensive outpatient coverage to increase access for youth; and expand psychiatric collaborative care codes. Finally, Medicaid prior authorization reform, managed care organization oversight, and policies that would reduce reimbursement barriers for stays beyond medical necessity were recommended.

### **Opioid Settlement Fund Recommendations**

Following initial recommendations made in December, IHA submitted a revised set of state opioid settlement fund recommendations on Feb. 27. These recommendations were adjusted following discussions with state leaders and modified with the intent of further aligning recommendations with existing goals to address opioid use prevention, treatment and recovery. Recommendations were based on a 2023 member survey, and focused on hospital-based medication-assisted recovery (MAR) education and training, resources for warm-handoffs facilitated by peer support specialists, and youth-focused interventions.

Requested feedback was also provided to [the Illinois Opioid Crisis Response Advisory Council's](#) MAR Prescribing Practices Committee on the 2023 member survey, which will help support implementation of Illinois' [State Opioid Action Plan](#) (SOAP) and inform future plan development. The SOAP forms the strategic framework for addressing the opioid epidemic in Illinois, focusing on efforts falling into three pillars:

- Prevention: By preventing people from using opioids;
- Treatment and Recovery: By providing evidence-based treatment and recovery services to Illinois citizens with opioid use disorder; and
- Response: By avoiding death after overdose.

[Contact us](#) with questions or comments.