Urgent Request

The Idaho Department of Correction contacted IHA with an urgent request for help in acquiring about a dozen temporal thermometers. Much like our hospitals are doing with checking temperatures for any staff and visitors to the hospital, the prisons have a need to check their employees before they enter the facilities. With community spread in various parts of the state, they want to avoid an employee accidently introducing the Coronavirus to one of their facilities. They have exhausted resources for procurement and very little information is available on how to order them. The Department is now looking for a few dozen. If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to Brian Whitlock at 208-427-1405.

Reimbursement & Policy

CARES Act to reimburse providers for uninsured patients

The federal government will use a portion of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act's $100 billion emergency fund for hospitals and health care providers to reimburse providers treating uninsured COVID-19 patients, President Trump and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar announced Friday.

"Under the President’s direction, we will use a portion of that funding to cover providers' costs of delivering COVID-19 care for the uninsured, sending the money to providers through the same mechanism used for testing," Azar said. "As a condition of receiving funds under this program, providers will be forbidden from balance billing the uninsured for the cost of their care. Providers will be reimbursed at Medicare rates. We will soon have more specifics on how the rest of the $100 billion will go to providers."

Resources & Equipment

CMS video on expanded telehealth services

CMS released a new video to answering questions about telehealth coverage and payments for Medicare beneficiaries.

Quality & Patient Safety

CDC guidance on cloth face coverings in community settings

Last week, the CDC recommended cloth face coverings as an acceptable COVID-19 prevention measure. The agency emphasized that the recommended coverings "are not surgical masks or N95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance."

The AHA, American Medical Association, and American Nurses Association also noted on the public’s role in the need for more N95 respirators and medical-grade ventilators. The agencies also highlighted the need to avoid non-emergency surgeries and procedures, and urged clinicians to re-prioritize patients who need medical care the most.

Idaho and other states are evaluating this latest CDC guidance as additional efforts to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain – especially in areas with significant community-based transmission.

Monitoring patients at risk for suicide

The Joint Commission openly addressed a question that may have or will likely arise in the hospital setting during these trying times. Does a patient who is at high risk for suicide with known or suspected COVID-19 require the 1:1 observer to be in the room? Please read their recommendations here.