Funding for rural hospitals coming this week

Relief for rural hospitals and clinics is on the way this week. HHS will be distributing $10 billion to rural hospitals, health clinics, and community health centers. Rural Idaho facilities will receive a total of nearly $123 million. According to the information we’ve received, CAHs will have a base amount of $1 million while clinics will receive at least $100,000. The remainder will be apportioned based on 4% of each facility’s operating expenses. The calculation will be based on the most recent available cost report, typically 2018.

This tranche of federal funds will be divided between 92 facilities in Idaho. We expect the funding will be received by hospitals via direct deposit.

Resources & Equipment

Expanded testing

Idaho received 15 Abbott coronavirus testing machines through FEMA. Two machines will be placed in each of the seven Public Health Districts, with the remaining one being sent to the Department of Correction. Idaho is supposed to receive a federal shipment of 40,000 kits (swabs and transport medium) later this week.

Quality & Patient Safety

New CDC testing guidance and IHA testing resource

Yesterday, the CDC updated the guidance for COVID-19 testing. Three different areas were modified - antibody testing, testing priorities, and specimen collecting and reporting.

Regarding recommendations for antibody testing, the CDC stated they do not “currently recommend using antibody testing alone for diagnostic purposes.

The priorities for testing were also updated. High priority for testing should be given to:

- Hospitalized patients;
- Healthcare or congregate living workers, and first responders with symptoms;
- Residents in long-term care or other congregate living settings;
- People identified by public health officials or clinicians as a high priority;
- Those with symptoms of a possible COVID-19 infection;
- Those without symptoms from certain racial and ethnic groups.

For collection and reporting, the CDC updated guidance on viral transport medium (VTM) to note that some point-of-care tests advise against its use; removed preference for NP swabs; and updated guidance for use of personal protective equipment while obtaining specimens.

IHA has developed a testing resource (below) designed to help people understand the types of testing available and some common questions. A more detailed resource is linked to as well.