

COVID-19 Report to Members ~ August 6, 2020

Reports are sent on Mondays and Thursdays, unless there's breaking news.

[New ad encourages Idahoans to "do your part"](#)

Several of our IHA member hospitals volunteered to help the Department of Commerce with their latest ad to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Our thanks to St. Luke's Magic Valley, Cassia Regional, Minidoka Memorial, and North Canyon Medical Center for sharing their time and staff talent to get this ad produced.

The Department of Commerce will be airing this ad and others on television as well as social media. IHA is encouraging all our members to share and post it on their hospital sites and feeds.



Governor updates on data, education and more

At today's news conference, Governor Little focused on the state's current status and plans for Idaho communities to get students back to school. The Governor announced that Idaho will continue in Stage 4 of the Idaho Rebounds plan for at least another two weeks.

While there is an indication that efforts to increase the use of masks and physical distancing are having a positive impact, Idaho still needs to bring down hospital admission rates in order to move forward. The identified goal is to have fewer than 4 hospital admissions per day but that number has continued to creep up to double digits.

Governor Little urged journalists to focus more attention on daily cases counts and capacity than overall positive case numbers. He acknowledged that simply looking at bed counts doesn't tell the whole story of a hospital's capacity to care for COVID-19 patients. He noted he has heard from hospital administrators that the availability of healthcare workers drives bed capacity. The state has experienced challenges in determining the number of healthcare workers out due to COVID-19 status because of the delay in the investigation process from the health districts. Now that those numbers are being reported directly by hospitals, the state will have better data available to make decisions moving forward.

In the area of schools opening this fall, the Governor and education leaders emphasized that each community plan will be unique and may include many combinations of in person and remote learning. In an effort to assist school districts in their efforts, the Governor is directing millions of dollars to the safe reopening of schools which includes:

- \$10 million for additional masks, gloves, sanitizer, and plexiglass for Idaho schools;
- \$48 million will help bridge the "digital divide" and equip schools with the computers, connectivity, and other resources to ensure successful remote learning;
- \$21 million toward testing for teachers and school staff;
- \$3 million to increase testing lab turnaround time and capacity to help get test results for teachers and school staff as quickly as possible; and
- \$3 million to leverage Idaho pharmacies in testing efforts to help quickly produce results for teachers, staff, and families in rural Idaho, where the majority of Idaho school districts are located.

Earlier this week, the Governor also announced his intent to convene a special session of the Legislature on August 24th. Idaho's constitution requires that any special session be for a specifically identified issue. While discussions about the specific topic/topics continue, today he hinted that there may be agreement on proposals dealing with the November general election and liability reform during emergencies. IHA, in addition to a number of business and education entities, testified before a special legislative workgroup last week, urging them to take up liability reform to address increased risk and vulnerability brought on by the pandemic.

An announcement is expected the week of August 17 detailing the exact issues to be considered during the special session.

Reimbursement & Policy

[HHS extends relief funding application deadlines](#)

Last week, the HHS announced [extended application deadlines](#) for relief payment programs.

From the Phase 1 and Phase 2 distributions, which allowed eligible Medicaid, Medicaid managed care, CHIP and dental providers to apply for funding of up to 2% of their patient care revenue, a new application deadline of August 28 has been set.

For providers with ownership change challenges which impacted receiving funds, HHS has also extended the application deadline to August 28 to provide revenue information and documentation proving a change in ownership.

HHS is expected to address relief payments to new providers and other organizations that have not yet received any funding in future announcements.

Resources & Equipment

[Addressing Idaho's workforce](#)

In support of Idaho's economic rebound efforts, the Idaho Workforce Development Council is working to identify the near-term job opportunities and define the fundamental skills required to fill these roles within the next 12 months.

Through the [LAUNCH Idaho – Employer Survey](#), the council is asking all Idaho employers regardless of industry, location or size, to provide some relevant data they can use for this project. The survey will take about 15-20 minutes and is best completed by those responsible for hiring decisions. The survey will be available until August 14. For additional information, contact the Idaho Workforce Development Council at 208.488.7560.

Virtual Meetings, Education & Updates

[Webinar ~ COVID-19 Ventilator Reskilling](#)

With the high demand for ventilator management in the acute setting due to COVID-19, healthcare providers may be tasked with managing complex patients with minimal understanding of mechanical ventilation or ventilators. This self-directed course, offered by the American Heart Association, helps healthcare providers in the acute care setting improve knowledge and competence in mechanical ventilation skills.

[COVID-19 Ventilator Reskilling](#) includes:

- Respiratory Physiology
- Basic Functions of a Ventilator
- Ventilator in Respiratory Failure
- Goals of Care in Respiratory Failure

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