

COVID-19 Report to Members ~ November 30, 2020

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

Resources & Equipment

Vaccine distribution ~ "be ready"

"Be ready," was the closing comment from Vice President Mike Pence today in a White House pandemic update call for the nation's governors when discussing vaccine availability. Idaho could see the first shipment of vaccines in as early as two weeks. IDHW and the Vaccine Advisory Committee continue to refine plans for vaccine distribution across the state, with early administration likely focused on healthcare workers.

Hospitals that have not yet submitted their enrollment forms to IDHW must do so before being able to administer any of the vaccines that become available.

In other vaccine news, [Moderna announced](#) they submitted their request for an EUA today. The FDA has indicated that the VRBPAC (Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee) would meet on December 17 to consider the request. If approved at that meeting, doses could be distributed as early as December 21. The US has secured 100 million doses of this vaccine which studies show is 94% effective.

Syringe resource

FEMA Region 10 announced it has 800,000 safety syringes available at no cost. The Orotex International syringes are not for use with vaccines, which are expected to come with their own syringes, and have a December 2020 expiration date. If you are interested in more information on obtaining some through the Idaho Office of Emergency Management, contact [Ben Roeber](#).

Quality & Patient Safety

Acute Hospital Care at Home program launched

CMS has launched the [Acute Hospital Care at Home](#) program to allow patients to be treated appropriately and safely in their homes.

This program allows Medicare beneficiaries the choice to receive care in the hospital or in their homes, if home-based care criteria are met. For some patients, care at home will allow them to have family and caregivers at hand. Asthma, congestive heart failure, pneumonia and COPD care were among the 60 conditions CMS noted as being able to be treated safely with proper monitoring and treatment protocols.

The program requires in-person physician evaluation and screening protocols before care at home begins. Patients will be admitted to home-based care either from an emergency department or inpatient bed. The patient's care plan must include a daily evaluation by a registered nurse (either in-person or remotely) and two in-person visits daily by either a registered nurse or mobile integrated health paramedic, based on the patient's nursing plan and hospital policies. Hospitals will report quality and safety data to CMS.

CMS has launched an [online portal](#) to streamline the waiver request process and allow hospitals and healthcare systems to submit the necessary information to ensure they meet the program's criteria to participate.

Reimbursement & Policy

Funding available for hospital contract staffing

Last week, hospital CEOs were advised that the Governor's Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee unanimously approved \$5 million in state CARES Act funds to be directed to help hospitals fill immediate staffing needs. With Idaho and the rest of the country hitting record numbers of hospitalized patients and the surge expected to continue into 2021, hospitals are in dire need of nurses, therapists and other clinical staff.

"This \$5 million will be critical to helping hospitals ease the burden on already over-taxed and fatigued staff," said IHA CEO Brian Whitlock. "We've hit an unfortunate milestone of more than 100,000 COVID-19 cases in Idaho, resulting in increased hospitalizations and ICU use. As we see more and more limited capacity, it not only affects those with COVID, but all Idahoans with a critical health need."

With demand for traveling nurses and other clinical workers at record highs across the country, Idaho hospitals were struggling to compete with other states as hourly fees are up to three times the normal rate. This level of demand left many hospitals without access to contract workers.

Idaho joins other states in utilizing CARES Act funds where they are critically needed as the surge threatens to overwhelm our healthcare system. This funding, however, is only available to be used through the end of December. As with all CARES Act funding, the entirety of those federal allocations must be used prior to the end of the year. It is uncertain if Congress will consider that deadline during the lame-duck session currently underway.

Virtual Meetings & Education

Webinar ~ Legal Issues for Idaho Healthcare Providers

Hawley Troxell's employment and healthcare attorneys will provide legal insights on three key issues for hospitals and other healthcare employers: vaccine preparations, COVID-19 employee leave, and the Idaho Patient Act.

If you are unable to attend the webinar, register so that you can receive the recording as well as the materials the day after the presentation.

Legal Issues for Idaho Healthcare Providers
Wednesday, December 9 ~ 9a MTN / 10a PAC

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