

IHA COVID Resources and Advocacy

September 17, 2020

HHS unveils COVID-19 vaccine distribution strategy

The Department of Health and Human Services today [released its strategy](#) for the public distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine. The strategy, which was developed with the Department of Defense and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, provides a [distribution overview](#) and an [interim playbook](#) for state, tribal, territorial and local public health programs and their partners.

The strategy identifies tasks that the COVID-19 vaccine program will require:

- Distribute vaccines immediately after granting emergency use authorization/biologics license applications using a transparently developed, phased allocation method based on the CDC's vaccine recommendations.
- Engage with state, tribal, territorial and local partners, other stakeholders and the public to communicate public health information about the vaccine and promote vaccine confidence and uptake.
- Ensure the safe administration of vaccines and the availability of administration supplies.
- Monitor necessary data from the vaccination program through an information technology system capable of supporting and tracking distribution and administration.

HHS anticipates remdesivir ordering-process transition in October

Since June 28, HHS has worked with Gilead Sciences, state departments and AmerisourceBergen to allocate and distribute remdesivir to hospitals. HHS and state department involvement in the allocation process has helped ensure hospitals have access to the drug while production capacity is increased.

Its anticipated that **Friday, Oct. 2**, will be the last day state departments will place remdesivir orders for hospitals. After this date, its expected HHS and state departments will no longer be involved in the allocation process and that hospitals can place remdesivir orders using traditional ordering processes.

More information about the ordering-process transition will be provided as its available.

Republican COVID-19 relief bill fails to advance in the Senate

A roughly [\\$500 billion COVID-19 relief package](#) failed to advance in the Senate last week as it fell short of receiving the necessary 60 votes. The vote on the legislation was 52-47. Republican leaders introduced the package, which would have provided additional assistance for priorities, including small businesses, enhanced unemployment insurance, childcare, COVID-19 testing and schools. The legislation also would have provided liability protections from certain lawsuits related to COVID-19.

IRS issues initial guidance on deferral of employee portion of Social Security tax

The Internal Revenue Service recently [issued guidance](#) for implementing the White House's Aug. 8 executive order on payroll taxes, which applies to wages paid Sept. 1 through Dec. 31. Under the memorandum, nonfederal employers may defer withholding and payment of an employee's portion of the Social Security tax if the employee earns less than \$4,000 biweekly. These taxes must be repaid between Jan. 1 and April 30, 2021, or interest, penalties and additions to tax will begin to accrue on May 1, 2021. This differs from the CARES Act payroll tax delay of the [employer share](#), which began March 27 and allows repayment over a two-year period.

IDPH provides rural health information updates

IDPH has recently provided these COVID-19 resources for rural health stakeholders:

- [Rural Crosswalk for COVID-19 waivers and flexibilities](#): CMS publishes a summary of COVID-19-related waivers and flexibilities that affect rural health clinics, federally qualified health centers, critical access hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. It also describes the significance of each provision for these rural providers and facilities.
- [Rural EMS COVID-19 Preparedness Checklist](#): Provides a checklist for rural response agencies to evaluate their current level of preparedness and identify areas that need additional action to better respond to COVID-19. Covers planning, strategy, personal protective equipment and supplies, workforce and recruiting, and funding.
- [Health Conditions and an Older Population Increase COVID-19 Risks in Rural America](#): Examines the influence of age and pre-existing health conditions on the likelihood of hospitalization or death from COVID-19 infection in rural America. Compares COVID-19 case rates and deaths by metropolitan status. Includes county-level maps on estimated risks among those infected with COVID-19 and current incidence.
- [Lessons Learned: Pediatric Tele-Mental Health in a Rural Medical Center in the Age of SARS-CoV-2](#): Explores a study on the use of telemedicine to expand mental health care access to rural children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Discusses implementation concerns such as a need to protect patient privacy and expand internet-based infrastructure.
- [America at a Glance: Social Isolation and Loneliness During the First Wave of COVID-19](#): Explores how COVID-19 and related stay-at-home orders contributed to feelings of social isolation and loneliness among people with disabilities. Compares feelings of social isolation and loneliness among urban and rural groups before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Discusses the possible impact of technological accommodations on these feelings.
- [COVID-19 Response in Minority Communities](#): 11 am, Thursday, Sept. 17. This virtual symposium is hosted by the HHS Office of Minority Health and will highlight state, tribal, territorial and community-based efforts to address COVID-19 among racial and ethnic minority populations.
- [MMWR Weekly COVID-19 briefing podcast series](#): Featuring the latest scientific information published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

USDA Economic Research Service COVID-19 charts:

- [Cumulative Confirmed COVID-19 Cases per 100,000 Residents by County Economic Type and Metro Status on August 7, 2020](#)
- [Cumulative Confirmed COVID-19 Cases per 100,000 Residents by County on August 7, 2020](#)
- [Cumulative Confirmed COVID-19 Cases per 100,000 Residents in Metro and Nonmetro Areas, March 1 to August 7, 2020](#)
- [Two-week Moving Average of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases per 100,000 Population since March 1, 2020: Comparing Rural Counties with 20 Percent or More Employment in Meatpacking to All Other Rural Counties in the United States](#)

Next CEO update call

The next CEO update call will be in conjunction with the IHA All-District Virtual Meeting, scheduled from 1-2:30 pm, Wednesday, Sept. 23. Click [HERE](#) to register.

Educational opportunities

- **2-3 pm Thursday, Sept. 17, Gratitude: The Path to Resilience, Well-being and Joy** – Gratitude isn't just a practice that makes one feel good. It can boost resilience, improve sleep, be a buffer against anxiety and depression, and reduce burnout in health care professionals. This webinar will explore meditation, journaling and expressive art practices designed to cultivate gratitude and boost resilience. Attendees also will learn how gratitude can enhance on-the-job effectiveness. Register [HERE](#).
- **8:30 am-12:30 pm Friday, Sept. 18, Iowa Society for Healthcare Engineering Virtual Conference** – The society's fall conference provides education to promote quality patient care, optimize facilities for the COVID-19 environment and prepare for health care's future through improved engineering practices. Register [HERE](#).
- **10 am-Noon, Wednesday, Sept. 23, Preparing for the New Normal in Survey Process** – CMS, The Joint Commission and Det Norske Veritas have started to re-engage with hospitals nationwide as some areas begin to emerge from their crisis operating conditions under the surge standard of care. It is important to understand how to be prepared for the new

survey normal. Register [HERE](#).

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