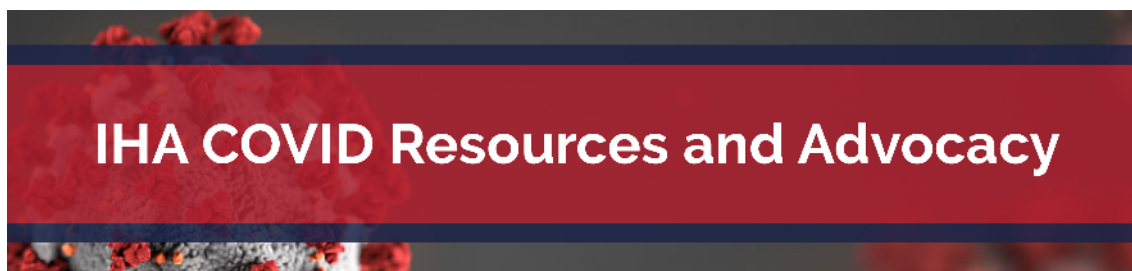


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Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021

Text of infrastructure package released

Last weekend, the US Senate released the [text](#) of a bipartisan infrastructure package that has been negotiated for several months. The proposal includes funding for broadband internet deployment, equity and affordability, as well as investments to improve federal coordination and help with response and recovery of cybersecurity incidents.

The package does not rescind provider relief funds as an offset for the package as advocated for by IHA and AHA, though it does extend the Medicare sequester for one additional year, through fiscal year 2031.

Amendments to the package are expected to be introduced soon. Federal lawmakers are working to finalize the package quickly before August recess begins and legislators return home for in-district work.

IHA will continue to monitor developments about the infrastructure and provide updates. Email questions to [Erin Cubit](#) at IHA.

Legislation introduced to allow more time to use relief fund money

The bipartisan Provider Relief Fund Deadline Extension Act was introduced July 28 in the Senate and House of Representatives. Reps. Cindy Axne and Mariannette Miller-Meeks were House co-leads along with Senate leads Sens. Michael Bennett and Kevin Cramer.

The bill would allow providers that received COVID-19 provider relief fund payments before June 30, 2020, to use their payments through Dec. 31, 2021, or the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency, whichever is later. IHA has been advocating for this extension to enable Iowa hospitals to continue utilizing provider relief fund payments beyond June 30.

To read a summary of the bill, click [HERE](#).

Click [HERE](#) to read AHA's action alert regarding the legislation.

CDC issues health advisory to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a Health Alert Network Health Advisory to notify public health practitioners and clinicians about the urgent need to increase COVID-19 vaccination coverage (the percentage of the population fully vaccinated) nationwide. Increased vaccination coverage can help prevent surges in new infections that could increase COVID-19-related morbidity and mortality, overwhelm health care capacity and widen existing COVID-19-related health disparities.

COVID-19 cases increased more than 300% nationally from June 19 to July 23 with parallel increases in hospitalizations and deaths driven by the highly transmissible delta variant. The CDC recommends continued efforts to accelerate primary vaccination efforts, especially in areas with lower vaccination coverage.

Public health jurisdictions should continue to increase efforts to reach and partner with communities to encourage and offer vaccinations. Clinicians not yet fully vaccinated should get vaccinated as soon as possible, increase patient outreach efforts and communicate with unvaccinated staff and others to increase vaccine confidence. Health care facilities and systems, nursing homes and businesses should recommend and offer the COVID-19 vaccine to staff and evaluate whether their facilities can implement vaccine requirements or vaccine incentives.

To read the full advisory, click [HERE](#).

FDA extends Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine authorized shelf life

The Food and Drug Administration extended the shelf life for Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine to six months, 45 days more than previously cited.

The decision is based on data from ongoing stability assessment studies. The studies demonstrated the vaccine is stable at six months when refrigerated at temperatures of 36-46 degrees Fahrenheit (2-8 degrees Celsius).

The Iowa Department of Public Health said providers also must check expiration dates for Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines and update vaccine expiration dates in IRIS. To determine expiration dates of vaccines, these steps for each manufacturer should be followed:

Janssen

The expiration date is not printed on the vaccine vial or carton. To determine the expiration date, providers can:

- Scan the QR code on the outer carton.
- Call 800-565-4008.
- Go to <https://vaxcheck.jnj/>.

Moderna

The expiration date is not printed on the vaccine vial or carton. To determine the expiration date, providers can:

- Scan the QR code on the outer carton.
- Go to <http://www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua/>.

Pfizer

The vaccine product has an expiration date on the vaccine vial.

To track the expiration date by lot number, providers can use the CDC's [COVID-19 Vaccine Expiration Date Tracking Tool](#).

Questions about the IRIS vaccine inventory or updating expiration dates can be directed to the IRIS Help Desk at 800-374-3958.

FDA authorizes monoclonal antibody therapies

The Federal Drug Administration [authorized](#) the use of the monoclonal antibody therapy REGEN-COV for COVID-19 prevention in certain children and adults not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or not expected to mount an adequate immune response to vaccination.

The FDA also [authorized](#) administering baricitinib (Olumiant) by itself to treat COVID-19 in hospitalized patients age 2 and older who require supplemental oxygen, mechanical ventilation or extracorporeal membrane oxygenation. The emergency use authorization previously required administering baricitinib with remdesivir (Veklury).

Educational opportunities

- [A Path Forward: Thriving in Rural Health Care After COVID-19](#), 11 am-Noon, Thursday, Aug. 19. Tying community engagement to diversity and health equity, this webinar explores true stories of the amazing resiliency of rural communities amid the formidable challenges of a pandemic.
- [COVID-19 Provider Relief Fund: Reporting Requirements and Strategies](#), Noon-1 pm, Tuesday, Aug. 24. This presentation will provide a brief recap of the provider relief fund and a detailed review of the new reporting guidance. It also will discuss common reporting questions and strategies in preparation for the reporting deadline.



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