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**Dear Member:**

**Special Maine CDC COVID-19 Preparedness Briefing for Congregate Care with Dr. Shah**

**Tuesday, December 8, 2020, 2-3 pm**

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/93274349415?pwd=ako5TExLRGpBV1RpV05LWEhnWnIXQT09>

Meeting ID: 932 7434 9415

Passcode: 758965

Phone one-tap: US: +13017158592,,93274349415#

Please note, this call will REPLACE the Tuesday Medical Directors/Clinician Call as well as the Wednesday OADS Congregate Care Call next week only.

**Federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Prioritizes LTC, State of Maine Decisions Coming Soon**

On Tuesday, December 1, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) (ACIP) voted to include long term care residents at the highest level of priority for the first distributions of a COVID-19 vaccine. This includes residents of skilled nursing centers, assisted living communities and other residential care settings.

Long term care residents are now included with health care workers in Phase 1a. This is extremely important because going into the meeting, our residents were Phase 1b, just after health care workers. View the [materials](#) that were discussed during the ACIP meeting.

Unfortunately, the reality is that there will not be enough doses in the initial batches of vaccine for everyone in the top tier to be vaccinated immediately. Pfizer projects they can produce only 6.5 million initial doses of their vaccine. There are at least 21 million health care workers and three million long term care residents nationwide.

In addition, states are not required to follow these guidelines. It will now be up to each state to decide how to allocate its limited supply of vaccine. Dr. Shah, Director of the Maine CDC, has publicly shared his concern about balancing limited supply with existing demand and that difficult choices may have to be made. MHCA is participating in regular CDC vaccine workgroups and we anticipate recommendations from the State soon.

**MHCA in the News**

The Maine media continues to take interest in COVID-19 and long term care. MHCA staff were interviewed recently as follows:

- [Many Maine nursing homes no longer allowing visitors amid COVID spike \(wabi.tv\)](#)
- [Maine long-term care facilities facing extra costs during pandemic | WGME](#)
- [Janet Mills: Maine Will Get About A Third Of The COVID-19 Vaccine Doses It Expected | Maine Public](#)

**Federal CDC Issues New Guidance on Quarantine, Holiday Travel and Facemasks**

This week, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced [shortened alternatives to its recommended quarantine](#) for people who were exposed to someone with COVID-19. The CDC still recommends a 14-day quarantine "as the best way to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19," according to federal officials. However, the quarantine can end after 10 days if the person has not developed any symptoms and after just seven days if the asymptomatic person also tests negative for the virus.

The agency also issued recommendations for [Domestic Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic | CDC](#). The CDC strongly urges Americans to stay home during the holidays to prevent the spread of COVID-19, especially if you or someone you care for may be at high risk.

The CDC has also made several updates on guidance for facemasks for health care personnel (HCP) as follows:

- Additional considerations for returning to conventional capacity practices.
- **Conventional capacity strategies:** Clarified HCP use of facemasks for source control and as PPE to protect their nose and mouth from exposure to splashes, sprays, and respiratory secretions.
- **Contingency capacity strategies:**
- Added clarifications on extended use of facemasks as PPE.
- Added clarifications on restriction on facemask use by HCP as PPE rather than by patients for source control.
- **Crisis capacity strategies:**
- Revised section on limited re-use paired with extended use.
- Deleted the strategies of designating convalescent HCP for the provision of care of patients with SARS-CoV-2 infection, use of expedient patient isolation rooms, and mechanical headboards.

As surveys begin to resume, surveyors may look to CDC guidance and evaluate if providers are adhering to the latest guidance. Please visit [Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of Facemasks](#) to learn more.

#### **LTCOP Reaching Out to LTC Residents**

From Maine LTCOP: "The Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is reaching out to residents through telephone calls, face time, zoom and post cards. We would like your help in connecting with residents who do not have family members or friends who check in on them. We want to provide whatever support we can to residents during this very challenging time. If you have residents who you think would benefit by this outreach, please let us know. You can contact us at [mltcop@maineombudsman.org](mailto:mltcop@maineombudsman.org). Our Regional Ombudsmen will follow up with residents. Thank you so much!"

#### **ICYMI: State Grants for Maine Health Care Organizations – Deadline is December 10th**

Earlier this week, the State announced a grant program to support health care organizations that serve residents with MaineCare and sustain vital health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Backed by \$30 million in Federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF), health care organizations that were ineligible for funding under the Maine Economic Recovery Grant program may apply for the new grants. These include hospitals and nursing facilities of any size, as well as congregate care, behavioral health, community service providers, and other providers with more than 250 employees.

The new grants will provide up to \$100,000 in financial relief for health care organizations that have incurred business disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. DECD will administer the grant program in coordination with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The application and FAQs are now available online: <https://www.maine.gov/decd/economic-recovery-grants>. The deadline to apply is **December 10, 2020**. Awards are expected to be distributed prior to the end of the month. The award amount will be based on demonstrated need, accounting for other sources of funding providers have accessed to offset revenue losses related to the pandemic.

#### **AHCA and CMS Produce Staff Video: Staying Safe During the Holiday Season**

In a new video for frontline long term care workers, AHCA/NCAL's chief medical officer Dr. David Gifford is joined by Dr. Shari Ling, Deputy Medical Director at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The two chat about ways staff members can help keep their residents, colleagues, family members and themselves safe during the holiday season by discussing some myths we've heard and offering the facts. Watch it here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX\\_EPNk3wqM&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX_EPNk3wqM&feature=emb_logo)

Dr. Ling and Dr. Gifford help explain why it's important to isolate for 14 days if you've been exposed to someone with COVID-19 (and why a negative test can be a false assurance). They also emphasize the importance of following CDC guidelines while out in the community. This includes avoiding large family gatherings and wearing a mask when out in public. The two geriatricians also remind staff to wear masks in all parts of the long term care facility, not just around residents. And they encourage staff members to support and remind one another should they see a colleague not wearing PPE appropriately.

Share this video with your staff and colleagues, so we can all do our part to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and keep our residents and family members safe during the holidays.

Thank you for all you do to care for your residents and staff.

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