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Dear Member:

Member Survey: Maine DHHS Proposal to Add Seasonal Flu Vaccine to Required Immunizations for HCWs

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced on Tuesday 10/06/2020 that it has proposed a rule change to make the seasonal influenza vaccine part of the immunizations required for health care workers, to protect public health during the COVID-19 pandemic and further reduce the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. In order for MHCA to advocate on behalf of its membership we ask for your participation in the following [quick survey](#). This will assist us in drafting language that best reflects members' position on this proposed rule.

Maine already requires employees of designated health care facilities to show proof of immunization or documented immunity to several diseases, including measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, and hepatitis B, unless they have a medical exemption. The proposed rule change would add influenza (flu) to this list to reduce the risk of flu among health care workers and the potential spread of flu to their patients as the state continues to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health care facilities designated under the immunization rule include hospitals, home health agencies, and licensed nursing, residential care, intermediate care, and multi-level health care facilities. As part of the proposed rule change, Maine DHHS also seeks to clarify that during public health emergencies declared by the Governor, the Department may require vaccinations and exclude individuals from the workplace, if these measures are necessary to protect public health to limit the spread of certain infectious diseases. Medical exemptions as authorized by law must be documented. Public comments on the proposed rule changes will be accepted through 5 p.m. on Friday, October 30 and may be submitted by email to bridget.bagley@maine.gov.

DHHS Launches Health Care Career Portal

Maine DHHS recognizes that challenges related to recruitment and retention of staff have intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. To help address this critical need, DHHS has launched a new health care career portal in partnership with Advancing States called <https://www.connecttocarejobs.com/#/>. This portal provides individuals looking for jobs with an easy way to connect with potential employers. The tool uses a matching algorithm to pair licensed and/or trained workers with health care and LTSS employers that need their specific skills.

There is no cost to the job seeker or the facility to use the service. In Maine, the service is available first to nursing facilities; other providers will be added in the future. Only licensed facilities can access this resource. DHHS tested the system with a small group of providers and recently reached out to every nursing facility to invite their participation.

You can learn more about how this new site works at http://www.advancingstates.org/sites/nasuad/files/Quick_Guide_to_ConnectToCare_Jobs.com_.pdf or watch this video https://youtu.be/7Pu_9Q99QDQ.

For questions about how this is rolling out in Maine, reach out directly to Joy Gould, Manager of Healthcare Workforce Development, DHHS at joy.k.gould@maine.gov. For other help, contact help@connecttocarejobs.com.

Important Reminders About Absentee Voting

When submitting absentee ballot request forms and voter registration forms, please be sure to include the unique signature of each resident for whom you are making the request. Request forms without valid voter signatures will be rejected. Each request form and registration form must be signed by the voter. In general, municipal clerks suggest it isn't a good idea to have a single person managing the entire process but rather, best practice is to have two people overseeing it. Also, if a staff member is helping a resident, they have to sign the witness box. Please share this information with your appropriate staff. Due to the demands on municipal clerks this election season, members may feel free to reach out to AARP Maine at 207-776-6304 or lparham@aarp.org for assistance.

Updated Testing Guidance from AHCA

AHCA/NCAL has updated the [FAQs](#) on Testing in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Communities. The updates include information on the Abbott BinaxNOW shipments, further clarity on CMS testing requirements, as well as a new section on discordant results. Members are encouraged to use this resource as questions on testing arise. Additional questions should be sent to COVID19@ahca.org.

HHS Updates Provider Fund Relief FAQs

The Department of Health and Human Services recently updated the [Provider Relief Fund \(PRF\) FAQs](#) with Phase 3 information. Several of the FAQs also provide helpful insights into other PRF requirements. AHCA/NCAL has developed a [summary](#) of these updates. You can also view specific updates to the HHS PRF FAQs [here](#).

The updated FAQs are lengthy. Below are highlights from the October 6 additions. Highlights discussion in the document include:

- Support for Providers Missing PRF Dollars;
- Phase 3 Methodology/Formula Overview;
- Eligibility and Receipt of Other Funding;
- VBP and PRF; and
- Infection Control & Current Staff.

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

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