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Dear Member:

MHCA Discusses Universal Testing with State Officials

Recently, MHCA staff and members met virtually with representatives of DHHS/Maine CDC to begin discussing universal testing in long term care. Nationwide, states are implementing various degrees of universal testing, some as a means of obtaining a baseline of COVID-19 presence, others as a consideration for reopening long term care facilities. **While there is no immediate plan to reopen long term care facilities in Maine**, MHCA requested the meeting to ascertain the State's position on universal testing in long term care and ensure the provider perspective is represented in ongoing discussions.

At this time, the State is committed to expanding testing in long term care facilities to obtain a baseline and prevent the entry or spread of COVID-19 among staff and residents. This commitment was bolstered by yesterday's announcement of expanded testing capacity in general at the State lab. They are referring to it as universal testing, but testing would start with staff. Any positive staff test will lead to testing all residents in the facility. We don't have a specific time frame, but it appears likely that staff testing will begin soon in the Southern counties where there has been community transmission.

DHHS asked about long term care facilities' ability to administer tests themselves, prompting an MHCA survey to its membership today. We will share the aggregate information with the State. No individual facility information will be shared. MHCA urged state officials to consider the issues of payment, staffing and the differences between nursing homes and assisted living facilities as they move forward with testing plans.

HHS Announces Enhanced Provider Portal, Relief Fund Payments for Medicaid Providers

Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced additional distributions from the Provider Relief Fund to eligible Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) providers that participate in state Medicaid and CHIP programs. HHS expects to distribute approximately \$15 billion to eligible providers that participate in state Medicaid and CHIP programs and have not received a payment from the Provider Relief Fund General Allocation.

According to the HHS press release, "Examples of providers, serving Medicaid/CHIP beneficiaries, possibly eligible for this funding include pediatricians, obstetrician-gynecologists, dentists, opioid treatment and behavioral health providers, **assisted living facilities** and other home and community-based services providers."

MHCA and AHCA are hopeful that this distribution will include our Medicaid assisted living providers, as well as **intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities**.

Tomorrow, HHS is launching an enhanced Provider Relief Fund Payment Portal that will allow eligible Medicaid and CHIP providers to report their annual patient revenue, which will be used as a factor in determining their Provider Relief Fund payment. The payment to

each provider will be at least 2 percent of reported gross revenue from patient care; the final amount each provider receives will be determined after the data is submitted, including information about the number of Medicaid patients providers serve.

To be eligible for this funding, health care providers must not have received payments from the \$50 billion Provider Relief Fund General Distribution and either have directly billed their state Medicaid/CHIP programs or Medicaid managed care plans for healthcare-related services between January 1, 2018, to May 31, 2020. More information about eligibility and the application process is available at [cares-act-provider-relief-fund/general-information](#). Read the full HHS press release here: [hhs-announces-enhanced-provider-portal-relief-fund-payments-medicaid-chip-providers](#).

Summary of Today's LTC Medical Director/Clinician Call

Maine COVID By the Numbers:

- 2606 cumulative COVID+ cases
- 100 total deaths
- 29 hospitalizations (lowest in 2 weeks)
- 7 individuals on vents
- Positivity Rate continues at ~5%, in larger communities during the height of community transmission it was up around 10-15%.

DLC Update on Infection Prevention (IP) Focused Survey: On June 1, 2020, [CMS memo QSO 20-31](#) directed state survey teams to conduct IP focused surveys at all nursing homes in the state. According to this CMS directive, these surveys must be completed by July 31st but according to Bill Montejo, DHHS Division of Licensing Director, it may take until mid-August for Maine survey teams to complete this work.

PPE use during these surveys: N-95s must/will be provided by the state *but* the facilities are responsible for providing appropriate PPE to surveyors upon arrival. Appropriate PPE is the same that is being used by the staff of the facility at the time of the survey.

Federal Surveyors: In addition to state IP focused surveys, CMS federal surveyors will also be in the state conducting surveys in Maine homes. If a facility experiences a federal survey this will replace the state teams survey.

Additional Outbreak Surveys: In addition to the baseline IP focused survey, facilities will experience an additional on-site survey within 3-5 days of an outbreak another on site survey will need to be conducted per CMS requirements. As for the definition of an outbreak, this will be based on CMS definition and guidance which will be forthcoming. Currently, the facilities will be identified for 'outbreak surveys' based on data that is self-reported in NHSN. This data is public facing and we strongly suggest that facilities check that their [publicly reported information](#) is accurate. The team from Healthcentric Advisors, the Maine based QIO has been helping get facilities enrolled and is helping troubleshoot any reporting issues for facilities. Any questions can be emailed to Danielle Hersey at dhersey@healthcentricadvisors.org.

Staff Self Swabbing: Dr. Marino of Maine Health and Susan Dionne-Jones of The Cedars shared their experience with staff conducting COVID self-swabs for universal testing. This pilot was conducted on one unit with a limit number of staff but Dr. Marino and Susan both indicated a strong sense of success with the process. Although, MHCA does not have any reference materials or FAQs to share with members currently, Dr. Marino did note that their team is working on an instructional video. The Division of Licensing weighed in that there is no regulatory concern with this practice and the CDC also suggested that based on recent testing protocol changes, this, with appropriate training and supervision may be an option for facilities moving forward. MHCA will continue to research this potential with representatives from DHHS and ME CDC.

LTC Ombudsman Program: The team at the LTC Ombudsman's office are in the process of developing educational materials specific to the impact of COVID-19 on AL and SNF residents. These materials will be shared with the group once completed.

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

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