

Governor's Office Daily COVID-19 Q & A

March 19, 2020

Medical Need

Q: How many Intensive Care Unit beds do we have in Illinois?

A: Illinois has 3,472 ICU beds. A hospital's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) is best equipped to handle the most serious COVID-19 cases.

Q: What is the total number of people who have tested positive vs. those who experienced symptoms that were mild?

A: Testing is still limited to the guidance by DPH which include the symptoms outlined [here](#) plus at least one of the 6 situational criteria. For the most up to date information on daily info on numbers, please visit: <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus>.

Equipment/Testing Kits

Q: Will there be relief from MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) regulations in an effort to preserve critical healthcare equipment (gowns, gloves, masks) during the emergency. Is this something IDPH is exploring? DPH offers the following guidelines for entities:

A: (1) Consider suspending active surveillance for MRSA until otherwise recommended by IDPH or a convened meeting of the hospital infection control committee and CMO. Recommendations of the hospital infection control committee should take into account facility MRSA infection rates, and supplies needed for COVID-19 testing and care.

(2) If screening was already done, do not isolate patients only on the basis of MRSA colonization.

(3) For patients with uncontained MRSA infections, such as wounds not contained by dressings or pneumonia, implement Contact Precautions for the duration of hospital stay. Follow CDC guidance on strategies for optimizing the supplies of PPE.

Q: Many constituents who have stockpiled masks and PPE might donate them in a shortage if asked. Has been considered if they could be picked up appropriately?

A: Constituents can contact their local health departments in regard to this matter.

Q: How many and which hospitals have testing capabilities? Who can get tested at them?

A: Hospitals throughout the state have testing kits and can administer the tests. Individuals that are not feeling well or exhibiting symptoms need to first and foremost, self-isolate and contact their primary care doctor for additional guidance. Persons that are not feeling well are advised to only enter a health

facility or hospital based on direction from their primary care doctor. Individuals that meet the following criteria are candidates to receive testing after instruction from their primary care doctor:

- Persons (may include residents or staff) who are part of a cluster of 2 or more possible or confirmed cases in a residential congregate setting that serves more vulnerable populations such as an assisted living facility, group home, homeless shelter, or correctional settings **or** hospitalized patients with unexplained pneumonia. DPH has provided updated [COVID19 testing guidelines](#).

Q: Skilled Nursing Facilities are desperately seeking guidance from IDPH as they too are in need of isolation gowns, masks and other items for residents and employees. Is this on IDPH's radar?

A: IDPH has been working with local health departments to provide these items. Additionally, the administration is working with vendors nationwide to provide additional PPE for our local health departments.

Insurance/Health Insurance:

Q: Will all Medicaid providers use mental health and therapy sessions for those that may be more at risk of mental health deterioration due to isolation? Is there a timeline for Medicaid to begin promoting these services?

A: The administration issued an Executive Order and rules to expand telehealth services in this ever-expanding crisis. By expanding access to telehealth, we can both allow people who are self-isolating to continue medical services from their home as well as free up space in hospitals and other health facilities for patients impacted by COVID-19 who require in-patient care.

Q: Will COVID-19 be covered under business disruption insurance? Will this increase unemployment insurance costs?

A: The administration shares the concerns about the impact of COVID19 on small businesses and the role insurance coverage can play in this issue.

Since we know every insurance policy is different, we urge businesses to submit a complaint on our website if they are having issues with coverage so our team can investigate on their behalf. An online complaint can be filed here: <https://mc.insurance.illinois.gov/messagecenter.nsf>.

Childcare

Q: Will daycares that do not take Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) dollars recoup costs for low attendance during the closures?

A: Additional guidance is forthcoming about relief that may be available for those child care providers. Governor Pritzker announced today that the U.S. Small Business Administration has approved the state's eligibility for disaster assistance loans for small businesses facing financial hardship in all 102 counties due to COVID-19. Eligible businesses can apply for up to \$2 million in low-interest loans

at: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov>. There are several provisions available in the federal package that is currently being considered by Congress that may be helpful to childcare providers.

Q: For those who choose not to send their children to daycare (for safety or financial reasons) should they still be required to pay for daycare?

A: The state does not regulate payment for private centers and parents may be required to continue payments. We encourage parents to have those conversations with the day care facilities. The administration is developing guidance for those centers. Please refer to [current guidelines](#) developed by DHS, ISBE and DCFS.

Education

Q: Will private non-public special education centers like Circle Academy be paid for Act God Days? Will charter school employees continue to receive pay for Act of God Days?

A: ISBE is working to find a way to make sure private special education schools continue to be paid during the statewide school closure. Charter schools are public schools so they will continue to receive pay.

Housing:

Q: Will there be additional assistance available to residents for their utility bills?

A: Utility companies have agreed to a moratorium on electricity and gas shutoffs so that they can continue providing services to families during this time. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is also directing utilities to suspend the imposition of late payment fees or penalties and implement temporary flexible credit and collections procedures until the Governor announces the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency. The Governor is committed to ensuring that customers remain connected to essential utility services until the emergency status ends.

Small Business Administration (SBA): Disaster Loan Assistance/ Short-Term Sales Tax Relief

Q: Where can eligible businesses apply for the SBA low-interest loan?

A: Eligible businesses can apply for up to \$2 million in low-interest loans at: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov>

Q: What expenses does the SBA low-interest loan cover?

A: The loan can provide relief to Illinois small businesses struggling to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable, or other bills.

Q: Where can applicants go for assistance to apply for the SBA low-interest loan?

A: Illinois Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) are available to assist small businesses with the loan application process and are currently operating remotely. Businesses can locate their nearest Small Business Development Center [here](#).

Q: Who can qualify for the Short-Term Sales Tax Relief?

A: The Department of Revenue released the following Bulletin with information [here](#).

Executive Order 2020-7: Business Compliance

Q: Will an allowance for carryout service from restaurants be put forth?

A: Yes, the Illinois Restaurant Association is working with entities to ensure their kitchens are equipped to provide carry-out services.

Q: How do we address a situation where an employee doesn't feel safe working?

A: Employees should take the recommended precautions outlined by the CDC which can be found [here](#). Employees are being sent home if they show symptoms or are sick. They will continue to receive pay during that time.

Executive Order 2020-7: Unemployment Benefits/Business Insurance

Q: The IDES Phone line is ringing busy and the website is failing to load for many people. Is there an additional line of communication that people can use to file claims?

A: IDES is working on the website and recently hired new employees to address this issue.

Q: Are immunocompromised individuals who are unpaid leave covered financially in any way?

A: The answer depends on the circumstances of their separation and each case will be very fact dependent, but in general, if the employer discharged the person, the employee could be eligible unless the employee was discharged for misconduct as defined by the Unemployment Insurance Act; whereas if the employee quits, they likely would not be eligible because their resignation would have been voluntary and not attributable to the employer. Of course, the situation might change depending on the facts. For example, if the individual was told by a doctor they were required to stay home, the individual's resignation in that case might not have been voluntary, so they might be eligible.

Q: Where should unemployed individuals seek assistance?

A: The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) recommends individuals who have been separated from their employment through no fault of their own or circumstances related to COVID-19

to file for unemployment insurance benefits through the department at www.ides.illinois.gov. Filing online is the best option as it leaves call-center employees open to answer specific unemployment question. If someone has a question or cannot file online, they can call the Claimant Services at (800) 244-5631.

Q: When doing Unemployment benefits can it be structured with the least impact to the employer?

A: IDES is working with the Governor's Office on state legislation to address this issue.

Q: Will unemployment benefits cover the 1st week of unemployment? Will an applicant have to wait 7 days to apply?

A: Per Executive Order 2020-7 issued by the Governor, the mandatory 7-day waiting period has been waived and will be covered under the State's unemployment insurance program.

Q: Do part time workers qualify for Unemployment Benefits?

A: When someone files, their weekly benefit amount is determined using a formula taking into consideration their base period wages. If someone is still working when they file, we have to determine how much they earned in a week. If the individual earned more than their weekly benefit amount in a week, they are not unemployed, so they are not eligible. If the individual earned some wages for part-time work, but the wages were less than their weekly benefit amount, they are eligible for benefits but some of those wages will offset their weekly benefit amount.

Q: What is the estimated timeline for an individual to receive unemployment benefits?

A: Generally speaking, when a claimant files for benefits they get a certification day set approximately two weeks later. Once they certify on their assigned date, they receive payment via debit card or direct deposit 2-3 days later.

Q: Is there any sense of new guidance including increased resources for displaced workers?

A: The administration is working with the federal government for additional unemployment assistance. We plan to provide more information on this once it is available.

Public Safety/Corrections

Q : What measures are in place to protect inmates and staff at IDOC?

A: To prevent the potential for COVID-19 (coronavirus) exposure, the Illinois Department of Corrections, after consultation with the Illinois Department of Public Health, temporarily suspended all visits on March 14 until further notice. We recognize the importance of visitation as an essential component of

rehabilitation, family connection and quality of life for those in our care. Our top priority is the health and safety of those who live and work in our facilities, and we are hopeful this policy change will be short-lived. The Department is expanding opportunities for video visits and phone calls. In addition to expanding opportunities for video visits and calls, the Department is providing all people in custody with funds for two 20-minute phone calls and one 15-minute video visit. We also encourage families to write to their incarcerated loved ones as often as possible. Attorneys are still permitted to visit IDOC facilities, but will be screened upon arrival.

The Department has not identified any positive cases of coronavirus, but is taking a number of preventative measures, including:

- The Department modified its Pandemic Influenza and Continuity of Operations plans.
- Hand sanitizer, antibacterial soap, and cleaning supplies are being made available to all staff and incarcerated individuals. We are closely monitoring our supply levels at each facility and are in close communication with our vendors to maintain adequate inventory.
- All staff are having their temperatures checked at arrival to their correctional facility.
- All interagency transports have been suspended with the exception of court writs, medical and mental health appointments, and emergency transfers.
- Educational and Clinical Services programming is being conducted in groups of 10 or less.
- The Department has developed a Normalcy Task Force to ensure facility operations remain as normal as possible for as long as possible.
- During the intake process, all individuals, including parole violators, are being screened by medical personnel and quarantined for 96 hours.
- All correctional facilities and transport vehicles are being routinely cleaned and disinfected.
- Staff and incarcerated individuals are being encouraged to practice good health habits, including hand-washing.
- We are communicating regularly with staff and people in custody to ensure they feel safe.

The Department continues to work closely with the Illinois Department of Public Health and Illinois Emergency Management Agency to ensure we are following all guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control. We will continue to monitor this fluid situation and adjust our procedures as necessary.

Other

Q: Will DHS employees continue to work, especially on critical functions?

A: State agencies have reviewed personnel and required “essential employees” to come into the office to continue critical agency functions.

Q: Are there any updates on temporary suspension of requirements related to Open Meetings Act so local government can do business without violating social distancing guidelines?

A: This was addressed in the Executive Order signed on March 16th which waives the in-person meeting requirements and allows for usage of technology as a substitute. Additional guidance regarding the

Open Meetings Act can also be found in the guidelines provided by the Attorney General's Office that can be found here http://foia.ilattorneygeneral.net/pdf/OMA_FOIA_Guide.pdf

Q: What parameters were used to determine the March 30th date as it pertains to school closures and business restrictions? How will they decide to move that date to a later one?

A: We follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and will continue internal dialogue on next steps.

Q: Is the governor going to address all internet carriers about suspending the data cap like AT&T did?

A: AT&T is providing unlimited home internet which can be found [here](#). There's also an FCC pledge to encourage carriers to keep service active, and other carriers are following suit with AT&T which can be found using these two links: 1. <https://www.androidpolice.com/2020/03/16/covid-19-coronavirus-carriers-late-fees/> and 2. <https://www.verizon.com/about/news/our-response-coronavirus>.