

April 2020



Dear Stakeholders,

IDHS has to strike a delicate balance in protecting staff, residents, patients, and customers and providing our residents with the care and services they need, as our work requires human connection. We have a multi-faceted plan in motion tailored to each type of settings under our purview that factors in our state's access to PPE and other supplies.

The Governor has shared every day that the State is grappling with the nationwide shortage of PPE. We don't have enough for our staff and facilities, and our community providers don't have enough for theirs. Please know, that we're working with the Governor and with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) to overcome this to get as much PPE as possible.

Nevertheless, we know every positive case is agonizing for families and for our staff, and we will continue to be as responsive and transparent as possible with everyone involved. I so grateful to the members and the leaders of AFSCME and the Illinois Nurses Association, who have been working in good faith throughout this crisis with IDHS to ensure the safety of everyone who works or lives in our facilities.

When the crisis hit, IDHS created an infection control team that guides and advises all of our efforts and in every setting. With this team and guidance from the CDC, IDPH, and IEMA – we have used science and data to influence our actions.

Our 24/7 facilities – seven psychiatric hospitals and seven developmental centers - across the state serve about 3,400 people with about 6,500 staff. Starting March 12th, 13 days before our first case in our state operated facilities:

- We initiated health screenings (including temperature checks) for all staff at every shift change, sending staff home for fever or any other COVID symptoms.
- We halted non-essential visits to our facilities.
- All group activities or community off campus outings were cancelled.
- All residents' vitals were taken on the AM shift and PM shift.
- Staff were continually trained regarding sanitation and handwashing.
- We provided PPE, following the guidance and approvals of IDPH.
- We implemented enhanced cleaning on frequently touched surfaces, such as doors, handrails, and light switches.
- Individuals who exhibited signs and symptoms of COVID-19 were placed in isolation.

In addition to meticulous tracking of our residents, we are tracking every day – the use of PPE supplies and what is available down to the individual piece at all of our facilities.

We try to do all of this with compassion and care, keeping the health, safety, service, and care of our residents, patients, customers, and staff—and maintaining the delicate balance of the same-- as our highest priority.

Sincerely,
Grace

Grace B. Hou
Secretary, IDHS

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