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Change Healthcare: Temporary Funding Assistance Available

Change Healthcare announced the establishment of a ["Temporary Funding Assistance Program" webpage](#) and is standing up a new instance of its Rx ePrescribing service for customers impacted by the ongoing cyberattack on Change Healthcare. The temporary funding assistance support program is intended for provider organizations impacted by the payer system outage to help with short-term cash flow needs. More details can be found at the webpage. *Please note, IHA has not evaluated the terms of the temporary funding program and is providing this information to IHA members for informational purposes only.*

Change Healthcare, a healthcare technology company that is part of Optum and owned by UnitedHealth Group, [announced](#) Feb. 21 it was experiencing a cyberattack. It has been confirmed that the attack was perpetrated by threat actor ALPHV Blackcat. [Click here](#) to access the American Hospital Association's (AHA) webpage with advisories and situational updates related to the cyberattack.

Today, AHA sent a [letter](#) to congressional leaders that, among other requests, urged lawmakers to press the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services "for bold, swift action to prevent further fallout and to ensure a complete and fulsome response from UnitedHealth Group." AHA is encouraging hospitals to reach out to their Congressional leaders to advocate for additional support and resources to hospitals and providers so that they can continue fulfilling their mission of caring for patients and communities.

Poison Prevention Month Aims to Prevent Poisoning Risks in Illinois

March is Illinois Poison Prevention Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about poisoning hazards and risks, especially for children.

The Illinois Poison Center (IPC), which is located in Chicago, is the oldest poison center in the country and dedicated to reducing harm due to poisoning. In 2023, IPC handled more than 72,000 cases through the IPC helpline (1-800-222-1222) involving potentially harmful substances, ranging from minor to severe. Poisonings can occur after exposure to medication, vitamins/supplements, plants, household chemicals, automotive products, insect stings, animal bites, lead, carbon monoxide, etc.

Each year, poison centers across the U.S. manage more than 2 million cases about poisoning exposure. Of those cases, almost half involve children 5 years old and younger.

IPC's toxicology specialists, who serve people speaking most all languages, resolve over 90% of poison exposure cases over the phone. IPC staff serve as toxicology consultants to Illinois healthcare professionals, whose inquiries represent nearly one-third of annual poisoning cases. Calls to the IPC helpline (1-800-222-1222) are free and confidential. IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays.

National Poison Prevention Week (NPPW) is March 17-23, which also raises awareness about poison dangers and provides education to the public on ways to further protect themselves and their loved ones. For more information about NPPW or to access marketing tools and resources, [click here](#).

For more information about the Illinois Poison Center, [click here](#). To access IPC resources, including educational tools and associated materials, [click here](#).

Presentation: Telemedicine in Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Illinois is among the nation's top 10 states with the highest percentage of rural hospitals that do not offer labor and delivery services. The Illinois Extension's Rural Development Series will explore this trend and discuss how telemedicine is expanding to address the demand for high-risk obstetrical care.

[Click here](#) to register for the program this Thursday, March 7, "Telemedicine in Maternal-Fetal Medicine: Improving Maternal Care throughout Central and Southern Illinois," which will be led by Robert M. Abrams, MD, MBA, Director of Obstetrics for the South-Central Illinois Perinatal Center and Executive Director and Professor of Maternal-Fetal Medicine at SIU School of Medicine. Dr. Abrams will highlight the regionalization of prenatal care in Illinois and the ways telemedicine helps bridge the distance gap for these women. The program will cover:

- The challenges of providing high-risk obstetrical care throughout the South-Central Illinois Perinatal Network;
- A review of how SIU Center for Maternal-Fetal Medicine has expanded its program through the use of telemedicine; and
- Acknowledgement of the many benefits of telemedicine in providing high-risk obstetrical care.

All participants will receive a follow-up email with links to materials, including the online recording of this webinar.

Spring Session Update

The Illinois House and Senate will return to Springfield tomorrow, March 5, with the House of Representatives scheduled through Thursday, March 7, and the Senate scheduled through Friday, March 8. It is expected to be a busy committee week due to an upcoming March 15 Senate deadline for substantive Senate bills out of committee. The House committee deadline is April 5. Full House and Senate committee schedules can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Click to view the [House](#) and [Senate](#) calendars.

COVID-19 Information

The Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) has launched a weekly [Infectious Respiratory Disease Surveillance Dashboard](#) that will be updated weekly on Friday. This report provides the public with the latest data on hospital visits, seasonal trends, lab test positivity and demographic data.

[Click here](#) to visit the IDPH COVID-19 resources webpage. IDPH will continue to report the weekly number of people with COVID-19 admitted to hospitals from emergency departments, deaths and vaccinations, with COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus information also reported through the dashboard of the [Illinois Wastewater Surveillance System](#).

Briefly Noted

The first birth control pill approved for over-the-counter use in the U.S. will be available in March in stores and online, CNN [reported](#). The suggested retail price of Opill is \$19.99 for a one-month supply and \$49.99 for a three-month supply, according to the manufacturer. CNN confirmed that Walgreens and CVS have said they will sell the product.

Leading the News

Illinois is adopting new COVID guidelines. Here's what you should know

The State Journal-Register [reports](#) (3/1), "The state of Illinois will be adopting new federal guidelines on the COVID-19 virus that will allow people to return to normal activities if their symptoms improve within 24 hours."

Health-care hack spreads pain across hospitals and doctors nationwide

The Washington Post [reports](#) (3/3), “The fallout from the hack of a little-known but pivotal health-care company is inflicting pain on hospitals, doctor offices, pharmacies and millions of patients across the nation, with government and industry officials calling it one of the most serious attacks on the health-care system in U.S. history.”

33 statistics on hospital profitability

Becker's Hospital Review [reports](#) (3/1), “The average operating margin for hospitals in January was 5.1%, down 11% from December, according to the Kaufman Hall National Hospital Flash Report.”

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