

**IN THIS ISSUE**

Governor Declares New Public Health Emergency, Indoor Mask Requirement..... 1

WHA Launches New COVID-19 Smart Behaviors PSA ..... 1

WHA Urges Congress to Boost Financial Relief to Hospitals, Include Health Care Priorities in Upcoming COVID Package ..... 2

HHS Announces New “Hot Spot” Payments, Including \$79 Million for WI Hospitals..... 2

Member Quality Spotlight: Ascension Wisconsin ..... 3

**EDUCATIONAL EVENTS**

**August 6, 2020**  
*Post-acute transitions in a pandemic: How COVID-19 disrupts hospital discharge strategy*  
 Webinar

**August 10, 2020**  
*Understanding How Overnight Telehealth Hospitalists are Improving Satisfaction and Generating Revenue in Critical Access Hospitals*  
 Webinar

**August 18, 2020**  
*HHS Begins Clarifying Reporting Requirements for Provider Relief Funds*  
 Webinar

**Governor Declares New Public Health Emergency, Indoor Mask Requirement**

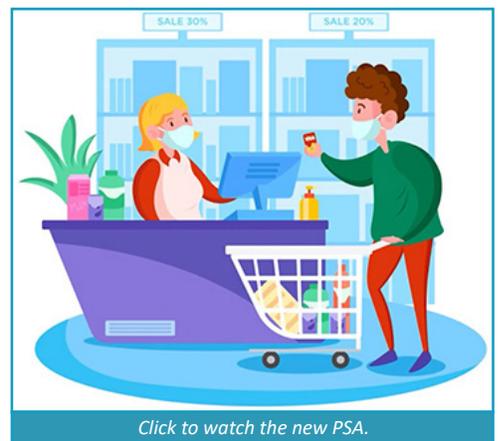
Citing a significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases this month, Governor Tony Evers today declared a new statewide public health emergency, which stays in effect for the next 60 days unless revoked by the Governor or by a joint resolution of the Wisconsin State Legislature. The action is [Executive Order #82](#). The declaration triggers certain state statutes granting the Governor special authority to issue orders that help protect the public.

The Governor simultaneously announced the first action under that authority: [a statewide face coverings order](#) that will take effect on August 1 and last until September 28, 2020. The order, with certain exceptions, requires all individuals age five or older to wear a face covering when indoors or in an enclosed space, which the order defines as including outdoor bars and restaurants, public transit and taxis and outdoor park structures. The order notes that the statewide action supersedes any local face coverings order that is less restrictive. The order also discourages individuals from using N95 masks “and other medical grade supplies” as face coverings, so that limited supplies of important personal protective equipment can be conserved.

“For weeks now, WHA and a host of other organizations have been urging the public to wash hands, maintain social distancing and wear a mask when appropriate to help stop the spread of COVID-19,” WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding said. “We continue to urge the public to embrace these strategies.”

**WHA Launches New COVID-19 Smart Behaviors PSA**

Continuing with efforts to help educate the public on behaviors that can help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin, WHA launched a new digital public service announcement (PSA) on its social media platforms July 27. The animated and closed-captioned video highlights three areas where public behavior can make a difference: wearing a mask when appropriate, washing hands regularly and maintaining smart social distancing.



*Click to watch the new PSA.*

You can view the PSA [here](#). All members are encouraged to further spread the message by sharing from WHA’s [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) pages.

“The public embracing these three behaviors can make a difference in how COVID-19 spreads in Wisconsin,” WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding said. “We’re pleased that WHA has been able to play a key role in encouraging the public to be proactive as a way to not only protect everyone’s health, but also to help our state’s economy get through the pandemic.”

*(continued on page 2)*

*(WHA Launches New COVID-19 Smart Behaviors PSA . . . continued from page 1)*

The animated PSA is the fifth in a series that WHA has produced and promoted since COVID-19 began to affect the United States. Other spots include a [television PSA](#) currently airing statewide through August 2, and another statewide spot featuring former Governor and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary [Tommy Thompson](#).

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## WHA Urges Congress to Boost Financial Relief to Hospitals, Include Health Care Priorities in Upcoming COVID Package

In a July 29 [letter](#) to Wisconsin's congressional delegation, WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding urged Wisconsin's federal lawmakers to push for Wisconsin health care priorities to be included in the COVID package being negotiated between the U.S. House and Senate.

While the U.S. House passed a \$3 trillion COVID relief package in May – the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions, or HEROES Act – the U.S. Senate waited until earlier this week to introduce a \$1 trillion COVID relief package, the HEALS (Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools) Act. With the two houses far apart on the total level of spending, it is unclear how long it might take for a compromise package to develop that both chambers can approve.

WHA outlined a number of priorities important to keeping Wisconsin's health care system strong throughout this pandemic, chief among them being needed financial relief for Wisconsin hospitals and health systems. Of the \$115 billion allocated nationally to health care providers from the federal Provider Relief fund, Wisconsin hospitals and health systems appear to have received only about \$1 billion thus far, despite collectively experiencing more than \$2.5 billion in lost revenue due to COVID. WHA is calling on Congress to appropriate an additional \$100 billion, with particular consideration being given to hospitals that have "fallen through the cracks," according to the letter, as they have yet to receive any special distributions such as "hot spot" or rural funding that were targets of previous federal disbursements.

Borgerding also called on federal lawmakers to increase the federal matching rate (FMAP) for the state's Medicaid program, noting that 90,000 Wisconsinites have joined BadgerCare since the start of the pandemic, and about 230,000 total are expected to join by this time next year.

"Wisconsin hospitals and health systems will face a significant decrease in reimbursement as more people switch from commercial insurance to Medicaid, which pays only about 67% of the cost to provide services in Wisconsin," Borgerding noted, while adding that the additional federal funding will help ensure states like Wisconsin have the resources needed to keep Medicaid fully funded during a time where the health care system is needed more than ever. "The prospect of further provider cuts from the state as it deals with budgetary pressures would create significant stresses on the health care system," Borgerding said.

In addition to financial relief, Borgerding noted the positive gains health care has made in expanding telehealth services during COVID. [WHA is supporting the Protecting Access to Post-COVID-19 Telehealth Act of 2020](#), which has been introduced by a bipartisan coalition of federal lawmakers and would permanently extend many of the expanded telehealth options under Medicare. Borgerding called on Wisconsin's delegation to push for adding this legislation to the COVID relief package. "Put simply, patients will not want to go back in time to the days when telehealth wasn't an option for many of the services they have the convenience of receiving via telehealth today," Borgerding said.

WHA activated its HEAT network of grassroots hospital leaders and advocates urging them to contact their federal lawmakers in support of these and other priorities laid out in the letter, such as more support for behavioral health care, fair treatment for critical access hospitals that received Paycheck Protection Program loans, and a temporary pause of federal rules that contain cuts to hospitals or add to hospitals regulatory burden. WHA will continue to advocate for these priorities with federal lawmakers as negotiations continue between the House and Senate. For more information, contact WHA Director of Federal and State Relations [Jon Hoelster](#).



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## HHS Announces New "Hot Spot" Payments, Including \$79 Million for WI Hospitals

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on July 17 announced details of how the second round of COVID-19 high-impact or "hot spot" hospital payments would be distributed.

HHS released a [breakdown](#) showing nearly 1,000 hospitals across the country would receive a total of over \$8.5 billion, and HHS has said as much as \$10 billion may be distributed. Twelve Wisconsin hospitals will qualify for a total of \$79 million in relief. Wisconsin fared much better under this round than it did under the [first "hot spot" round](#) where only two Wisconsin hospitals were eligible.

