



# Fall 2022 Virology Newsletter

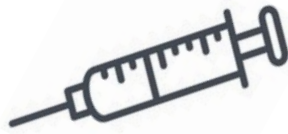
## Get Your Flu Shot!

As the season changes for the colder, it is important to get your flu vaccination to protect yourself and others from serious complications from influenza.

To schedule your annual flu vaccination at UIHC, please visit,

[uihc.org/flu-shot](http://uihc.org/flu-shot)

more information on page 3



Inside this Edition of the University of Iowa Virology Newsletter:

Vaccinations for PLWH

COVID and Flu Information

What is LIHEAP?

Iowa Homeowner Assistance Fund

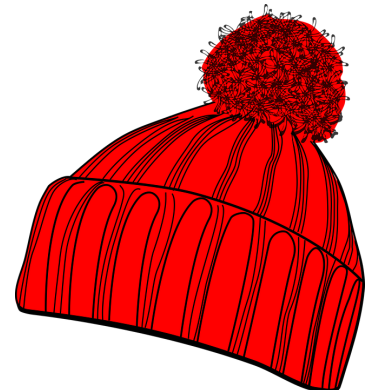
HOPWA and CLEAR

Open enrollment and ADAP updates

New Contact Information

## Taking Care of Your Health During Fall and Winter

1. Practice good hand hygiene. Influenza, cold, and SARS-CoV-2 viruses live longer in the cold.
2. Stay active. Exercise is good for your overall health and can improve immune function.
3. Mind your mental health. Talk to your health care provider about any symptoms of seasonal depression and ways to cope with them.
4. Take precautions when going outdoors in extreme weather. Prioritize minimizing exposed skin when there is a frostbite advisory. If you are having trouble acquiring proper winter clothes, talk to a social worker at your next appointment.



# Vaccinations for People Living With HIV

Laura Stulken, PA-C

Did you know that vaccinations against influenza, COVID-19 and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) are especially important for people living with HIV (PLWH)?

## Here's why:

- **Flu:** PLWH can have higher risk of flu infection and severe complications of flu, including pneumonias, longer hospital stays, and death. PLWH can have more risk of getting a bacterial lung infection on top of flu.
- **COVID-19:** PLWH are at higher risk of COVID-19 infection and its serious complications (hospitalization, needing a ventilator to breathe for them, and death). PLWH are 38% more likely to die in the hospital from COVID-19!
- **HPV:** HPV is a very common sexually transmitted infection. PLWH have higher rates of HPV infection and are at higher risk of oral, anal, and cervical cancers and precancers. Men who have sex with men (MSM) with HIV have especially high rates of HPV, up to 87-98%. The risk of anal cancer in MSM with HIV is 80x higher than men without HIV. Women living with HIV have 6x the risk of cervical cancer than women without HIV.
- In all three cases, the risks are greater when someone has low CD4 counts, high viral load, and/or is not taking HIV medications.

## A little about the vaccines:

- **Flu:** Flu shots are safe and effective in PLWH. They prevent infections in PLWH, as well as pneumonias and death from flu. Flu shots cannot give you flu because they do not contain any living pieces of the flu virus. We need an updated flu shot every year because the virus is constantly evolving, and the flu this year is not exactly the same as it was last year.
- **COVID-19:** The COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of infection and risk of severe illness and death from COVID. They are effective in PLWH; however, people with low CD4 counts or who aren't taking HIV medications may need more doses. Some people (but not everyone) get side effects from the vaccines, which usually go away within a few days. The vaccines do not contain live virus pieces in them, so you cannot get COVID-19 infection from them. Booster vaccines are important because PLWH are at increased risk of breakthrough infection. The number of vaccine doses you need depends on which type of vaccine you get, your age, CD4, and whether you take HIV medications.
- **HPV:** HPV vaccines can prevent genital warts and cancers caused by HPV infection. The vaccine series is 3 doses, given over 6-12 months. The vaccine is recommended for everyone up to age 26, but is also recommended for certain people with risk factors up to age 45. If you are over age 46 and are interested in the vaccine, please ask your provider about it.

A lot of patients have indicated they want more information about these vaccinations, particularly HPV. If you have any questions or concerns about the vaccines, please ask us! We would love to help you decide if these vaccinations are right for you.

## Influenza and COVID-19

It is difficult to distinguish between flu symptoms and symptoms of COVID-19. If you have respiratory symptoms and a fever, you are likely to be tested for both.

Symptoms of COVID-19 and the flu:

- high fever >101F
- cough
- sore throat
- muscle or body aches
- fatigue and tiredness
- headaches
- runny or stuffy nose

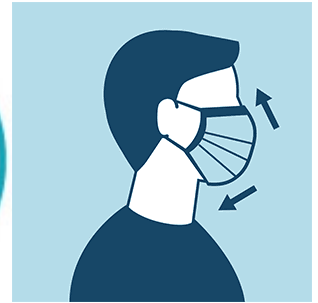
The elderly and the immunosuppressed are at greater risk of complications and hospitalizations from influenza and from COVID-19. Receiving the immunizations is voluntary; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers people living with HIV to be at higher risk for influenza and COVID-related issues and highly recommends vaccination against both.

Where can I get vaccinated?

Medicine Specialty Clinic: Call (319) 356-8133 to schedule an appointment.

Family Medicine Clinic: UIHC main campus and various locations; Walk in appointments welcome.

Please call Program Nurse, Tracy Peters, at (319) 335-7605 if you have questions about vaccinations or side effects.



Influenza can remain infective in the human body for a week. Outside the body in colder environments, the virus can remain infective for longer. Contact with saliva, nasal secretions, feces, and blood from an infected person can transmit the virus.

### Preventing Illness

- getting the flu and COVID vaccines is the most effective way to prevent serious illness and to protect others
- wear a mask when contacting other if you are feeling sick
- wash your hands often and keep your environment clean

COVID boosters are available and recommended. These may be administered at the same time as your flu vaccine if you wish.

If you are diagnosed with COVID please seek care early in the infection, the medications that we use for treatment are best if taken within the first five days of COVID symptoms. These drugs can interfere with your current antivirals so please check with your provider/ pharmacist before taking them.

**Those living with HIV should not receive live attenuated (weakened) virus vaccines such as the flu mist.**

## LIHEAP (Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program)

The LIHEAP program offers financial assistance to offset high winter utility costs for those households under 200% of the federal poverty level (\$25,760 annually for a household of one). This program is available to both homeowners and renters who pay heating costs. If approved, payments are made as a lump sum directly to your utility company. For homeowners, weatherization assistance to make your home more energy efficient may also be available. LIHEAP begins accepting applications on November 1, or October 1 for households with members who are over 60 or disabled.



Apply for LIHEAP at your local community action agency:  
Johnson County: HACAP, 319-337-5765  
Linn County: HACAP, 319-366-7632

For other counties, use this website or contact Malory (319-356-1545) for assistance  
<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply>



IOWA FINANCE AUTHORITY

### Iowa Homeowner Assistance Fund

Did you experience financial hardship that put you at risk of foreclosure on your home after the COVID-19 pandemic? The Iowa Homeowner Assistance Fund may be able to support you financially with mortgages payments, property taxes, homeowner's insurance, HOA fees, and manufactured home lot rent if you purchased your home under a legally recorded contract or those who own manufactured homes.

Applicants must:

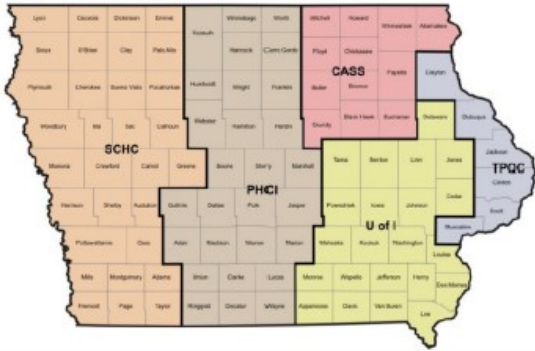
- be income qualified (varies by county, see website)  
[www.iowafinance.com/content/uploads/2022/05/HAF-IncomeLimits.pdf](http://www.iowafinance.com/content/uploads/2022/05/HAF-IncomeLimits.pdf)
- be 30 or more days behind on mortgage, contract sale, or home associated taxes.
- Be able to demonstrate financial hardship after Jan 21, 2020
- own property in Iowa and it must be their primary residence

For more information, please visit the Iowa Homeowner Assistance Fund website at <https://www.iowafinance.com/ihaf/> or call (888) 668-0927.

If you have questions or would like help applying, please contact your case manager or Jennifer Keeler at (319) 467-5662.

## Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA)

Having trouble maintaining your housing due to an emergent situation such as job loss or illness? You may be eligible for HOPWA assistance. Please contact the HOPWA provider in your area to see if assistance is available. Income limits vary by county. If you live in the U of I area you may qualify for services such as Long-Term Rental Assistance (TBRA), Short-Term Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Assistance (STRMU), and Permanent Housing Placement Services (PHP) which can provide you deposit and/or first month's rent.



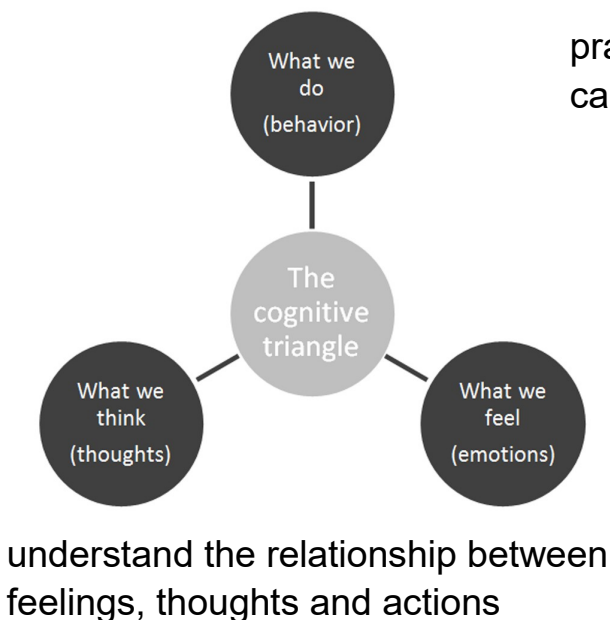
If you live in the U of I area and would like to apply for HOPWA, contact Jennifer at (319) 467-5662 or [jennifer-keeler@uiowa.edu](mailto:jennifer-keeler@uiowa.edu)

If you receive case management services, you may also contact your case manager to discuss your situation.

## Choosing Life, Empowerment, Action and Results

The CLEAR program is open to persons living with HIV who are interested in increasing or enhancing behaviors that promote healthy living, practicing ways to effectively face challenges of daily living, increasing positive thoughts, feelings, and actions as well as developing daily routines to stay healthy. Participation in CLEAR will involve at least 6 one-hour weekly sessions with a trained CLEAR counselor.

To learn more about the enrollment process for CLEAR please call Daniel Czachura at 319-383-3621 or Kari Vrban at 319-367-5655.



practice talking to health care providers



learn coping strategies



## Insurance Updates

As some of you may know, UIHC has not had a dedicated field benefits specialist (FBS) since January. As we continue to recruit for this role, please know our team remains committed to finding answers to your insurance questions. Please contact your case manager or interim FBS Malory Dreasler (319-356-1545) if you have a question or a concern. We encourage you to reach out as you approach your 65 birthday if you plan to transition to Medicare, or any time you have a change or lapse in insurance coverage. Please remember that we have resources to help with Medicare and private insurance costs for those who qualify—we want you to have the best possible coverage!

**Medicare Part D Open Enrollment:** Medicare Part D Open Enrollment runs from October 15 through December 8. During this time, you have the opportunity to review your Medicare Part D coverage and switch to a different plan. You will want to confirm that all your medications and your preferred pharmacy is still covered on your plan, and that your plan has the lowest possible cost. Please contact your case manager or Malory to complete a plan comparison. Please note that UIHC currently does not have a permanent FBS, so UIHC clients are being referred to their local SHIIP office for assistance. See <https://shiip.iowa.gov/find-a-shiip-counselor> to find a SHIIP counselor in your community.

**Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment:** Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment runs from January 1-March 31, 2023. If you are currently enrolled in Medicare Advantage, you can change plans or switch back to traditional Medicare during this time.

**ASI Open Enrollment:** ADAP sponsored insurance will have open enrollment in November and December of 2022. We will have more specific details when the final plan selections are announced by the ADAP office. Please stay in communication with your case manager during these months to be sure that we're able to complete your insurance enrollment within program deadlines.



**Medicaid/Public Health Emergency Updates:** Since March 2020, Iowa Medicaid has been operating under federal public health emergency guidelines, which required that premiums not be charged for services and individuals eligible for Medicaid during this timeframe not be terminated even if their income changed. As a result, many individuals have maintained Medicaid/Iowa Wellness coverage despite having an income level over program guidelines. The end date of the public health emergency has not yet been announced, but may occur as early as January 2023. When the public health emergency ends, each Medicaid recipient will be required to recertify their eligibility by providing income documentation. If they are over income, their coverage will be terminated at that time. If you receive a Medicaid termination notice and/or know your coverage will be terminated at the end of the public health emergency, please work with your case manager or FBS to ensure you have access to other insurance options.

**CAUTION!** Hear about a Medicare or Medicare Advantage plan that sounds too good to be true? It probably is! We encourage you not to change your Medicare coverage without talking to a certified SHIIP counselor and/or your case manager. Many plans that are advertised on television or in the mail may not provide the coverage you need for your care and medication. Take the time to consult with someone you trust to be sure that a change would be beneficial for you.

# Reminders for Clients for Continuity of Case Management

**Social Security** has announced that individuals that receive benefits through Social Security- SSI, SSDI, and SS retirement- will receive an 8.7% increase in 2023. If you work with a case manager, it will be important for you to get a copy of your 2023 Social Security Benefits letter to your case manager as soon as possible. You send this via text, email, mail, or bring your letter with you to your next appointment.

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$13,590
2	\$18,310
3	\$23,030
4	\$27,750
5	\$32,470
6	\$37,190
7	\$41,910
8	\$46,630

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,720 for each additional person.

**Federal Poverty Level Change:** On September 14, 2022, Iowa's Ryan White Part B program and ADAP income guidelines increased to 500% of the federal poverty level, or \$67,950 annually

## Questions about your Case Management?

If your income or household situation has changed, please contact your case manager to ensure that you are still eligible for services. Please see contact section, page 8.

## HIV Advocacy

Case Managers Malory Dreasler and Kari Vrban were invited to present at the Iowa Health Care Association's (IHCA) Convention & Trade Show at the Marriott Hotel in Downtown Des Moines on Wednesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. The IHCA is an association that provides leadership, advocacy, resources, and education to long-term nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, senior living communities, and home health agencies. The goal of the presentation was to provide education, reduce stigma, and highlight resources available for folks living with HIV. Malory and Kari hope that by addressing barriers that individuals living with HIV face as they plan for their future, it will provide long-term care facilities with the support and resources they may need to care for our patients. The presentation was two hours long and the participants were engaged and had many questions! Malory and Kari feel it was an overall success and were happy to be asked to return next year to continue to provide this essential education.



## Welcome new case manager, Azzah!

Start date: October 31st!

Azzah Nasraddin (she/her/hers) is a recent graduate with her masters in social work and public health from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis. In her free time, Azzah loves to travel, take long walks, garden, read books & hang out with loved ones. She is passionate about HIV harm reduction and advocacy, and is super excited to join the HIV clinic team!



### Contact Us:

To schedule a clinic appointment at UIHC, call **319-356-8133** and for Cedar Falls Outreach, call **319-356-8133**.

For lab results or health related questions, please call Tracy Peters, LPN at **319-335-7605**.

For refill requests, have your pharmacy fax a request to **319-356-3004** or contact the Infectious Disease refill line at **319-356-8133**.

For insurance questions, contact Malory Dreasler at **319-356-1545** until new hire determined.

If you have a medical emergency during the 8am-5pm work day, please try contacting Tracy Peters, LPN at **319-335-7605** or your provider. If Tracy and your provider are unavailable, you may call the hospital operator at **319-356-1616** and ask for the Infectious Disease doctor on call.

For medication questions, contact Dena Dillon at **319-541-0335**.

Sub-contracted Ryan White case management services are also offered at River Hills Community Health Center in Ottumwa at **319-800-5561**.

Social work questions and concerns should be directed to:

**Malory Dreasler** at **319-356-1545** or **319-359-9181**

**Lisa Dye** at **319-335-7309** or **319-383-6563** (\*maternity leave until 11/28/22)

**Viri Estudillo Gil** at **319-353-8951** or **319-930-9829**

**Jennifer Keeler** at **319-467-5662** or **319-499-7963**

**Tricia Kroll** at **319-384-7307** or **319-383-1759**

**Kari Vrban** at **319-467-5655** or **319-471-2123**

If you have questions or would like more information about our HIV program, please contact **Tricia Kroll** at 319-384-7307. For budgetary and contractual items, please contact **Rina Chaudhary** at 319-335-7437