



Virology Newsletter

Spring 2021

Coronavirus, 1 Year Later: How The Pandemic Has Changed Us

In some ways it seems like the pandemic has been going on forever and in others, this time seems to have flown by quickly. While COVID isn't ending anytime soon, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on this past year since it has certainly been a time that has challenged us all in some way.

First we'd like to pause and recognize those who have lost something- a loved one, a job, a home, or even a sense of safety or connectedness.

We recognize that everyone is experiencing this from a different perspective. Some are fearful for their health, others are experiencing financial strains. For some this time may be reminiscent of the 1980's AIDS crisis. All of us have probably experienced change of some sort which alone can be challenging.

We'd also like to recognize our staff. Our program has attempted to balance many of these issues personally while maintaining the safety of our patients along with continuing to provide excellent care and support. We've had to be creative and flexible at times but overall, we've been able to make it work.

As many of you have experienced, the hospital is also a different place. From screening lines, limited visitor access, and masking, your appointments here don't look the same. We thank you for your patience and flexibility and hope that some changes, like telemedicine, will improve how we can serve you in the future.

And now that vaccinations access is expanding, we have hope that we are rounding the corner and that things will return to a more "normal" way of life. While the vaccine rollout hasn't been the smoothest, we do encourage you to get vaccinated to protect yourself and your community.

As always, if you have questions or concerns please reach out to us. We look forward to continuing to serve you, whatever the future brings.

Getting vaccinated at UI Health Care is a 3-step process

Subject to vaccine availability, getting vaccinated with UI Health Care is a 3-step process:

Step 1: Let us know you are interested in receiving your vaccine with UI Health Care.

Step 2: Wait for notification from UI Health Care that you are eligible to schedule a vaccine appointment (via phone or MyChart).

Step 3: Accept your appointment through phone or MyChart to confirm the date, time and location of your vaccination.

Two ways to let us know you are interested in receiving the vaccine: uihc.org/covid-vaccine
Let us know in MyChart

Let us know with the web form

Please contact Tracy Peters @ 319-335-7605 if you have received your COVID vaccine – patients may also send copies of their COVID-19 vaccine cards via email to michael-c-bates@uiowa.edu.



RYAN WHITE PART C FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Our new fiscal year starts May 1, 2021 and runs through April 30, 2022. All patients with no payer should complete an application for Ryan White financial assistance. Patients with dual eligibility (having both Medicare and **full** Medicaid benefits) or patients enrolled in ADAP Sponsored Insurance (ASI) or an Iowa Wellness Managed Care Organization (MCOs) are *not* encouraged to complete an application as Ryan White C will not likely have any additional benefit to you. Patients seeking assistance with insurance premiums, coinsurance or co-pays are welcome to apply. Please attach all supporting income verification as requested and your eligibility for assistance will be calculated according to our sliding - fee scale.

Please contact Tricia Kroll at **319-384-7307**, tricia-kroll@uiowa.edu or your Ryan White Case Manager to request an application or if you have questions/concerns.

COVID-19 Vaccine Information, Phase 1B & 1C Priority Populations

Persons aged 65 years and over (Iowans over 65 looking for help to schedule a vaccine may contact 211.)

Adults of any age with **certain underlying medical conditions** are at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19. Severe illness from COVID-19 is defined as hospitalization, admission to the ICU, intubation or mechanical ventilation, or death.

Adults of any age with the following conditions **are at increased risk** of severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19:

Cancer, Chronic kidney disease, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), Down Syndrome, Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies, Immuno-compromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant, Obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 30 kg/m² or higher but < 40 kg/m²), Severe Obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²), Pregnancy, Sickle cell disease, Smoking, and Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

COVID-19 is a new disease. Currently there are limited data and information about the impact of many underlying medical conditions on the risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Based on what we know at this time, adults of any age with the following conditions **might be at an increased risk** for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19:

Asthma (moderate-to-severe), Cerebrovascular disease (affects blood vessels and blood supply to the brain), Cystic fibrosis, Hypertension or high blood pressure, Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from blood or bone marrow transplant, immune deficiencies, HIV, use of corticosteroids, or use of other immune weakening medicines, Neurologic conditions, such as dementia, Liver disease, Overweight (BMI > 25 kg/m², but < 30 kg/m²), Pulmonary fibrosis (having damaged or scarred lung tissues), Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder) and Type 1 diabetes mellitus.

(Source: <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus/Vaccine/Information-for-the-Public>)

Find out where to get your vaccine at <https://vaccinefinder.org/search/>

State of Iowa announces plans to open COVID-19 vaccination eligibility for all Iowans starting April 5

On Wednesday, March 17, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds announced that the state plans to expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to include all Iowans, starting on April 5, 2021.

Thank you and Good Luck to Edin Pujagic!

It has been a pleasure working with the UIHC HIV team during my fellowship. I've learned more than I thought I would and have made some great friends along the way. As a result of my experience with the team, I feel confident that I will be able to manage HIV effectively no matter where I go. I will truly miss the team members and patients I have developed a memorable relationship with.

Thank You and Best Wishes to Fernando Casado Castillo!

It has been a pleasure working with the UI virology clinic team during the past two years. I am very happy with all the things I've learned while interacting with my patients and other members of the team. Although I already had prior experience with people living with HIV before coming to Iowa, I feel my time here heightened my confidence to care for people living with HIV and I am sure what I've learned here will help me as I further in my career. Once again, thank you to our wonderful patients for allowing me to take care of them, but also thank you to my friends and colleagues at the virology team for helping with my growth, both personally and professionally during my fellowship training. I will always have you all in my thoughts!

Support Group

Consider joining UIHC's Support Group for People Living with HIV. We are focused on connecting with others in a time when it is exceptionally difficult. Share experiences, resources, coping strategies, and just chatting and getting to know others.

When: First Wednesday of the month from 4:00pm-5:30pm Where: Online for now!

Contact: Daniel Czachura, BHC Phone: 319-383-3621 Email: daniel-czachura@uiowa.edu

Spring into Better Mental Health

While things may not be "back to normal" yet, the weather is getting warmer, which means a lot of activities that can help recharge mental health!

- Exercise – Outdoors has plenty of room to exercise safely, by walking, jogging or biking.
- Getting Sunlight – This can help boost mood and a whole bunch of other health factors. Even if you are just getting outside for a little bit, it's a great time to start building this into your routine.
- Practice being present – Listen for birds chirping, feel the breeze, smell the roses (literally). Being mindful of your senses and surroundings can help shift focus away from thoughts and feelings of stress



Changes to inpatient visiting hours effective March 17

The safety of our patients, visitors, and staff is our top priority here at UI Hospitals & Clinics, but we also know how important it is for patients to spend time with loved ones while receiving care.

With the recent decline in COVID-19 infection rates in our community, we are able to expand visiting hours **for adult inpatients**, while still maintaining our high safety standards. Starting **Wednesday, March 17**, visiting hours for adult inpatient units—including those with patients with COVID-19—will be modified to **3 to 7 p.m. daily**.

Our COVID Year in Review

While much of the country shut down in 2020, the Ryan White Program at the University of Iowa never did. We found ways to work safely and remain available to our patients through the pandemic and, because of the increased need in our community, were just as busy as ever. The Ryan White Program provided 19,173 services over the course of the year to 831 individual patients from 66 counties. These services included clinic appointments, referrals, case management, mental health support, and insurance benefits assistance. Due to some additional funding, we were also able to provide some critical financial assistance related to food, housing, transportation insecurity and defraying medical costs for qualifying patients.

We are very grateful to our team for their hard work in the past year and to our funders for providing the resources necessary to help our patients manage the ongoing crisis that has dominated our country for the last 12 months. We also are grateful to you, our patients, for giving us the continued opportunity to be part of your care, and we look forward to a better 2021 where we all can feel healthier and safer.

An important step in putting the pandemic behind us is vaccination. We strongly encourage you to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Although we would like to have all our patients vaccinated, we realize some of you may have questions or concerns about the available vaccines. Please let us know if you'd like more information or to discuss your concerns with our staff. As a program, we have documented at least 100 of our patients having received at least one COVID vaccination. Please let us know either through our office, your provider via MyChart, or to a case manager if you have received the vaccine (and type if known), so that we can keep track of this information.

Track your stimulus check here: <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment>

Turning 65 or Eligible for Medicare?

If you are turning 65 soon, have recently turned 65, or have received notice through SSI/SSDI you are eligible for Medicare then please contact Angela to discuss your transition plan from your current insurance to Medicare. Every person's insurance situation is different and Angela can help you determine the best insurance plan for you and your situation.

- As a reminder, ADAP insurance changed for many from Medica to BCBS. Additionally, some Medica members changed plans as well. Please remember to get a copy of your new insurance card to your case manager so this information can be updated with NSP and UIHC.
- Some Medica plans still show active for 3 months after canceling them. Please remember to not use this insurance with outside pharmacies or provider offices so they do not bill the wrong insurance.
- If you switch Medicare Part D plans for 2021 you will be receiving new cards in the mail. Please update your pharmacy with this new information, and your case manager if you have one.

FMLA

Angela will be out on FMLA at the end of May and will return August 2nd. If you are case managed and have insurance questions please contact your case manager or if you do not have a case manager, please contact a UIHC social worker.

Healthcare.gov Open Enrollment, Again

Under declaration of President Biden insurance open enrollment is now available through healthcare.gov. If we have noticed you do not have insurance at this time your case manager or Angela may be reaching out to you to discuss the option of getting on a plan before August 15th. If you have questions about this please reach out to Angela.

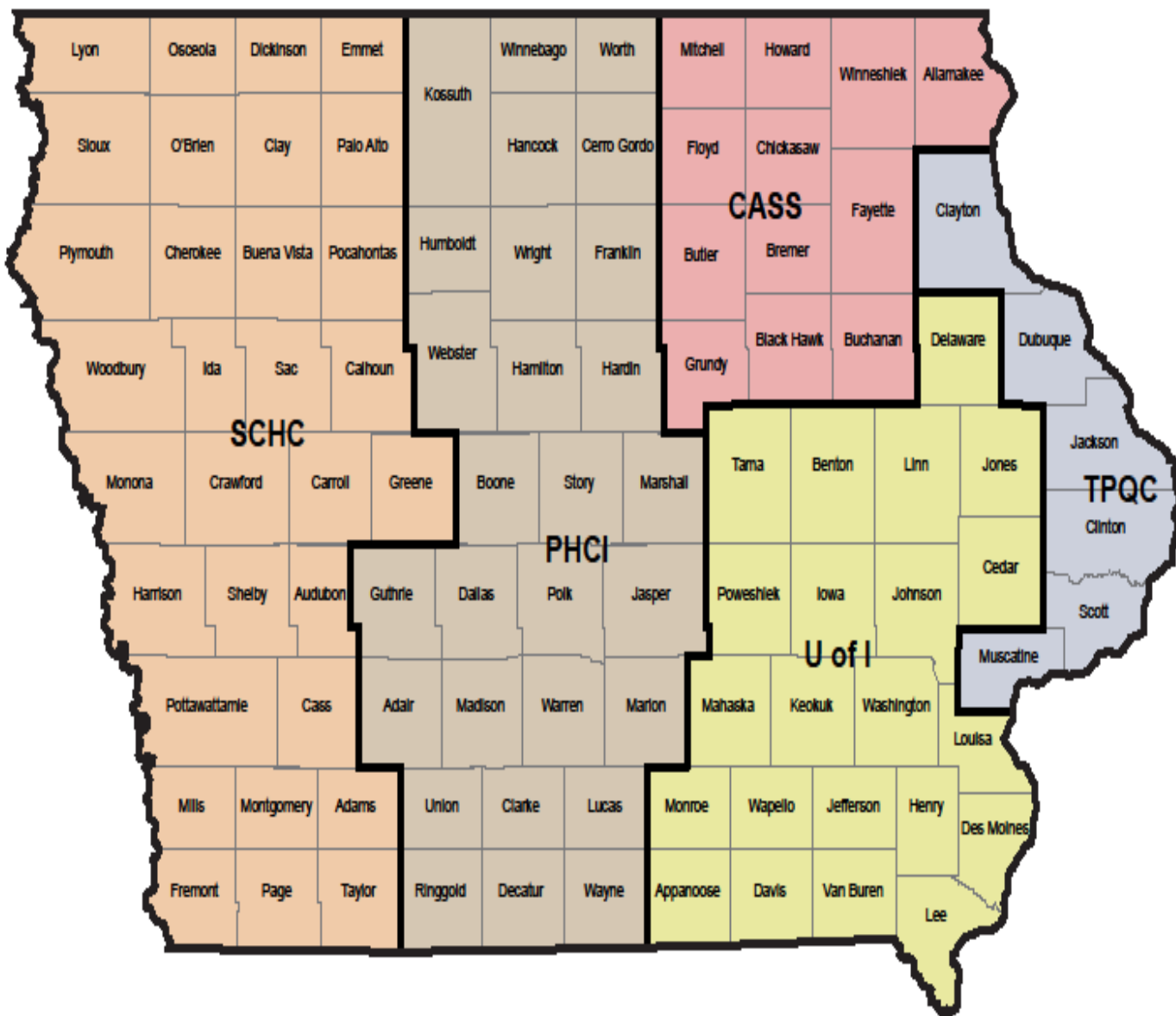
We have been informed by Iowa Medicaid that the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency will continually renew throughout 2021, and that the Department of Health and Human Services will provide a 60 day notice to the Governor of our state prior to its expiration. So those who have had their Medicaid benefits extended due to the Public Health Emergency will continue to be extended though this year. If it is ended before the end of the year a 60 day notice will be provided.

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. UIHC currently offers assistance with long-term rental assistance (TBRA), short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance (STRMU), and permanent housing placement services (PHP) (deposit and/ or 1st months rent). If you live in the U of I area, contact:

Jennifer at 319-467-5662.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)



Siouxland Community Health Center (SCHC) 1021 Nebraska Street PO Box 5410 Sloux City, IA 51102 (712)-252-2477	Primary Health Care, Inc. (PHCI) 1200 University Avenue Des Moines, IA 50314 (515) 248-1517	Cedar AIDS Support System (CASS) 2101 Kimball Avenue Suite 2880 Waterloo, IA 50704-2880 (319) 727-2002	University of Iowa (U of I) 200 Hawkins Drive Iowa City, IA 52242 (319) 467-5662	The Project of the Quad Cities (TPQC) 1701 River Drive #110 Moline, IL 61265 (309) 762-5433
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IowaHousingRecovery.com

Iowans impacted by COVID-19 may be eligible for assistance through a new Iowa Finance Authority program. Funding for this program is made possible by the CARES Act. Applicants must be able to demonstrate a financial hardship due to COVID-19 and housing instability which may include a past utility bill, eviction notice, or past due mortgage.

To apply go to IowaHousingRecovery.com.

* Please note applicants from Polk County and the City of Des Moines will need to apply via www.impactcap.org



Social Work Month in March is a time to celebrate the great profession of social work.

The theme for Social Work Month 2021 is **Social Workers Are Essential**.

Social workers are essential to community well-being.

As practitioners, social workers are trained to help people address personal and systemic barriers to optimal living. They are employed to effect positive change with individuals, families, groups and entire communities.

Shout out to all the awesome social workers at UIHC and within our HIV Program for all you do!

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 Amber Phelps, MA at **319-335-7218**.
- 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 **Angela Speers** at **319-335-7309** or **319-333-8714**.
- If you have a medical emergency during the 8am-5pm work day, please try contacting Amber or your provider. If Amber 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 now offered at Great River Medical Center in W. Burlington at **1-319-800-5430**, and River Hills Community Health Center in Ottumwa at **1-319-800-5561**.
- Social work questions and concerns should be directed to:
 - Malory Dreasler** at **319-356-1545** or **319-359-9181**
 - Katie Vodraska** at **319-353-7173** or **319-383-6563**
 - 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**
 - Sade Creach** at **319-335-7444** or **319-331-0031**
 - Viri Estudillo Gil** at **319-353-8951** or **319-930-9829**

If you have questions or would like more information about our HIV program please contact **Amber Phelps** at **319-335-7218**.

Case Manager Malory will be on *maternity leave* from late February-early May 2021. Her case managed clients will receive instructions for an alternate contact person during that time.