



Protecting, Maintaining and Improving the Health of All Minnesotans

Notification Letter to Minnesota Hospitals Regarding Reporting of Situational Awareness Data to Support COVID-19/SAR-CoV-2 Surveillance Efforts

April 2, 2020

Dear Hospital / Health System,

This letter is to inform you that the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is collecting additional data to support MDH's surveillance efforts for COVID-19. MDH has the authority to conduct this surveillance under Minnesota Statutes, section 144.05, subdivision 1. Specifically, it says:

"The state commissioner of health shall have general authority as the state's official health agency and shall be responsible for the development and maintenance of an organized system of programs and services for protecting, maintaining, and improving the health of the citizens. This authority shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) conduct studies and investigations, collect and analyze health and vital data, and identify and describe health problems;"

This effort is extremely important and time-sensitive, as our testing capabilities are limited. We know that more Minnesotans have the COVID-19 virus than our confirmed cases show, but need to rapidly begin collecting and incorporating new data into our modeling to assist with our preparation and response activities. We recognize the number of Minnesota and federal requests hospitals are being asked to report and truly applaud your efforts to help state and federal officials collect the information needed to address the pandemic. We are committed to working with the Minnesota Hospital Association to coordinate implementation and streamline reporting requirements for hospitals as much as possible.

As part of this effort, the Department of Human Services-sponsored Encounter Alerting Service (EAS) will support reporting necessary for the COVID-19 surveillance efforts. This service receives Admission, Discharge, and Transfer (ADT) notifications from hospitals. MDH will receive this data to support our efforts to develop situational awareness related to COVID-19.

MDH's goal is to have 100% of Minnesota hospitals sending ADTs for the total population of patients receiving care in their facilities as soon as possible. A number of Minnesota hospitals are already connected to the EAS, but more are needed to achieve 100%.

In addition to meeting the needs for COVID-19 surveillance and other situational awareness surveillance, implementing ADT notifications will help Minnesota hospitals meet a new federal rule that will require hospitals to send electronic notifications to another healthcare facility or community providers when a

patient is admitted, discharged, or transferred. More information about this new rule can be found at: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/interoperability-and-patient-access-fact-sheet>.

Minnesota hospitals that are not currently connected for ADTs have two choices:

1. Contact **Audacious Inquiry**, a State-Certified Health Data Intermediary, who is the EAS vendor. The point of contact is Nick Regier at nregier@ainq.com or 651-302-4825. Hospitals do not need to pay a fee for the subscription service, although there may be a fee for the electronic health record interface cost. MDH would provide a grant to those hospitals wishing to seek reimbursement for this cost. More information about the EAS can be found at: <https://mneas.org/>.
2. Contact **Koble-MN**, a Minnesota State-Certified Health Information Organization, which has an existing connection to be able to send alerts to the EAS. The point of contact is Chad Peterson at charles.d.peterson@koblegroup.com or 1-844-335-6253. Although hospitals would need to pay a fee to begin this service, MDH would provide a grant to those hospitals wishing to seek reimbursement for this cost. More information about Koble-MN can be found at: <http://www.koblemn.org/>.

A participation agreement, which many Minnesota health organizations have already signed, will need to be signed with either Audacious Inquiry or Koble-MN, followed by an interface and testing for completeness. If begun quickly, full implementation is expected to be completed within the next month.

If a hospital is interested in a grant opportunity to cover the electronic health record interface cost associated with a connection to Audacious Inquiry or for the electronic health record interface cost and subscription cost associated with a connection to Koble-MN, please contact Anne Schloegel at Anne.Schloegel@state.mn.us with a cc: to mn.ehealth@state.mn.us.

We strongly encourage hospitals that are connected to Audacious Inquiry for the Medicaid only EAS to expand the service to include event notifications for the total population. Audacious Inquiry and Koble-MN will work together to get the needed ADT information to MDH.

By the end of the week, we will have this information available online at: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/facilities.html> (note: as of April 1, this website is not live). We will also post frequently asked questions as they become available. If you have questions about this letter, please contact Jennifer Fritz at Jennifer.Fritz@state.mn.us. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,



Jan K. Malcolm
Commissioner
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975