

From: [Ely, Margo](#)
To: [Morin, Donna](#)
Cc: [Berry, Pam](#); [Boserup, Rita](#); [Ely, Margo](#); [Garvey, Susan](#); [Giannetti, Frankie](#); [Heard, Melissa](#); [Kajtsa, Amy](#); [Leban, Lisa](#); [Metzger, Michael](#); [Morin, Donna](#); [Motyka, Ashli](#); [Mucha, Dorothy](#); [Nunez, Jilma](#); [Nuno, Marisol](#); [Panousis, Telly](#); [Pitchala, Venkat](#); [Porrevecchio, Jenny](#); [Reed, Cynthia](#); [Rhodes, Colleen](#); [Sierra, Cecilia](#); [Stoffels, Tom](#); [Styles, Faith](#); [Swahlstedt, Jennifer](#); [Zarcone, Margie](#)
Subject: IRMA COVID Alert to IRMA Members
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This email is being sent to IRMA Delegates, Alternates, Claims Coordinators and Department Heads.

COVID-19 ALERT: STAY VIGILANT!

Over the past year, we have continued to encourage IRMA members to stay vigilant in the fight against COVID, especially in the face of temptations do let our guard down. This is especially important in the workplace where we are responsible for maintaining a safe and healthy environment for employees. If management does not enforce applicable IDPH/CDC guidelines, it is likely that COVID cases and outbreaks will be deemed to be compensable workers compensation claims, which can be very dangerous and costly for some people. Recently, we have observed that some IRMA members are becoming lax in their management obligation to enforce applicable guidelines, leading to the potential that claims will be compensable where they would not otherwise be if management was vigilant in its responsibility to enforce guidelines and maintain safe and health work environments. Do not let your guard down! It is not over. Require Masks; Require Social Distancing; Disinfect; Limit Gatherings!

The CDC warns that cases have been on the rise since March 20, 2021. As of April 13, 2021, [the 7-day average of daily new cases](#) is up 10% from the previous week. The Illinois case rate is within the top 20 amongst the country with neighboring states like Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana not far behind. Michigan's rates are almost triple Illinois, leading the country in COVID-19 cases. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued warnings on all Chicago-area counties as new cases per 100,000 are all above target, including Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.

Now is not the time to be lax, although that is what our investigations into COVID-19 claims are revealing. Member workplace protocols are not being enforced or even followed. We expect all employers to continue to follow state and federal prevention measures and to comply with well-established COVID-19 policies. Protocols need to continue to be followed **regardless** of employee vaccination levels. There should be no confusion about vaccinations.

- **Vaccinations do not constitute a change in COVID-19 protocol while at the workplace.** The [Interim Guidance](#) issued by the CDC applies to non-public settings and personal socialization. At work it is expected that vaccinated persons still practice preventative measures such as social distancing, wearing masks, and limiting gathering sizes. Engineering controls, like plexiglass barriers, are recommended to remain in place as well. Anything less could be considered in violation of the most basic employee rights – as outlined in the General Duty Clause, [Section 5\(a\)\(1\)](#) of the [Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970](#), 29 USC 654(a)(1), which requires

employers to furnish each worker “employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.”

- **Vaccinations do not protect against emerging variants.** The most prominent [variant in Illinois](#) is the U.K. Variant known as B.1.1.7. Little is known about the variants as this is continued being studied by IDPH and CDC.

We need all members to continue to enforce COVID-19 Protocols. Not only is it your obligation to your employees and community, but it also provides IRMA with a basis to successfully accept and pay or deny and defend incoming COVID-19 claims. Your continued vigilance will contribute to minimizing COVID-19 claim payments both within your organization and in the entire pool. IRMA is committed to providing the membership with relevant and detailed resources that can help with enforcement of pandemic related rules. Visit IRMA’s [COVID-19 page](#) on our website for more information.

Margo Ely
IRMA Executive Director
margoe@irmarisk.org
c: 847-826-7110



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