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MEMORANDUM

TO: Steve Walsh, Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association (MHA)
Dr. Mark Girard, Steward Health Care System
Lora Pellegrini, Massachusetts Association of Health Plans (MAHP)
Mike Caljouw, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Tara Gregorio, Massachusetts Senior Care Association
Elissa Sherman, LeadingAge Massachusetts

FROM:

Kate Walsh

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "kaw", written over the printed name "Kate Walsh".

RE:

45-day Continuation of Strategies to Address Healthcare Capacity

DATE:

March 7, 2023

The Massachusetts healthcare system continues to face capacity challenges with persistently high hospital occupancy levels and significant workforce shortages. Collaborative practices that each of your respective organizations put in place over the past 90 days have helped anchor a multi-faceted response. A number of these reflect best practices that your member organizations have indicated should continue to be encouraged, such as expanded weekday and weekend admissions at nursing facilities, and a commitment to start discharge planning as early as possible. In light of continuing capacity challenges and in recognition of the value of these best practices, we have requested, and your respective membership organizations plus Steward Health Care System and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts have agreed to continue, the following set of modified operational and practice changes for 45 days until April 20, 2023.

Health Plans

Blue Cross Blue Shield MA and most MAHP member plans have agreed to 24-hour expedited turnaround time for prior authorization requests through April 20, 2023 for admissions from acute care hospitals to sub-acute care facilities and rehabilitation facilities across commercial, Medicaid, Medicare, and Medicare Advantage lines of business.

- All necessary documentation must be submitted by the requesting provider, including all required clinical information.
- The expedited turnaround time does not apply to long-term or custodial admissions.
- Acute care hospitals and post-acute care facilities will be expected to notify plans about any inpatient admission for which post-acute care is anticipated within 24 hours of admission and to provide updates, at a minimum of every 5 days, to support discharge planning.

Nursing Facilities

- Nursing facilities have agreed to continue extending their admissions hours to accept admissions Monday through Saturday from 9am-7pm, at a minimum, and will continue capacity-building efforts to accommodate admissions 24/7.

Hospitals

- Hospitals have agreed to continue to commence their discharge planning as early in the day as possible.

Thank you for your continued collaborative efforts to support our healthcare system. We are grateful for your commitment to our collective health.

CC: Mary Beckman, Senior Advisor