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March 31, 2020

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from the NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: [massmed.org/covid-19](https://massmed.org/covid-19).

If you have questions, we will bring them to the appropriate stakeholder for an answer. Please send questions to the [MMS Department of Health Policy and Public Health](#).

Follow our COVID-19 activities on:  
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## Personal Wellness & Well-being

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### Physician Health Services: A resource

The Physician Health Services, Inc. (PHS) core mission of promoting the health, well-being, and effectiveness of physicians and medical students in Massachusetts has never been more relevant. We continue to be in touch with hundreds of physicians on the front lines of providing medical care and provide them with support, resources, and a listening ear. Services are provided virtually now, including support groups for current clients.

In the interest of the well-being of the broader medical community, and recognition that we are all in this together, PHS will be offering a twice-weekly free and confidential 'Virtual Self-Care Group' to physicians in MA, facilitated by licensed PHS professionals.

If interested, please call: 781-434-7404 and let us know how to reach you, or email: [PHS@mms.org](mailto:PHS@mms.org).

In addition, PHS is always available for consultations – on the fly, or in-depth, assistance with burnout and self-care techniques, and referrals.

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## Podcast series on burnout and COVID-19

[MedPEP](#), the *Medical Professionals Empowerment Program*, is a podcast series created and sponsored by PHS. The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic is stressing our already stressed health care system. Physician burnout rates which were hovering at 50% are climbing and physicians' physical and emotional well-being are at risk. Each MedPEP podcast delves into ways physicians can practice self-care, even in a time of crisis. MedPEP also provides free, risk-management CMEs.

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## Practice Management

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### CMS expands Advance Payment Program

In order to increase cash flow to providers of services impacted by the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has expanded its current Accelerated and Advance Payment Program to a broader group of Medicare Part A providers and Part B suppliers. The expansion of this program is only for the duration of the public health emergency. The payments can be requested by hospitals, doctors, durable medical equipment suppliers, and other Medicare Part A and Part B providers and suppliers. To qualify for accelerated or advance payments, the provider or supplier must:

- Have billed Medicare for claims within 180 days immediately prior to the date of signature on the provider's/ supplier's request form,
- Not be in bankruptcy,
- Not be under active medical review or program integrity investigation, and

- Not have any outstanding delinquent Medicare overpayments.

Medicare will start accepting and processing the Accelerated/Advance Payment Requests immediately. CMS anticipates that the payments will be issued within seven days of the provider's request. To learn more, [click here](#). To have your questions answered, please contact the **National Government Services (NGS)**. Toll-free hotline telephone number: 1-888-802-3898; hours of operation: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. CT.

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## Telehealth billing update

On March 30, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released an interim final rule providing new regulatory relief and policy changes related to COVID-19. To see a summary of these policies and new billing guidelines related to telehealth, [click here](#).

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## Government Guidelines

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### The CARES Act – MMS overview of federal relief for health care providers

On Friday, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a \$2 trillion piece of legislation intended to provide economic relief to those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill includes numerous provisions to ease the burden of COVID-19 on the health care community. In addition to advocating for this relief for providers, the MMS has been analyzing the impact of the legislation and guidance around implementation. We hope [this overview of the CARES Act](#) will help our members understand the support provided in the legislation and gain clarity on how they may be eligible for financial relief.

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## COVID Command Center update

To slow the spread of coronavirus, [Governor Baker issued an emergency order](#) temporarily closing all early childhood education programs across the state, in effect until at least May 4, 2020. [Emergency child care programs authorized by EEC](#) have been set up to serve children of families designated as [COVID-19 Essential Workforce](#), with emphasis on those in the health care, public health, and human services and law enforcement, public safety, and first responder fields. There are over 500 emergency childcare centers operating throughout the state providing free childcare to essential staff. If you qualify as an essential worker and are in need of child care, please visit [this page](#) for more information, including [guidance](#) for families using emergency care and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for parents.

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860 Winter Street, Waltham Woods Corporate Center, Waltham, MA 02451-1411  
781-893-4610 | 781-893-3800 | Member Information Hotline: 800-322-2303 x7311

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