August 12, 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 NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

Public Health

Data from 10 cities show COVID-19 impact based on poverty, race

Neighborhood income and other structural factors have a significant impact on whether an individual in the area has been infected with or died from COVID-19, a new national study finds. The research looked at data from the combined statistical areas of 10 major U.S. cities – Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia, and Seattle. Read more »

Video: COVID-19 and Black communities

This video workshop, produced by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, examines elements of SARS-CoV-2’s pathophysiology in humans. The workshop also explores:
• Why Black people are more likely to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, and once infected, why Black people are more likely to die;
• Strategies to invest in Black communities and train doctors, engineers, and scientists;
• Partnerships required to build community response and community resilience. [Watch here »]

How CDC determines the level of a destination's COVID-19 Travel Health Notice

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notifies travelers and other audiences about health threats in destinations around the world through Travel Health Notices (THN). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CDC has also provided an interactive world map specifically showing COVID-19 travel recommendations by destination. This world map uses an evidence-based approach, referred to as the COVID-19 THN Risk Assessment, to evaluate the COVID-19 risk in each destination. [Read more »]

AMA Advocacy Resource Center survey on pain management

The American Medical Association (AMA) Advocacy Resource Center is asking physicians to complete a survey about treating patients with pain. While physicians have received many surveys—and the AMA is highly sympathetic to the time and other pressures on physician practices—this brief 8-minute survey is the first to specifically address issues affecting physicians who treat patients with pain during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results will help inform future advocacy efforts. [The survey is available here.]

Due to the promotion of this survey, it is possible that a physician may receive this note from more than one organization. Please only take the survey once and send any questions to ARC@ama-assn.org.
Federal relief funding for providers – Reopened application portal and webcast

On Monday, August 10, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released details about the reopening of the Provider Relief Fund’s (PRF) application portal for providers who may not have initially applied. This application portal will allow providers who received nominal automatic payments from the first general distribution, but did not apply for additional funds by the initial June 3 deadline or returned these automatic payments, to apply and receive additional PRF payments totaling two percent of net patient revenue. The deadline for applications is August 28. This announcement, combined with the second extension of the Medicaid and CHIP application period through August 28, should allow most providers to successfully apply for PRF funds.

For providers who may have questions about the application process, HHS is hosting a webcast Thursday, August 13 at 3:00 p.m. ET about the new application and eligibility. Click here to register for the webcast.

NEW - PPP Frequently Asked Questions

The Small Business Administration (SBA), in consultation with the Department of the Treasury, offers additional guidance to address borrower and lender questions about the implementation of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) established by section 1102 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

- FAQ for lenders and borrowers (08-11-2020)
- FAQ about PPP loan forgiveness (08-11-2020)

Tufts Health Plan update
Out-of-network authorization policies for COVID-19 services: effective until further notice.

- If a member's plan requires a referral or authorization to received out-of-network (OON) services, Tufts Health Plan is waiving such requirements for the OON services listed below when related to a COVID-19 diagnosis regardless of member's plan type:
  - Inpatient care
  - Post-acute care, including inpatient rehab, skilled nursing facilities, long-term acute care (LTAC), and/or home care following an inpatient admission,
  - Primary care or outpatient behavioral health services
  - Urgent/emergent services
- Testing for asymptomatic members:
  - Testing for asymptomatic members is covered when being admitted to a health care facility or when the member has been identified by a health care provider, the state or local board of health as someone who is a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. For all other asymptomatic persons, testing is not covered.

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**Physician fee schedule proposed rule: Understanding 4 key topics listening session**

- Thursday, August 13 from 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. EDT
- [Register](#) for Medicare Learning Network events.

Proposed changes to the CY 2021 Physician Fee Schedule are aimed at reducing burden, recognizing clinicians for the time they spend taking care of patients, removing unnecessary measures, and making it easier for clinicians to be on the path towards value-based care. During this listening session, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) experts will review provisions from the proposed rule and address your questions to help you with comments for formal submission.
• Extending telehealth and licensing flexibilities beyond the public health emergency
• Updating Evaluation and Management (E/M) coding guidance
• Updating the Quality Payment Program/MIPS Value Pathways
• Updating opioid use disorder/substance use disorder provisions

We encourage you to review the following materials prior to the call:

• Proposed rule
• Press release
• Physician Fee Schedule proposed rule fact sheet
• Quality Payment Program proposed rule fact sheet

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