August 26, 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

Massachusetts Medical Society on flu vaccination for school-aged children

The Massachusetts Medical Society released the following statement today regarding the Commonwealth’s mandate regarding influenza vaccination and school-aged children:

“All Massachusetts Medical Society supports Gov. Baker and his administration in requiring children to receive influenza vaccination to attend schools in the Commonwealth as a prudent and proactive measure.

The Massachusetts Medical Society urges people of all ages to receive an influenza vaccination to protect themselves, their family members, and their community from the flu.

Influenza results in thousands of hospitalizations in Massachusetts each year and causes illness and death in people of all ages. As influenza season approaches, our state will face the dual threat of seasonal flu and a likely resurgence of COVID-19 cases. Flu
vaccination is a safe and important step toward ensuring that our health care system and health care resources are not overwhelmed by an overlap of transmissible illnesses that can have lethal outcomes.

We strongly urge all patients to contact their physician to schedule an influenza shot this fall. Data prove that a flu shot is safe for children and adults and prevents or reduces substantially the symptoms of influenza and the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

During the COVID epidemic, influenza vaccination is doubly important. We encourage anyone with questions to have a conversation with their physician."

Stigma compounds the consequences of clinician burnout during COVID-19: A call to action to break the culture of silence

The systemic factors driving burnout and its dangerous consequences have brought the health care workforce to a breaking point. Clinicians across the career and specialty spectrum, along with leaders in health care, accrediting and licensing, educational institutions, and membership and professional organizations, must speak out now for culture and systems change. Only by fundamentally addressing the culture of silence can we ensure that the clinicians who care for us can, in turn, ask for and receive the care they need without fear of consequences that could jeopardize their careers and well-being.

Read the rest of the commentary from the National Academy of Medicine.

CDC information for pediatric health care providers

The guidance is intended to inform pediatric health care providers of up-to-date information about children with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and about caring for children during the pandemic. Revisions were made on August 14, 2020, to reflect new evidence about COVID-19 in children. Read the guide »
For health care providers caring for neonates with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, including those born to a mother with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, please refer to this CDC guidance.

Save the date: "COVID-19 and School Reopening" forum

This virtual forum will provide an opportunity for physicians of all specialties to hear from experts and ask questions. Forum sponsors include the Massachusetts Medical Society, the Massachusetts Academy of Family Physicians, and the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Registration and additional details will be available soon.

- Topic: COVID-19 and School Reopening
- Date: Wednesday, September 9
- Time: 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Practice Management

UPDATE: Deadline to apply for Phase 2 General Distribution Funding extended to September 13, 2020.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is again extending the deadline for physicians to apply for the Provider Relief Fund. Physicians now have until September 13, 2020 to apply.

This deadline applies to the targeted distribution for Medicaid providers, as well as Medicare providers, who missed the previous deadline to apply for additional funding from the second $20 billion tranche of the $50 billion general distribution.

For further assistance with your application, please use the UnitedHealthcare Provider Relief hotline number: (866) 569-3522. For updated information and data on the Provider Relief Fund, click here.
HHS Provider Relief Fund payment reporting requirements and auditing

All providers receiving Provider Relief Fund (PRF) payments must comply with the reporting requirements described in the Fund's terms and conditions and, when applicable, in future directions issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar.

On July 20, 2020, HHS issued a public notice about forthcoming reporting requirements for certain providers that accepted one or more payments exceeding $10,000 in the aggregate funding from the PRF. The reporting notice initially advised recipients that additional details regarding data elements would be provided by August 17, 2020. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is continuing to refine its data elements and will provide those additional details at a date later than August 17, 2020. Providers will still be given the detailed PRF reporting instructions and a data collection template with the necessary data elements they will be asked to submit well in advance of the reporting system being made available – which is currently targeted for October 1, 2020. Providers should continue to check the HHS website for the latest updates.

CMS-CDC fundamentals of COVID-19 prevention for nursing home training: Live Q&A sessions

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is implementing a national nursing home training program for frontline nursing home staff and nursing home management. The training is designed to equip both frontline caregivers and their management with the knowledge they need.

- Frontline staff training, called “CMS Targeted COVID-19 Training for Frontline Nursing Home Staff,” covers five topics separated into five modules. These modules address some of the most common concerns found by surveyors and strike teams, basic infection control and prevention.
- Management training, called “CMS Targeted COVID-19 Training for Nursing Home Management,” covers 10 topics separated into 10 modules. These modules
are comprehensive, focusing on infection control and cleanliness but also larger institution-wide issues like implementation of telehealth, emergency preparedness, and vaccine delivery.

- The training will be available on the CMS [Quality, Safety & Education Portal](#).

CMS and CDC will also have subject matter experts available on bi-weekly webinars from August 27, 2020 through January 7, 2021, from 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET to answer questions. Registration is required for these question and answer sessions. Participants can register on the Zoom webinar [registration page](#).

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**CMS new FAQ**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released additional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on recent COVID-19-related waivers to help physicians, hospitals, and rural health clinics. The document includes information about:

- Payment for specimen collection for purposes of COVID-19 testing
- Hospital billing for remote services, including a decision tree guiding hospitals through their options for billing for telemedicine
- High throughput COVID-19 testing
- Medicare telehealth
- Home infusion services
- Cost reporting
- General billing requirements

To download, [click here](#).

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**Fee schedule adjustments reminder for codes 99441-99443**

The National Government Services (NGS) received several inquiries from providers regarding the adjustment of CPT codes 99441-99443. When the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that it was changing the fee schedule allowance for these procedures to mirror codes 99212-99214, they also announced that MACs
would be adjusting previously submitted claims to allow the codes billed at a higher allowance.

It is important to remember that NGS processes claims using the Medicare Part B Physician Fee Schedule. The allowance for related claims will be the lower of the published fee schedule rate and the submitted amount for that service. Therefore, if the submitted charge for codes 99441-99443 was lower than the fee schedule amount, the claim will not be allowed at the adjusted fee schedule. Services will never allow greater than the charge submitted by a provider.

If you have charges for codes 99441-99443 that were not adjusted to equal the new allowance indicated by CMS, please check the submitted amount for the service. If the submitted amount is not accurate and needs to be corrected, then you may do so via the reopening process.

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DOI and CHIA meeting on Thursday for providers: testing, telehealth, and prior authorization

The Division of Insurance (DOI) and the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) hosts regular meetings to offer providers an opportunity to raise questions and concerns related to Governor Baker's emergency order commercial insurance provisions. The next meeting will focus on testing, telehealth, and prior authorization, and will be recorded for later viewing. The DOI and CHIA, along with the Massachusetts Medical Society and the Massachusetts Hospital Association, sponsor these calls.

- Date: Thursday, August 27
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT
- Meeting URL »
- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
- Passcode: 501

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