

If you're not already a subscriber, [sign up](#) to receive *Planning and Preparedness*.



August 3, 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.

Educational Resources & Programs

How to make your voice heard and encourage public use of masks

In the latest COVID-19 update from the American Medical Association (AMA), health experts discuss how physicians can use their voice to encourage mask use and help limit the spread of COVID-19. [Watch here](#) »

PPE 101: The do's and don'ts of donning and doffing

Proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) has always been part of medicine, but the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how vital it is to perform properly and stop the spread of infection. This fact has been made clear to new residents who have gone through intense training on the topic at the beginning of their graduate medical education. To learn more, [click here](#).

Practice Management

Paycheck Protection Program deadline is August 8

Small businesses still have until August 8 to apply for potentially forgivable loans through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which was extended from its original June 30 deadline. A [PPP Second Draw Loan](#) is under consideration in the Continuing Small Business Recovery and Paycheck Protection Program Act, part of the HEALS Act in the Senate.

To learn more:

- [Paycheck Protection Program loan information](#)
 - [Loan details and forgiveness](#)
 - [Who can apply](#)
 - [FAQ for lenders and borrowers](#)
-

HHS extends application deadline for Phase 1 & 2 relief; Medicaid, CHIP, and dental providers eligible

To offer health care providers financial relief because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced an application deadline extension for the Phase 2 general distribution to Medicaid, Medicaid managed care, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and dental providers. HHS also will allow certain Medicare providers, who experienced challenges during the Phase 1 Medicare general distribution application period, a second opportunity to receive funding. Both groups will have until Friday, August 28, to apply. [Read more](#) »

HHS issues report highlighting dramatic trends in Medicare beneficiary telehealth use

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a new report surveying telehealth use for primary care delivery in Fee-for-Service Medicare during the early pandemic months. The report analyzes claims data from January through early June, 2020, and underscores how telehealth flexibilities helped spur and maintain Medicare beneficiaries' access to their primary care providers.

Four key findings from the report:

1. Before the pandemic, 14,000 Medicare beneficiaries received telehealth. From mid-March to early July, this number jumped to more than 10.1 million beneficiaries.
2. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York had the highest increase in primary care telehealth visits, while Iowa, South Dakota, and Oklahoma had a smaller increase.
3. Even when Medicare in-person primary care visits resumed for some communities in May, a steady demand for telehealth visits persisted.
4. Health care providers are still interested in telehealth, including specialists.

[Read the full report »](#)

Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA to expand the availability of mental health services

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBS MA) announced new initiatives to ensure members have access to high-quality and affordable mental health care. The initiatives include:

- Supporting newer, more convenient mental health care options by reimbursing telehealth sessions performed by mental health specialists at the same rate as in-person visits beyond the current COVID-19 public health emergency. This includes both video and telephonic telehealth services.
- Expanding the number of child psychiatrists available to members by increasing reimbursement rates 50 percent for child psychiatrists who participate in the new BCBS MA incentive program.

- Offering new financial incentives for primary care physicians to integrate mental health care into their practices to improve physical and mental health outcomes.
- Expanding access online programs that allow members to better manage anxiety and stress.
- Adding 2,000 new clinicians to the Blue Cross mental health network.

[Read the press release »](#)

COVID-19 telehealth services for Part B providers

Please join National Government Services (NGS) for this hour-long session to learn about telehealth services during COVID-19. NGS will provide current updates and address your questions.

- Date: Wednesday, August 5
 - Time: 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT
 - [Register »](#)
-

DOI and CHIA meeting for providers: testing and telehealth

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 and telehealth and will be recorded for later viewing.

- Date: Thursday, August 6
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT
- [Meeting URL »](#)
- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643

- Passcode: 501

Follow us on:

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Instagram](#)

© 2020 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved.
860 Winter Street, Waltham Woods Corporate Center, Waltham, MA 02451-1411
781-893-4610 | 781-893-3800 | Member Information Hotline: 800-322-2303 x7311

To ensure delivery of all Massachusetts Medical Society communications, please add vitalsignsthisweek@mms.org to your email address book or Safe Sender List. If you are still having problems receiving our communications, see our [white-listing page](#) for more details.

| [Unsubscribe](#) |