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August 5, 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

Mass General answering the call: Prioritizing health equity

This seminar on prioritizing health equity features MGH's Peter L. Slavin, MD, President; Joseph Betancourt, MD, MPH, Vice President and Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer; Katrina Armstrong, MD, MSCE, Physician-in-Chief, Department of Medicine; and Aisha James, MD, MS, Physician, MGH Everett Family Care. [Watch here](#) »

Health literacy resources on inequities for non-English speakers

The resources provided are designed to improve access to critical information about COVID-19 and raise awareness about health equity in the context of COVID-19. The resources include insights about the longstanding systemic issues that contribute to health inequities. In addition, the resources highlight actions and provide tools to advance health equity at multiple levels.

- [COVID-19 Health Literacy Project](#)
- [CDC's general recommendations for coronavirus prevention translated into the most common languages in the U.S.](#)
- [New Hampshire government has resources in eight languages](#)
- [Washington's Department of Health offers information in 15 languages](#)

[For more health equity resources](#) »

Lessons learned in one of the nation's first hot spots

The American Medical Association (AMA) spoke with three health care leaders in New York about lessons learned in one of the nation's first COVID-19 hot spots. [Watch here](#) »

Practice Management

Trump administration proposes to expand telehealth benefits permanently for Medicare beneficiaries

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed changes to expand telehealth permanently, consistent with the Executive Order on Improving Rural and Telehealth Access that President Trump signed. The Executive Order and proposed rule advance efforts to improve care access for Medicare beneficiaries—particularly those living in rural areas. Additionally, the proposed rule implements a multi-year effort to reduce clinician burden and ensure appropriate reimbursement for time spent with patients.

During the public health emergency (PHE), CMS added 135 services including emergency department visits, initial inpatient and nursing facility visits, and discharge day management services that could be paid when delivered by telehealth. CMS is proposing to permanently allow some of these services to be done by telehealth. CMS welcomes public input on services to permanently add to the telehealth list beyond the PHE. Public comments on the proposed rules are due by October 5, 2020.

[Read the full press release »](#)

Counseling and COVID-19 testing billing

To prevent further spread of COVID-19, a key strategy includes quarantine and isolation while patients wait for test results or after they get positive test results – regardless of showing symptoms. Physicians and other health care practitioners who counsel patients during their medical visits have an opportunity to decrease the time between patient-testing and quarantine/isolation, especially when this counseling happens concurrently with COVID-19 testing.

These counseling services are covered by Medicare. Physicians and other practitioners furnishing counseling services to people with Original Medicare should use existing and applicable coding and payment policies to report services, including evaluation and management visits.

Please note that for services provided during CY 2020, when more than 50 percent of the face-to-face time (for non-inpatient services) or more than 50 percent of the floor time (for inpatient services) is spent providing counseling or coordination of care, time can be used to select the level of visit reported.

Additional resources:

- [Provider counseling Q&A](#)
- [Provider counseling talking points](#)
- [Provider counseling checklist](#)

Harvard Pilgrim testing update

Antibody testing: Testing for previous COVID-19 infection is covered only when it is an FDA-authorized test ordered by a physician or appropriately licensed health care

professional, and when medically necessary for the provider to help make decisions about the member's treatment for an immediate medical condition (e.g., transplant services). Harvard Pilgrim's [COVID-19 Antibody \(Serological\) Testing Medical Policy](#), which is effective for dates of service beginning Aug. 15, 2020, outlines the criteria necessary for coverage.

If you believe a claim should be considered medically necessary under these criteria, please submit an appeal with appropriate medical documentation. Testing meeting the above criteria is covered in full with no copayment, deductible, or cost-sharing through the COVID-19 emergency period. Members are eligible for two COVID-19 antibody tests (that meet the criteria in the medical policy) per lifetime.

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
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"Lessons from the Front Lines" call on Friday

The upcoming "Lessons from the Front Lines" call welcomes physicians and other clinicians to share their experience, ideas, strategies, and insights about their COVID-19

response. Participants may ask questions of presenters. These calls are a joint effort between The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

- Date: Friday, August 7
- Time: 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT
- Toll free attendee dial-in: 833-614-0820
- Access passcode: 4695240
- [Audio webcast](#) »

Tufts Health Plan COVID-19 update for providers (webinar)

This webinar allows providers to participate in an interactive session with Tufts Health Plan's Provider Education Team.

- Date: Monday, August 10
- Time: 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT
- [Register](#) »

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