January 25, 2021

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 expands COVID-19 vaccination sites and updates Phase 2 plan

The Baker-Polito Administration announced today an expansion of COVID-19 vaccination sites in all parts of the Commonwealth, including new mass vaccination sites, pharmacy locations, and local sites. The Administration also announced updates to Phase 2 of the Commonwealth’s distribution plan, which will begin Monday, February 1. Individuals 75 years or older will now be the first priority group in Phase 2, and individuals 65 years and older have been moved to the second priority group along with individuals with two or more comorbidities.

Only individuals eligible to receive the vaccine in Phase 1 should complete the attestation form at this time. Individuals in Phase 2 will be able to fill out the form once Phase 2 is activated on February 1.
Information on current vaccine eligibility criteria and a map of vaccination sites are updated regularly here. Sites will be added in the coming weeks and appointments will be released on a rolling basis.

Please note: Patients are asked to refrain from calling the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) or the state's 211 line to make a vaccination appointment. Please speak with your patients about their vaccine eligibility and to utilize the DPH website.

DPH sends out survey for Phase II patient vaccination
The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), through the state’s MIIS vaccine system, sent a survey this weekend to primary care practices registered in the Massachusetts COVID-19 vaccine program to obtain further information about vaccine allocation for patients in Phase II. Please check your inbox, or that of your MIIS designated staff member, for this important email. DPH has asked that the survey be completed as quickly as possible. Please contact PPRC@mms.org if you have questions.

Allergic reactions following first dose of Moderna vaccine
Between December 21, 2020, and January 10, 2021, the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System detected 10 cases of anaphylaxis after administration of a reported 4,041,396 first doses of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine (2.5 cases per million doses administered). In 9 cases, onset occurred within 15 minutes of vaccination. No anaphylaxis-related deaths were reported.

Decontamination systems for personal protective equipment
Decontamination systems are devices intended to decontaminate certain medical devices (such as compatible respirators) so that they can be reused by health care personnel. The
Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs) permitting some decontamination systems to decontaminate certain respirators, recognizing that availability of PPE is an integral part of patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Practice Management

2020 MIPS Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Exception deadline extended to February 1

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) extended the deadline for COVID-19-related 2020 Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Exception applications to **February 1, 2021**.

For the 2020 performance year, CMS will be using our Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances policy to allow MIPS-eligible clinicians, groups, and virtual groups to submit an application requesting reweighting of one or more MIPS performance categories to 0% due to the COVID-19 emergency.

If you have any concerns about the effect of the COVID-19 emergency on your performance data, including cost measures for the 2020 performance period, **apply now** and cite COVID-19 as the reason for your application.

If you have an approved application, you can still receive scores for the Quality, Improvement Activities, and Promoting Interoperability performance categories if you submit data. If the Cost performance category is included in your approved application, you will not be scored on cost measures even if other data are submitted.

**IMPORTANT:** Individuals, groups, and virtual groups can’t apply to override PY2020 data that has already been submitted. Any data submitted as an individual, group, or virtual group before or after an application has been approved will be scored. Learn more in the [2020 Exceptions Applications Fact Sheet](#).
Medicare billing for COVID-19 vaccine administration

Health care providers will be able to bill on single claims for COVID-19 vaccine administration or submit claims on a roster bill for multiple patients at one time. When COVID-19 vaccine doses are provided by the government without charge, only bill for the vaccine administration. Do not include the vaccine codes on the claim when the vaccines are free. If the Medicare beneficiary is enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, submit COVID-19 claims to original fee-for-service Medicare. This applies to all patients enrolled in Medicare Advantage in 2020 and 2021.

Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) call: Post-acute COVID-19 care

For some people, the effects of COVID-19 can last well beyond the immediate illness. Patients and clinicians across the United States are reporting long-term effects of COVID-19, commonly referred to as long COVID. Symptoms may include cognitive difficulties, fatigue, and shortness of breath. In some patients, critical illness from COVID-19 may be the cause of persistent symptoms, but many patients with long-term effects had mild or asymptomatic acute COVID-19 infection. During this COCA call, presenters will share their firsthand experiences with treating long COVID, focusing on the pulmonary, neurologic, and psychological aspects. They will also describe their experiences with establishing clinics that provide care for patients with these long-term effects.

- Date: Thursday, January 28
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET
January 28: DOI and CHIA meeting for providers

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 COVID-19 commercial insurance provisions. The next meeting will focus on telehealth, prior authorization, and other topics, and will be recorded for later viewing. The DOI and CHIA, along with the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) and the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association (MHA), sponsor these calls.

- Date: Thursday, January 28
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET
- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
- Passcode: 501

Join the meeting

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