January 4, 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

Residents aged 75 and older moved to "Phase Two, Group One" in state vaccination schedule

Massachusetts Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Marylou Sudders announced today that residents aged 75 and older will be included in the second rollout stage for vaccinations earlier than originally planned. These residents will now fall in “Phase Two, Group One” alongside individuals with two or more comorbidities. This update to the vaccination schedule will affect about 170,000 Massachusetts residents. Under the original plan, adults aged 65 and older were near the bottom of the list for receiving vaccines in the second phase, slated to run between February and April.

To review Massachusetts' phased vaccination plan, click here.

COVID-19 vaccine resources for health care providers
Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines
Learn about the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, including vaccine characteristics, administration, and contraindications.

- Self-paced online course: Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine
- Webinar: What clinicians need to know about the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines

Vaccine safety
Learn how to monitor COVID-19 vaccine safety and educate patients on what to expect after vaccination.

- Webinar: What every clinician should know about COVID-19 vaccine safety

Vaccination training programs
Learn immunization basics, including vaccine storage and handling, administration, and patient communication. Some trainings offer free continuing education.

- Varied formats: COVID-19 vaccination training programs for healthcare professionals

Vaccine update: Development, approval, allocation, and distribution in the U.S.
Learn from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and research partners about the path to COVID-19 vaccine approval and distribution.

- Webinar: COVID-19 vaccine update

Testing health care personnel for SARS-CoV-2
This document provides a summary of considerations and current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations regarding testing health care personnel (HCP) for SARS-CoV-2. Testing of HCP can be considered in four situations:

1. Testing HCP with signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19
2. Testing asymptomatic HCP with known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2
3. Testing asymptomatic HCP without known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2 as part of expanded screening
4. Testing HCP who have been diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 infection to determine when they are no longer infectious

Hand sanitizer safety and use communication toolkit

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a new toolkit to help stakeholders communicate in English and Spanish about hand sanitizer safety and use during the COVID-19 pandemic. New materials include social media messages and graphics, consumer information, and health professional messaging. Additionally, a new COVID-19 Communication Toolkits webpage provides links to all FDA toolkits on COVID-19 topics to help everyone communicate accurate and timely information to patients, the public, and health care professionals.

Practice Management

SBA extends COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan applications through Dec. 31, 2021

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced today that the deadline to apply for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program for the COVID-19 pandemic will be extended to December 31, 2021. Loans are offered with a 3.75% interest rate for small businesses and a 2.75% interest rate for nonprofit organizations, a 30-year maturity, and an automatic deferment of one year before monthly payments begin. The SBA encourages eligible small businesses and nonprofits to apply.
Tufts Health Plan telehealth update

Tufts Health Plan will compensate in-network providers at 100% of their contracted rate for services rendered in person, as specified in provider agreements, until further notice. The telehealth reduction will not apply.

- All Tufts Health Plan contracting providers, including specialists and urgent care facilities, may provide telemedicine services to members for all medical (well visits/preventive, sick visits, preadmission screenings), behavioral health, ancillary health, and home health care visits for both new and existing patients. Prior authorization is not required.
- Tufts Health Plan will waive member cost share for in-network telehealth services. This includes both facility and professional services. Providers should not collect a copay from members.

**Note:** Effective for dates of service on or after January 1, 2021, member copays and other applicable cost share will be applied to all non-COVID-19 telehealth services, except for primary care and behavioral health telemedicine services for Rhode Island Commercial members. Member copays and other applicable cost share will continue to be waived for COVID-19-related, in-network, medically necessary services. A COVID-19 diagnosis must be submitted on the claim for the waived cost share to continue to apply.

January 7: 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 7
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET
- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
- Passcode: 501

**Join meeting**

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