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July 1, 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](https://massmed.org/covid-19).

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## Public Health

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### COVID-19 in racial and ethnic minority groups

Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put some members of racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk for COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness, regardless of age. Among some racial and ethnic minority groups, including non-Hispanic Black persons, Hispanics and Latinos, and American Indians/Alaska Natives, evidence points to higher rates of hospitalization or death from COVID-19 than among non-Hispanic White persons. The CDC developed resources to help health care professionals reduce the impact of COVID-19 among racial and ethnic minority populations. [Read the CDC report](#).

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### The COVID-19 *Health Literacy Project* fact sheets

To help patients from vulnerable communities know when and how to seek care, the [COVID-19 Health Literacy Project](#) created accessible COVID-19 information in 37 different languages. Several state, national, and international partners are helping

disseminate the materials to patients in their communities and around the world. All of the documents were created in collaboration with Harvard Health Publishing and vetted by Harvard Medical School faculty. These materials are available for download and distribution without copyright restrictions. [Click here for access](#).

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## Practice Management

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### Promoting access to health care and coverage during a public health crisis: COVID-19–related changes affecting MassHealth, Health Connector programs, and the Health Safety Net

Massachusetts, with support from the federal government, implemented several policy and programmatic changes intended to promote access to health care services and health insurance coverage during the COVID-19 emergency. This [centralized resource](#) describes the policy, regulatory, and administrative actions concerning MassHealth, Health Connector programs, and the Health Safety Net. This technical resource is intended to be used by advocates, enrollment assisters, and other stakeholders to assist consumers in identifying options to protect their access to coverage and health care services. Since policies and programs are changing frequently in the current environment, this resource will be regularly updated.

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### How to maintain momentum on telehealth after COVID-19 crisis ends

The use of telehealth exploded as many regulatory barriers affecting its use were temporarily lowered during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current crisis reinforces the need for physician access to practical resources that will enable them to operate telehealth services efficiently while facilitating positive patient experiences. Congress is beginning to examine what needs to be done from the regulatory, legislative, and private-sector perspectives to sustain this momentum.

A recent hearing before the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee was a first step in this process. Dr. Joseph C. Kvedar, a professor at Harvard Medical School and president of the American Telemedicine Association, was one of the speakers and urged Congress to act—and to act quickly before telehealth services abruptly end with the national emergency and beneficiaries lose access to virtual services on which they have come to rely. [Read more here.](#)

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## Unconscious bias resources for health professionals

At academic medical centers, unconscious biases can compromise diversity and inclusion efforts in admissions, curriculum development, counseling, and faculty advising, among other functions. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) provides resources and trainings to assist these institutions to meet their goals around addressing unconscious biases. Explore the [resources](#).

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## Harvard Pilgrim HealthCare updates for providers related to COVID-19

Please refer to this [document](#) for information about Harvard Pilgrim’s policies and business operations designed to support members, providers, and employers through the COVID-19 emergency. The information applies to Harvard Pilgrim fully insured, Medicare Advantage, Medicare Enhance, and Medicare Supplement plans, unless otherwise noted.

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## Meeting tomorrow for providers: DOI & CHIA on testing and telehealth

The Division of Insurance (DOI) and the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) hosts regular meetings offering providers an opportunity to raise questions and concerns related to Governor Baker's emergency order commercial insurance provisions.

Tomorrow's meeting will focus on testing and telehealth and will be recorded for later viewing.

- Date: Thursday, July 2
  - Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT
  - [Meeting URL](#)
  - Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
  - Passcode: 501
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## CMS COVID-19 Office Hours Calls (Tuesdays, 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. EDT)

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) hosts recurring stakeholder engagement sessions to share information related to COVID-19. These “Office Hour Calls” are an opportunity for hospitals, health systems, and providers to ask CMS officials questions about the temporary actions that:

- Increase hospital capacity – CMS Hospitals Without Walls
- Rapidly expand the health care workforce
- Put patients over paperwork
- Further promote telehealth in Medicare

### **Event details:**

- Date: Tuesday, July 7
  - Time: 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. EDT
  - Attendee dial-in: 833-614-0820
  - Passcode: 3048844
  - [Audio webcast](#)
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## CMS Lessons from the Front Lines: COVID-19 (twice a month on Fridays at 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT)

“Lessons from the Front Lines” calls are a joint effort between Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) administrator Seema Verma, FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn, MD, and the White House Coronavirus Task Force. Physicians and other clinicians are invited to share their experiences, ideas, strategies, and insights related to their COVID-19 response. There is an opportunity to ask questions of presenters.

- Date: Friday, July 17
- Time: 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Attendee dial-in: 833-614-0820
- Passcode: 3096434
- [Web link](#)

Calls, recordings, and transcripts are posted on the CMS [podcast page](#).

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