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July 27, 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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## Government Guidelines

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### HHS extends the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and maintains provider flexibilities

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) officially renewed the public health emergency declaration (PHE) for the coronavirus pandemic. The emergency declaration will now last through October 23, 2020 (at least). This will ensure that key telehealth flexibilities and cost sharing waivers for COVID-19 testing and treatment remain in place for at least 90 more days as many states are facing dramatic increases in COVID-19 cases.

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) supported many HHS flexibilities adopted during the PHE and advocated to make the [telemedicine policies permanent](#). However, we have urged the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to sunset the PHE waivers involving scope of practice and licensure when the PHE concludes. The MMS, the American Medical Association (AMA), and several state and specialty societies [sent a letter this week](#) to CMS Administrator Seema Verma affirming our support for the

physician-led team-based approach to care and opposing efforts that could undermine the physician-patient relationship during and after the pandemic.

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## Public Health

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### Additional COVID-19 testing sites open in 8 more communities

To slow the spread of COVID-19, the Commonwealth is erecting new free testing sites in Agawam, Brockton, Methuen, Randolph, Revere, Springfield, Taunton, and Worcester. These communities constituted about 15 percent of the Commonwealth's positive tests last week. The additional facilities will double the size of Massachusetts's current testing program. Information on specific testing locations is available at [mass.gov/stophespread](https://mass.gov/stophespread).

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## Educational Programs & Resources

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### How to help patients manage high blood pressure remotely

The American Medical Association (AMA) Chief Experience Officer Todd Unger talks with experts about how physicians can help patients manage hypertension remotely, using, for example, self blood pressure monitoring. To watch the video, [click here](#).

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## Practice Management

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### Application extension: Provider Relief Funds for Medicaid and CHIP physicians and organizations

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) extended the deadline for eligible Medicaid and CHIP physicians and organizations to [submit information](#) and apply for funding from the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund to August 3, 2020 (originally July 20).

HHS is distributing approximately \$15 billion to eligible physicians who have not previously received a payment from the Provider Relief Fund. The payment amount will be at least 2 percent of reported gross revenue from patient care, and the final amount will be determined based on submitted data, including the number of Medicaid patients served. HHS created a [fact sheet](#) to explain the application process and answer frequently asked questions.

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## Telehealth for community-based organizations

Register today for the first of three webinars on telehealth for community-based organizations. This U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) webinar will provide an overview of telehealth basics for community-based organizations such as public housing authorities, multi-family housing providers, aging and disability network stakeholders, and other social service providers. The webinar will highlight relevant resources and provide examples of telehealth use and lessons from the field. To register, [click here](#).

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## It is not too late - SBA economic relief programs

There is still time to take advantage of the Paycheck Protection Program with an extended deadline of August 8. The Small Business Association (SBA) Massachusetts district office is hosting a webinar to address some frequently asked questions, including:

- How does the program work and what do I need to do?
- How does loan forgiveness work?
- Are there other programs available for small businesses affected by the pandemic?

The session will be followed by a question-and-answer opportunity.

- Date: Tuesday, July 28
  - Time: 11:00 a.m. – noon EDT
  - [Register](#)
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## Tomorrow: CMS COVID-19 Office Hours call

Office Hours Calls provide an opportunity for hospitals, health systems, and providers to ask questions of agency officials regarding the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) temporary actions that empower local hospitals and health care systems to:

- Increase hospital capacity
- Rapidly expand the health care workforce
- Put patients over paperwork
- Further promote telehealth in Medicare

To join the next Office Hours call, please use the information below.

- Date: Tuesday, July 28
  - Time: 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. EDT
  - Toll-free attendee dial-in: 833-614-0820.
  - Access passcode: 1492795
  - [Audio webcast](#)
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## 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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