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July 6, 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.

MMS Programs and Events

Video, slides, and summary available: “COVID-19 and Vulnerable Populations”

Tuesday night, June 30, the Massachusetts Medical Society hosted “COVID-19 and Vulnerable Populations,” a forum moderated by Simone Wildes, MD, an infectious disease physician and chair of the MMS Committee on Diversity in Medicine. Monica Bharel, MD, MPH, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and Mary Bassett, MD, MPH, Director of the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, discussed the state and national data on COVID-19 cases and deaths. While people over 65 years of age make up 80 percent of deaths, age-adjusted national data show striking disparities in cases and mortality between Black, Latino, and Indigenous populations relative to Whites for all age groups up through midlife—rates up to nine times higher.

The speakers discussed state actions to address these disparities and made clinical, data reporting, and advocacy recommendations for physicians.

The program recording, along with the slide deck and summary, can be [found here](#).

Psychological First Aid: Healthy recovery now and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 public health crisis

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted physicians and other first responders physically and emotionally. The daily occurrence of sheltering behind PPE, quarantining from family and friends after long work shifts, and the lack of time to mourn all exact a heavy toll.

"Psychological First Aid," a live webinar sponsored by the MMS and the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society, will:

- Describe the impact of traumatic incidences on mental health and resulting sequelae on first responders.
- Introduce the treatment principles for Psychological First Aid.
- Highlight the linkage between racial trauma and injustice, moral injury, and mental health aspects of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Identify ways in which Psychological First Aid can be adapted to various trauma and disaster settings.

Event details:

- Date: Wednesday, July 15
- Time: 7:30 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
- [Register here](#)

Accreditation Statement

The Massachusetts Medical Society is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

AMA Credit Designation Statement

The Massachusetts Medical Society designates this live activity for a maximum of 1.25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits TM. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Risk Management

This activity meets the criteria of the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine for risk management study.

Government Guidelines

Massachusetts reopening Phase 3

With Phase 3 taking effect (today) Monday, July 6, health care providers may continue to provide in-person procedures and services as authorized in Phase 2, with the addition of certain group treatment programs and day programs. All providers must maintain compliance with public health and safety standards. Prioritizing telehealth, meeting public health and infection control standards, adhering to prioritization policies, ensuring equitable access to care, and monitoring patient volume must continue. Moving into Phase 3 for the health care system is contingent on Massachusetts maintaining sufficient statewide hospital bed capacity at newly revised thresholds. For more information:

- [EOHHS Health and Human Services Phase 3 Reopening Approach](#)
- [DPH Phase 3 Reopening Non-Acute Care Hospital/Health Care Provider Guidance](#)

- [Phase 3 Reopening Attestation Form Non-Acute Care Hospital/Providers](#)

For more information about Phase 1 and Phase 2, please see below.

- [Health and Human Services reopening plans and guidance](#)
- [MMS tips for expanding practice during COVID-19: Phase 2](#)

Public Health

DPH releases updated COVID-19 testing guidance

On July 3, 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) updated its [guidance and recommendations for diagnostic testing for COVID-19](#) as well as the circumstances where serological testing may be appropriate. In addition, the document indicates which subset of specimens can be submitted to the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory. The guidance is not intended to replace or supersede clinical judgment. Clinicians concerned that their patient has COVID-19 or has been exposed to COVID-19 should utilize testing as they deem appropriate.

Providing mental health and substance use disorder resources during the COVID-19 public health emergency

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) issued a new guide urging insurers and clinicians to leverage existing health and disease management programs to provide mental health and substance use disorder resources during the COVID-19 public health emergency. [Click here](#) to learn more about:

- Expanding coverage for mental health and substance use disorder services delivered via telehealth platforms, telephone, and similar mechanisms.
- Providing mental health and substance use disorder resources using online health and disease management programs.
- Connecting enrollees to community resources that provide mental health and substance use disorder support.
- Using mobile apps to provide resources.

Practice Management

MassHealth will extend telehealth flexibility through at least December 31, 2020

Telehealth will remain an important part of MassHealth's strategy to ensure member access to critical health care services and to promote safety adherence during and after the COVID-19 emergency.

MassHealth will extend its current telehealth-related policies through at least December 31, 2020. This includes extending the following policies:

1. Allowing qualified providers to deliver all clinically appropriate, medically necessary MassHealth-covered services to MassHealth members via telehealth, including video and telephone.
2. Rates of payment for services delivered via telehealth will be the same as such services delivered via traditional (i.e., in-person) methods outlined in the applicable regulations.

MassHealth is currently developing a longer-term telehealth policy that will take effect after December 31, 2020. This policy will continue to support broad telehealth access for MassHealth members. For additional information, please refer to [All Provider Bulletin 298: MassHealth Telehealth Policy](#).

Quality Payment Program – COVID-19 response

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is implementing multiple flexibilities across multiple performance years for the Quality Payment Program. CMS announced that physicians will have the option to opt-out completely or partially from the 2020 MIPS program by completing a hardship exemption application and indicating it is due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Individual clinicians and group practices have until December 31, 2020 to complete the [hardship application](#). [Click here](#) to learn more about the new 2020 performance year flexibilities.

The PPP is now extended through August 8

The new deadline to apply for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan is August 8, 2020. Use [this form](#) to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program with an eligible lender

[View a list of lenders participating in the Paycheck Protection Program.](#)

The Small Business Administration will forgive loans if all employee retention criteria are met, and the funds are used for eligible expenses. [Click here](#) to read more about PPP loan forgiveness.

COVID-19 coding and guidance: Summary of the SARS-CoV-2 related CPT codes

Review a summary of the SARS-CoV-2 related CPT codes that have been approved and published for the 2021 CPT code set.

- Accepted addition of code 87635 to report infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Coronavirus disease [COVID-19]), amplified probe technique. The new code was effective March 13, 2020.
- Accepted revision of code 86318 to report immunoassay for infectious agent antibody(ies) and to be a parent to 86328; addition of code 86328 to report single step antibody testing for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2; addition of child code 86769 to report multiple-step antibody testing for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2; and revision of the Immunology guidelines. The new codes and revisions were effective April 10, 2020.
- Accepted addition of PLA code 0202U to report the BioFire® Respiratory Panel 2.1 (RP2.1) test. The new code was effective May 20, 2020.
- Accepted addition of code 87426 to report infectious agent antigen detection by immunoassay technique of SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2. In addition, two new PLA codes (0223U and 0224U) were accepted for detection of SARS-CoV-2.

[Click here](#) to learn more and [download the June 25, 2020 CPT Assistant guide](#).

CARES Act Provider Relief Fund FAQ

Find answers related to Provider Relief Fund general information, general distribution, Medicaid and CHIP distribution, and targeted distribution. [Click here](#) to explore the new FAQ.

CARES Act Provider Relief Fund Medicaid and CHIP distribution webinar

To be considered for the Medicaid and CHIP Distribution, providers must submit their gross revenues from patient care for CY 2017, 2018, or 2019 by July 20, 2020. Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

To learn about the application process:

- [Join the webinar](#): Pre-register to reserve a spot for Wednesday, July 8, at 4:00 p.m. EDT.
 - [Watch a recording](#): Register/login to watch a previous session.
-

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](#)

Meeting 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 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, July 9
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT
- [Meeting URL](#)
- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
- Passcode: 501

COVID-19 Medicare Part B advanced payment, repayment and recoupment process webinars

If you requested and received accelerated or advanced payments from Medicare due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, this learning session is for you. CMS expanded the accelerated and advance payment program for financial hardship relief during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Accelerated or advanced payments need to be repaid to the Medicare Trust Fund. During this webinar, NGS will review the repayment and recoupment process.

Date: Thursday, July 16

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. EDT

[Register](#)

Date: August 13

Time: 10:30 a.m ET – 11:30 a.m EDT

[Register](#)

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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860 Winter Street, Waltham Woods Corporate Center, Waltham, MA 02451-1411
781-893-4610 | 781-893-3800 | Member Information Hotline: 800-322-2303 x7311

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