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May 4, 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 the NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

MMS Programs & Projects



Dr. Christopher Garofalo, member of the Committee on the Sustainability of Private Practice, is grateful for his family.

Send your photo submission to the "MMS From the Heart" video project

MMS members: What are you grateful for? With our front-line workers fighting to contain novel coronavirus, the MMS is seeking to capture this moment in history—and remember the goodwill—through a video and social media project.

To participate, please submit a photograph of yourself with a written message describing what you are grateful for, or a message of hope or thanks, to mmsfromtheheart@mms.org.

Public Health

Commonwealth of MA and Partners In Health launch Community Tracing Collaborative

Please help contain COVID-19 by spreading the word about the [Community Tracing Collaborative](#). Let patients, friends, and colleagues know to “Answer the Call” if they are contacted by someone from the collaborative.

When someone tests positive for COVID-19, the collaborative’s contact tracers will reach out by phone to that person and their close contacts. Contact tracers make sure individuals receive the medical attention and support they need during isolation and quarantine. The caller ID will show that the call is coming from the “MA COVID Team.” Information shared during the call is strictly confidential and treated as private medical information.

Practice Management

Telehealth vendor options

Because many factors must be considered when selecting a telehealth vendor, the MMS created a list of available telemedicine platforms with details about functionality, options, pricing, and other considerations. Some platforms are stand-alone, while others are integrated with electronic health record (EHR) software in addition to other video conferencing platforms.

- [Click here](#) for the updated MMS vendor options list.
- [Click here](#) for the Selecting a Vendor Guide document.
- [Click here](#) for the Vendor Information Intake Form.

CMS announces payment increase for audio-only telephone visits

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued another round of sweeping regulatory waivers and rule changes to deliver expanded care to seniors and provide flexibility to the health care system. CMS directed a historic expansion of telehealth services so that providers can deliver a wider range of care to Medicare beneficiaries in their homes.

CMS is increasing payments for these telephone visits to match payments for similar office and outpatient visits. This would increase payments for these services from \$14-\$41 to \$46-\$110. The payments are retroactive to March 1, 2020.

Because some Medicare patients don't have access to the audio-video technology required for Medicare telehealth services, or choose not to use it, CMS is waiving the video requirement for certain telephone evaluation and management services. As a result, Medicare beneficiaries will be able to use an audio-only telephone to access these services.

[Click here](#) for the new list of services payable under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule when furnished via telehealth, including services eligible to be provided via audio-only technology.

[Click here](#) for COVID-19 Emergency Declaration Blanket Waivers for Health Care Providers.

[Click here](#) to learn about the new regulatory waivers and services expansion.

CMS coronavirus stakeholder calls

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) hosts recurring stakeholder engagement sessions to share COVID-19-related information. These sessions are open to members of the health care community and are intended to provide updates, share best practices among peers, and offer attendees an opportunity to ask questions of CMS and other subject matter experts.

[Click here](#) to learn more and access transcripts and audio from previous calls.

Health plan updates

The Massachusetts Medical Society is working closely with health plan leaders, state officials, and partners within the health care system to address local needs resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak. For an updated summary of Massachusetts health plan coverage policies, [click here](#).

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