October 26, 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.

Public Health

Universal masking lowers COVID-19 infections among health care workers

Universal masking at a Massachusetts health system led to a decrease in COVID-19 cases among health care workers, even as the virus spread increased in the surrounding community.

The study — led by researchers at Cambridge Health Alliance, a Harvard-affiliated community health system, and the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health — compared COVID-19 infection rates between the Cambridge Health Alliance and Massachusetts residents. The study period was March 17, when the first health system employee tested positive, to May 6, when Massachusetts began requiring masking in public places where social distancing isn't possible.
Latinx COVID-19 health inequities report: Insights for the health care field

The structural drivers that have led to health inequity in Latinx communities have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and have contributed to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on these communities. That is a key finding of “Latinx COVID-19 Health Inequities Report: Insights for the Health Care Field,” which was produced by the American Medical Association (AMA) Center for Health Equity and gleaned from interviews with physicians and other stakeholders at the intersection of the Latinx community and the COVID-19 response. For COVID-19 health equity resources, please [click here](#).

Free hand sanitizer available for Mass. health care providers

Massachusetts-based vendor SLH Medical Supply received a donation of hand sanitizer from The Faber Foundation that they would like to pass along to Massachusetts health care providers. The sanitizer is liquid and made in compliance with World Health Organization (WHO) specifications with 80% alcohol (ethanol). The safety data sheet for the sanitizer is [available here](#).

A total of 12,000 16-ounce bottles are available in cases of 12. **Sanitizer must be picked up on Thursday, October 29 between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. in Webster, MA.** A limit to the number of cases available to each organization will be determined based on the volume of interest. To express interest in this offering, please fill out this [brief form](#). You will then receive an email with pick-up instructions and confirmation of the number of cases you will be allotted based on your request and availability. Please contact [Jennifer Day](#) with any questions.

*Please note that COVID precautions will be in place and masks are required to be worn. This is a one-time offering and the MMS is not able to ship the hand sanitizer to you and will not bring supplies back to our main office in Waltham. You must be able to have someone from your practice pick up the hand sanitizer on the donation day referenced above.*
Last chance to register: "Stigma and Illness": Live webinar on October 29

The bias and discrimination that accompany certain illnesses can prevent individuals from seeking care, engender fear, and cause prejudice against entire groups or communities. The response to outbreaks, infectious disease, and stereotyped health conditions requires protecting health while mitigating the stigma that can further exacerbate social and health disparities. The Massachusetts Medical Society’s 17th Annual Public Health Leadership Forum will convene leaders in public health, medicine, and policy to examine ways to destigmatize disease and put forth interventions that reinforce prevention and the provision of safe, equitable, and quality health care. The program is free; however, pre-registration is required. Please visit www.massmed.org/2020PHLF to register or to learn more about the program faculty and CME information.

- Date: Thursday, October 29
- Time: 1:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. ET

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**Practice Management**

**Organizational commitment and reducing physician/clinician burnout**

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) and the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association (MHA) Joint Task Force on Physician Burnout has studied physician well-being over the past two and a half years, produced two nationally recognized studies on burnout, and aligned its findings with the National Academy of Medicine.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, and now more than ever, the Task Force believes that commitment from healthcare organization leadership is necessary to effectively reduce physician/clinician burnout. To promote this outcome, the Task Force is asking CEOs and CMOs to [sign this letter](#) demonstrating your facility’s commitment to addressing burnout. Specifically, each organization should select a measure of physician/clinician
burnout and measure it over time, and include improving that particular metric of burnout within the organization's institutional goals.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the issue further, please contact Steven Defossez, MD, MHA Vice President of Clinical Integration, or Yael Miller, MBA, MMS Director of Practice Solutions and Medical Economics. Signed commitment letters can also be submitted to sdefossez@mhalink.org.

The MMS-MHA Joint Task Force on Physician Burnout produced a landmark report on the issue in 2018 and has collaborated with state and national groups including the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the Harvard Global Health Institute, and the National Academy of Medicine.

COVID-19 grants for MA businesses

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has made $50.8 million in grants available to support small businesses, microenterprises, and their employees, families, and communities. Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC) will be administering these funds to businesses experiencing economic hardship and a loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Preference will be given to small businesses whose owners are women, minorities, veterans, members of other underrepresented groups, who are focused on serving the Gateway Cities of Massachusetts, and those most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Preference will also be given to applicants that have not been able to receive aid from other federal programs related to COVID-19. Read more »

HHS expands relief fund eligibility and updates reporting requirements

Eligibility
Health and Human Services/Health Resources & Service Administration (HHS/HRSA) announced that the Phase 3 Provider Relief Fund (PRF) eligibility has been expanded to include provider applicants such as residential treatment facilities, chiropractors, and eye and vision providers that have not yet received PRF distributions. Many providers who accept Medicare and Medicaid within these categories have already received a PRF payment, but others have not and HHS is working to ensure even more providers are able to receive Phase 3 funding.

- Under the Phase 3 General Distribution, which began accepting applicants on October 5, 2020, HHS invited providers that had already received PRF payments to apply for additional funding that considers changes in patient care operating revenue and expenses caused by the coronavirus.
- For a detailed description of all eligible Phase 3 General Distribution provider types, visit the [PRF website](#).
- The deadline for these providers and all Phase 3 applicants is November 6, 2020 to submit their applications for payment consideration. Once validated, these providers will receive a baseline payment of approximately 2% of annual revenue from patient care plus an add-on payment that considers changes in operating revenues and expenses from patient care, including expenses incurred related to coronavirus.
- To learn more, register for the webcast on November 2 at 3:00 p.m. ET
- Watch a recorded webcast. Register/login to watch the session

**Reporting Requirements**
HHS also announced it will update the most recent PRF reporting instructions to broaden the use of provider relief funds.

- In September, HHS published final reporting guidance to set expectations for PRF payment recipients and updated its [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)](#) to clarify that for purposes of relief payments for lost revenues attributable to COVID-19, recipients must submit information showing a negative change in year-over-year net patient care operating income.
- A policy memorandum on the reporting requirement decision can be found here.
- The amended reporting requirements guidance can be found here.
CARES Act Provider Relief Fund update

Applications for the Phase 3 General Distribution are now being accepted through **November 6, 2020**. Providers are encouraged to apply as soon as possible to expedite the calculation and distribution of payments.

- Learn how to apply »
- Download: Factsheet (PDF) | Presentation (PDF) »
- Register for the webcast on November 2 at 3:00 p.m. ET
- Watch a recorded webcast. Register/log in to watch the session.

CMS COVID-19 Office Hours Calls (twice a month on Tuesday from 5 – 6 p.m. EST)

Office Hour Calls provide an opportunity for hospitals, health systems, and providers to ask questions of agency officials regarding Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ (CMS) temporary actions that empower local hospitals and healthcare systems.

- Date: Tuesday, October 27
- Time: 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. ET
- Toll-free attendee dial-in: (833) 614-0820
- Access Passcode: 2394789
- Audio webcast link »

Telehealth and Team-Based Care: How to best engage support staff to successfully implement TBC in telemedicine

Attend this webinar to understand how best to engage support staff to successfully implement the Team-Based Care (TBC) model in telemedicine.

- Speaker: James Jerzak, MD Family Physician, Bellin Health
DOI and CHIA meeting for providers: testing, telehealth, and prior authorization

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, telehealth, and prior authorization, and will be recorded for later viewing. The DOI and CHIA, along with the Massachusetts Medical Society and the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association, sponsor these calls.

- Date: Thursday, October 29
- Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET
- Meeting ID: 290 289 5643
- Passcode: 501
- Meeting URL »