September 9, 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

17th Annual Public Health Leadership Forum - *Stigma and Illness*

Infectious diseases, mental illness, and substance use not only cause sickness, pain, and loss for patients and communities, they can also trigger a common corollary of illness—stigma. This year’s Public Health Leadership Forum will examine health-related stigma and discuss interventions to counter the misinformation and fear that impede access to safe, equitable, and quality health care. Speakers include Anne Stangl, PhD, president of Hera Solutions, LLC, and associate faculty of social and behavioral interventions at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; Cassandra Pierre, MD, MPH, medical director of the Center for Infectious Diseases at Boston Medical Center; and Michael Curry, Esq., deputy chief executive officer and general counsel of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers.

- Date: Thursday, October 29
- Time: 1:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
- [Learn more »](#)
CDC interim guidance for rapid antigen testing for SARS-CoV-2

Antigen tests can be used in a variety of testing strategies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This interim guidance is intended for clinicians and laboratory professionals who order antigen tests, receive antigen test results, and/or perform point-of-care testing. The guidance includes summary tables on testing strategies, the differences between RT-PCR and antigen testing, and the relationship between pre-test probability and the likelihood of positive and negative predictive values.

Practice Management

Deadline approaching for CARES Act Provider Relief Fund

Applications are still open for Phase 2 General Distribution funding for Medicaid, Medicaid managed care, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), dental providers, certain Medicare providers, and assisted living facilities. All groups have until September 13, 2020 to submit their TIN for validation and apply for funding. Learn about the application process and apply.

HHS telehealth update

Updated information about telehealth billing and reimbursement during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, including Medicare's expansion of telehealth coverage, can be found here.

Blue Cross: Behavioral health providers fee schedule clarification

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBS MA) is still operating under the COVID-19 Temporary Payment Policy. BCBS MA is currently reimbursing telehealth visits at the same rate as in-office visits. Please refer to the payment policy for
specific reimbursement information for telehealth services. BCBS MA will continue to reimburse behavioral health telehealth visits at the same rate as in-office visits even after the COVID-19 public health emergency ends. BCBS MA will also update the payment policies accordingly once the public health emergency ends. If you have any questions, please call Network Management and Credentialing Services at 1-800-316-BLUE (2583).

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**CMS: New COVID-19 testing and reporting requirements**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provided actions nursing homes can take in the next 24-72 hours to reduce viral transmission and reduce the risk of COVID-19. [Click here](#) to learn more.

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