June 9, 2021

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.

Please note: The Massachusetts Medical Society will conclude regular weekly publication of the Planning and Preparedness e-newsletter on Wednesday, June 16. Should metrics around COVID-19 change or if there is pertinent information that must be communicated rapidly, we will utilize this platform to communicate with you. Thank you for reading.

Public Health

June 11 White House Conversation: Primary Care Providers, Health Systems, and the Next Phase of the Vaccination Rollout

The White House COVID-19 Response Team and the U.S. Surgeon General invite physicians to join a virtual conversation on Primary Care Providers, Health Systems, and the Next Phase of the Vaccination Rollout on Friday, June 11 from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. ET. The event will feature five conversations with primary care providers, health system leaders, and state health officials on innovative approaches they are taking to patient outreach and implementing vaccination programs at primary care provider offices. The conversations will be chaired by Dr. Anthony Fauci, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Dr. Vivek Murthy, Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, and Dr. Bechara Choucair.
Click here to attend the event. A recording will also be available at this link after the event.

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**Practice Management**

**Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee**

**June 10, 2021 meeting**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) will [convene a virtual meeting](#) of the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) at 8:30 a.m. ET on June 10, 2021.

During the meeting, the agency will provide a status update on our approach to emergency use authorization (EUA) for COVID-19 vaccines intended for use in individuals 12 through 17 years of age. The committee will also discuss the data needed to support an EUA and a biologics license application (BLA) for a COVID-19 vaccine intended for use in children less than 12 years of age. The committee will not discuss any specific products.

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**MassHealth update**

This MassHealth [bulletin](#), which supplements and updates All Provider Bulletins 304 and 312, provides an update to the payment provisions for monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 described in those bulletins. It also notes that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) withdrew emergency use authorization for a previously approved monoclonal antibody treatment that is no longer a covered service for MassHealth members. Finally, the FDA granted emergency use authorization for monoclonal antibody therapy sotrovimab effective May 26, 2021, and MassHealth will cover this service. Effective for dates of service on or after May 6, 2021, providers enrolled in the MassHealth acute outpatient hospital (AOH), community health center (CHC), and physician programs may bill and receive payment for administering monoclonal antibody products used to treat COVID-19 as described [here](#).
SARS-CoV-2 viral mutations: Impact on COVID-19 tests

The SARS-CoV-2 virus has mutated over time, resulting in genetic variation in the population of circulating viral strains over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Molecular, antigen, and serology tests are affected by viral mutations differently due to the inherent design differences of each test.

This page provides information regarding the impact of viral mutations on COVID-19 tests, recommendations for clinical laboratory staff and health care providers, and information about certain tests for which the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has identified potential impacts on performance due to SARS-CoV-2 genetic mutations. The FDA will update this page as significant new information becomes available.

Tufts Health Plan: COVID-19 updates for providers

Referrals: Effective for dates of service on or after July 1, 2021, referral requirements will be reinstated for all Commercial products. This temporary referral policy applies to all fully-insured and self-insured groups, however, self-insured groups do have the option to opt-out and those opt outs may not be specifically listed. To confirm referral opt outs for self-insured groups, contact Provider Services.

Cost Share Update: Effective for dates of service on or after August 7, 2021, cost share will be reinstated for COVID-19 treatment, including COVID-19 related telehealth services. These changes apply to Rhode Island Commercial products and Tufts Health Medicare Preferred HMO plans. Additionally, Rhode Island Commercial products will resume cost share for primary care and behavioral health telehealth services, effective for dates of service on or after August 7, 2021.

As a reminder, the following changes were implemented:

Notification:

Notification is required within 2 business days of the admission for the following:

- Urgent/emergent inpatient admissions and post-acute admissions
• Diagnoses and treatment related to COVID-19 or suspected of having COVID-19 contraction

Prior Authorization:

• Prior authorization is not required, for diagnoses and treatment related to COVID-19 or suspected of having COVID-19 contraction, including for transfers to post-acute non-hospital facilities and home health care.
• The following prior authorization requirements are reinstated and apply to all diagnoses, except for a COVID-19 diagnosis:
  o Prior authorization is required for non-hospital locations for post-acute care (i.e. inpatient rehab, LTAC, skilled nursing facilities and home care), including following an inpatient hospital admission.
  o Prior authorization requirements will be reinstated for hospice services.
• For Massachusetts Commercial Products and Tufts Health Direct, prior authorization requirements will be reinstated for any inpatient treatment or outpatient scheduled surgeries or admissions to acute care hospitals or mental health hospitals.
• Refer to the benefit-specific payment policies located in the Provider Resource Center for additional information.