

Hospice and Palliative Care Resources for the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 01/08/21

NHPCO has created this update for hospice and palliative care providers to share recent news and helpful links. Please note, these Updates are published when there is helpful news to share.

“People grow through experience if they meet life honestly and courageously.” – Eleanor Roosevelt

Policy Update

HHS Partnering with Pharmacy Chains to Speed Up Vaccinations

The federal government is turning to private pharmacies to administer COVID-19 vaccines, in an effort to speed up the number of Americans being inoculated against the disease. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) vaccine tracker reports that at least 5.3 million doses have been administered in the United States as of January 6, out of almost 17.3 million doses distributed. As late as December 23, Operation Warp Speed leaders had stated that 20 million doses would be distributed by the end of 2020.

HHS has now decided on an "early launch" of a federal partnership with 19 pharmacy chains, which will let states allocate vaccines directly to some 40,000 pharmacy locations, said Azar. "The plan had been to ramp up this partnership over time because vaccine supply would not be sufficient to spread across all of the pharmacy partners right away."

The pharmacies could vaccinate people over a certain age or in specific occupations, in "settings that may be more convenient and efficient than partners [states] have used so far, like hospitals," said Azar.

Walgreens and CVS are already working with the federal government to vaccinate residents and staff of long-term care facilities, but that effort is slow-going. As of January 6, only 511,000 doses have been administered at long-term care facilities, out of some 3.4 million that have been distributed, according to the CDC vaccine tracker.

HHS Continues Community Based Testing Sites for COVID-19

Today, HHS announced the [extension of the Community Based Testing Site program for COVID-19 testing](#), through partnership with national pharmacy and retail chains CVS, Rite-Aid, Walgreens, Quest (through services at Walmart) and service provider eTrueNorth (through services at Health Mart and Topco locations). The partnership has resulted in establishing more than 3,300 COVID-19 testing locations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. To date, more than 5.6 million tests have been conducted as a result of this partnership.

Secretary Azar Renews Determination That A Public Health Emergency Exists

As a result of the continued consequences of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, on this date and after consultation with public health officials as necessary, I, Alex M. Azar II, Secretary of Health and Human Services, pursuant to the authority vested in me under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, do hereby [renew, effective January 21, 2021](#), my January 31, 2020, determination, that I previously renewed on April 21, 2020 October 23, 2020, my January 31, 2020, determination, that I previously renewed on April 21, 2020, July 23, 2020, and October 2, 2020, that a public health emergency exists and has existed since January 27, 2020, nationwide.

FDA Posts New Webpage

The [FDA posted a new webpage](#) on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) highlighting authorities that are intended to enhance the FDA's ability to identify, prevent, and mitigate possible drug shortages by, among other things, enhancing the FDA's visibility into drug supply chains.

Provider Update

COVID-19 Public Education Campaign on Vaccines

Recently, HHS launched the [COVID-19 Education Campaign](#) aimed at increasing public confidence in COVID-19 vaccines while reinforcing basic prevention measures, including mask wearing and social distancing. Today, several HHS leaders (Dr. Anthony Fauci, RADM Felicia Collins, Dr. Nancy Messonnier) participated in a historic town hall conversation with Black America about the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and how they can work together to save lives.

When Vaccine is Limited, Who Gets Vaccinated First?

Because the U.S. supply of COVID-19 vaccine is expected to be limited at first, [CDC is providing recommendations](#) to federal, state, and local governments about who should be vaccinated first. CDC's recommendations are based on those from the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#), an independent panel of medical and public health experts.

CDC Foresees Spread of Highly Contagious Coronavirus

As reported by an article in [The Washington Post](#) (01/06/21): The mutant variant of the novel coronavirus first seen in Britain is likely to be present in much of the United States. Although the variant has so far been detected in a very small fraction of infections, it shows signs of spreading and may become significantly more common in coming weeks, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and infectious-disease experts.

Deaths in the U.S. Top 4,000 for First Time

More than 4,000 people died of covid-19 in the United States on 1-7-21 which is the first time the toll has exceeded that milestone, following a record day of 3,915 deaths on 1-6-21, reported [The Washington Post](#) (01/07/21). The pandemic has now claimed more than 363,000 lives in the United States. More than 265,000 new coronavirus cases were reported, the second-highest count in a day according to a Washington Post analysis. More than 132,000 people are battling covid-19 in hospital beds, the most the nation's health-care system has taken on.

Resources

CAPC Blog on Caring for Latino Patients

How the pandemic has impacted Latinos living with serious illnesses – and the important role palliative care teams play in providing culturally humble care. Read the blog, "[Invisible Millions: Caring for Latino Patients and Families during COVID-19](#)" on the CAPC website blog.

NHPCO Podcast Inspires Article in *Hospice News*

The last NHPCO podcast of 2020, [Episode #102](#), featuring Carla Cheatham and Ben Marcantonio was covered in an article published today by *Hospice News*. Visit the *Hospice News* website to read "[Fostering Hospice Staff Resilience During COVID-19.](#)"