

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 03/26/21

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.

"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." – Confucius

Policy Update

Congress Passes Legislation Extending Medicare Sequestration Relief

Yesterday, the Senate passed H.R. 1868, a bill to extend the two percent Medicare sequestration moratorium until December 31, 2021. To offset the cost, the bill extends the timeframe for the Medicare sequestration until late 2030. President Biden is expected to sign this legislation into law after the House passes the Senate version of the bill next month. For details regarding how this bill will affect hospice providers, NHPCO members can download the full Policy Alert (03/25/21) from the [Regulatory Alerts and Updates](#) page.

Paycheck Protection Program Loan

Yesterday, the Senate also passed a bill extending the deadline for applying for a Paycheck Protection Program loan to May 31, sending the legislation to the White House for President Biden's signature days before the current March 31 deadline. The CARES Act, H.R. 748, established the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a guaranteed loan program created as an expansion of an existing loan program operated by the Small Business Administration (SBA) for small businesses to cover payroll and other operating expenses during the public health crisis. Many hospice providers have been recipients of PPP Loans.

SAVE LIVES Act to Expand VA Authority to Provide Vaccines

President Biden signed the [SAVE LIVES Act](#) into law on 03/24/21, expanding VA's legal authority to provide COVID-19 vaccines to all Veterans, regardless of their VA health care enrollment status, as well as Veteran spouses, caregivers and some beneficiaries. The SAVE LIVES Act removed some of the legal limits on the medical care VA can provide to Veterans, based on health care eligibility and priority groups. The expanded authority depends on readily available COVID-19 vaccine supply and requires VA to continue to prioritize vaccinations and healthcare delivery for our nation's Veterans enrolled in VA care.

Provider Update

Vaccinating Dialysis Patients and Healthcare Personnel

COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting people from getting sick. By [allocating vaccines for outpatient dialysis patients and the healthcare personnel](#) who care for them in your jurisdiction, you can protect patients who are at high risk, disproportionately affected by COVID-19, or might suffer severe consequences if infected.

COVID-19 'Long Haulers' Need Dedicated Clinics

"The United States should create multispecialty COVID-19 clinics dedicated to treating patients still experiencing serious multiorgan effects of infection well after recovery from acute illness, say the authors of a comprehensive [review](#) of literature on so-called coronavirus "long-haulers" published yesterday in Nature Medicine." Visit the [Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy](#) to learn more.

More Than 40 States Say They Will Meet or Beat Biden’s May 1 Vaccine Deadline

An article in [The New York Times](#) states, “More states are expediting COVID-19 vaccination by expanding eligibility as the number of reported COVID-19 cases in the US surpassed 30 million and total deaths reached 544,000, with new cases rising in 30 states. About 13% of the US population has been fully vaccinated and about 25% has received at least one dose of vaccine, while officials in more than 40 states said they will meet President Joe Biden's target of May 1 for expanding access to all adults.”

More Sleep Linked to Lower COVID-19 Risk for Healthcare Workers

[Becker’s Hospital Review](#) reports that, “An international study published in BMJ Nutrition Prevention & Health found that among high-risk health care employees, each hour of extra sleep appeared to reduce the risk of COVID-19 by 12%. The study also found that inadequate sleep could be linked to greater symptom severity and longer recovery times with COVID-19.”

Scientists Find Evidence that Coronavirus Infects the Mouth’s Cells

An international team of scientists has found evidence that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, infects cells in the mouth. While it’s well known that the upper airways and lungs are primary sites of SARS-CoV-2 infection, there are clues the virus can infect cells in other parts of the body, such as the digestive system, blood vessels, kidneys and, as this new study shows, the mouth. The potential of the virus to infect multiple areas of the body might help explain the wide-ranging symptoms experienced by COVID-19 patients, including oral symptoms such as taste loss, dry mouth and blistering. Visit the [NIH website](#) to learn more.

U.S. Needs to Expand Rapid COVID-19 Testing

[Axios reports](#) that, “Experts warn that vaccinations likely do not provide long-term immunity and that the pandemic is far from over. Jennifer Nuzzo of Johns Hopkins, and Michael Mina of Harvard's Kennedy School of Public Health, say mass testing will be imperative to tracking outbreaks and containing the virus in the coming months.”

Resources

COVID-19 Vaccine Webinar Series

CDC is offering a series of brief (15-20 minute) [webinars addressing topics around COVID-19 vaccination](#). These interactive, web-based training modules offer a real-world perspective on different issues around COVID-19 vaccines. Topics range from routine clinical and vaccine safety information to guidance for on-site clinic vaccination activities and having conversations with vaccine recipients. Each webinar includes self-test practice questions and lists additional resources related to the topic discussed.

Funeral Costs for COVID-19-Related Deaths

A reminder that FEMA will begin providing [financial assistance for funeral expenses](#) incurred after January 20, 2020 for deaths related to coronavirus (COVID-19) to help ease some of the financial stress and burden caused by the pandemic. FEMA is moving rapidly to implement this funeral assistance program nationwide.

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