

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 06/09/21

NHPCO publishes the COVID-19 Update once a week on Wednesdays. Should there be breaking news of importance to the provider community, we will communicate that as needed.

“In some ways, we have to reform our end goals. We need to cure sometimes but care always.”

– Florence Wald

Policy Update

Biden Administration Continues Efforts to Increase Vaccinations by Bolstering Payments for At-Home COVID-19 Vaccinations for Medicare Beneficiaries

As part of President Biden’s commitment to increasing access to vaccinations, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [today announced](#) an additional payment amount for administering in-home COVID-19 vaccinations to Medicare beneficiaries who have difficulty leaving their homes or are otherwise hard-to-reach. This announcement further demonstrates continued efforts of the Biden-Harris Administration to meet people where they are and make it as easy as possible for all Americans to get vaccinated. There are approximately [1.6 million adults 65](#) or older who may have trouble accessing COVID-19 vaccinations because they have difficulty leaving home.

While many Medicare beneficiaries can receive a COVID-19 vaccine at a retail pharmacy, their physician’s office, or a mass vaccination site, some beneficiaries have great difficulty leaving their homes or face a taxing effort getting around their communities easily to access vaccination in these settings. To better serve this group, Medicare is incentivizing providers and will pay an additional \$35 per dose for COVID-19 vaccine administration in a beneficiary’s home, increasing the total payment amount for at-home vaccination from approximately \$40 to approximately \$75 per vaccine dose. For a two-dose vaccine, this results in a total payment of approximately \$150 for the administration of both doses, or approximately \$70 more than the current rate.

More information on Medicare payment for COVID-19 vaccine administration – including a list of billing codes, payment allowances and effective dates – is available at cms.gov/medicare/covid-19/medicare-covid-19-vaccine-shot-payment. Visit the [CDC website](#) for more information regarding the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Requirements and how the COVID-19 vaccine is provided through that program at no cost to recipients.

Administration Recommends Policy Changes to Secure U.S. Pharmaceutical Supply Chain

The White House, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today released a series of [policy recommendations](#) to address the vulnerabilities in U.S. pharmaceutical supply chains. Led by FDA and ASPR, the White House [report - PDF](#) and its recommendations have been accepted by President Biden.

HHS Launches First Venture Capital Partnership to Develop Transformative Technologies to Combat Future Pandemics, Other Health Emergencies

Through the BARDA Ventures program, the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), part of the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, [is launching a partnership](#) with

the nonprofit organization Global Health Investment Corporation (GHIC) to accelerate development and commercialization of technologies and medical products needed to respond to or prevent public health emergencies, such as pandemics, and other health security threats.

HHS Pick Says Pandemic is Top Job, but Agenda is Broader

The [Associated Press reports](#), "Health secretary nominee Xavier Becerra told senators Tuesday that confronting the coronavirus pandemic will be his first priority if confirmed, but he also pledged to expand health insurance, rein in prescription drug costs and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in medical care."

Provider Update

NHPCO Statement on Resource Allocation

Reflecting on the experience of our provider community throughout the course of the past year's global pandemic, the NHPCO Board has issued a statement for providers, "Allocation of Scarce Resources During a Pandemic." This document is designed as a resource for hospice and palliative care leaders and their organizations. One of the most difficult ethical questions in healthcare is the fair allocation of scarce resources and this document will help hospice and palliative care leaders and organizations (re)familiarize themselves with a small set of ethical concepts when facing resource allocation decisions. [Download this resource](#) free of charge.

U.S. Increasingly Unlikely to Meet Biden's July 4 Goal

The [Associated Press](#) reports, "For months, President Joe Biden has laid out goal after goal for taming the coronavirus pandemic and then exceeded his own benchmarks. Now, though, the U.S. is unlikely to meet his target to have 70% of Americans at least partially vaccinated by July 4."

Delta Variant Accounts for 6 Percent of New U.S. Coronavirus Infections

[The Washington Post](#) reports, "The coronavirus variant called "delta," first detected in India, has become the dominant strain in the United Kingdom, despite that country's highly successful vaccination campaign. The variant also now accounts for about 6 percent of infections in the United States. But one vaccine dose offers just 33 percent protection, the data shows, a reminder of how strongly the second shot boosts immunity to the virus. With the United States in the midst of providing vaccines to adolescents and other people who have waited to get them, second doses are critical."

FEMA Funeral Assistance Nears \$200 Million in Disbursements

In the short time since FEMA began accepting COVID-19 funeral assistance applications, the agency is quickly approaching a milestone of \$200 million in awards. Nearly \$190 million has been approved for almost 28,000 eligible applicants. See the [FEMA press release](#) for more information.

FDA Updates

- The FDA issued a [safety communication](#) to warn the public to stop using the Lepu Medical Technology SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Test Kit and the Leccurate SARS-CoV-2 Antibody Rapid Test Kit (Colloidal Gold Immunochromatography) because the FDA has serious concerns about the performance of the tests and believes there is likely a high risk of false results when using these tests.
- The [FDA issued warning letters](#) jointly with the Federal Trade Commission to Beauty & Spa Concepts, DBA Beenefits and to Everything Health LLC for selling unapproved products with unproven COVID-19 claims. Consumers concerned about COVID-19 should consult with their health care provider.

RESOURCES

Learn More About the EOLD Grief Support Project

Taking advantage of their availability and skills, NHPCO's EOL Doula Advisory Council created the [COVID Grief Support Program](#) to help anyone who has been affected with a loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this program, trained and vetted volunteer doulas engage in free, confidential and private one-on-one hour-long calls for four weeks with those seeking this service. Following a successful pilot project, the EOLD Council is looking to expand the reach of this project. Visit nhpco.org/doula-grief-support for more information or to fill out the online form to register for the program.

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Registration is now open for the [2021 Virtual Conference](#). Register by June 14 to get the early-bird rate!