

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 06/23/21

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.

*"Do what you can to show you care about other people,
and you will make our world a better place."*

– Rosalynn Carter

Policy Updates

Biden Administration to Invest \$3 Billion from American Rescue Plan as Part of COVID-19 Antiviral Development Strategy

The Biden Administration is investing more than \$3 billion to accelerate the discovery, development and manufacturing of antiviral medicines as part of the Biden Administration's whole-of-government strategy to develop the next generation of COVID-19 treatments. Through collaboration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), part of the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), this plan – called the [Antiviral Program for Pandemics](#) – will respond to the urgent need for antivirals to treat COVID-19 by spurring the availability of medicines to prevent serious illness and save lives. It also will build sustainable platforms for discovery and development of antivirals for other viruses with pandemic potential, helping better prepare the nation to face future viral threats. Learn more on the [HHS website](#).

COVID-19 Had a Devastating Impact on Medicare Beneficiaries in Nursing Homes During 2020

This data snapshot from the OIG showed the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Medicare beneficiaries in U.S. nursing homes in 2020. It provides objective, standardized data based on Medicare claims for beneficiaries in nursing homes throughout the country. Until this data snapshot, data on the number of nursing home residents who were diagnosed with COVID-19 or likely COVID-19 have not been readily available, particularly for early in the pandemic. Nursing homes are not required to report cases and deaths that occurred before May 8, 2020. Access this [OIG Report \(OEI-02-20-00490\)](#).

New OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard to Protect Healthcare Workers

On June 21, the Federal Register published an [interim final rule](#) from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), issuing an emergency temporary standard (ETS) to protect healthcare and healthcare support service workers from occupational exposure to COVID-19 in settings where people with COVID-19 are reasonably expected to be present. Hospice agencies are covered by this ETS, and the Interim Final Rule references the Medicare Hospice regulations for infection control. NHPCO members will find a Regulatory Alert available for download from the [Regulatory Alerts & Updates](#) page of the website.

Provider Update

Delta COVID Variant Becoming Globally Dominant, WHO Official Says

An [article published by Reuters](#) reports, “The Delta variant of COVID-19, first identified in India, is becoming the globally dominant variant of the disease, the World Health Organization's chief scientist said on Friday. Recent research from the UK suggests the Delta variant may be up to 60% more transmissible than the Alpha variant, which originally emerged in the UK in 2020 and has since become dominant in the U.S. and many other countries.”

Variants Mean More in U.S. Must Get Vaccine

[WebMD Health News](#) reports, “More people need to get vaccinated if the United States wants to prevent the spread of deadly variants this winter, says a top vaccine expert. ‘Vaccines are our only way out of this,’ Paul Offit, MD, a member of the FDA Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, said on CNN. ‘Unless we vaccinate a significant percentage of the population before winter hits, you're going to see more spread and the creation of more variants, which will only make this task more difficult.’”

U.S. Hits Encouraging Milestones on Virus Deaths and Shots

COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. have dipped below 300 a day for the first time since the early days of the disaster in March 2020, while the drive to put shots in arms hit another encouraging milestone Monday: 150 million Americans fully vaccinated. The U.S. death toll stands at more than 600,000, while the worldwide count is close to 3.9 million, though the real figures in both cases are believed to be markedly higher. About 45% of the U.S. population has been fully vaccinated, according to the CDC. Over 53% of Americans have received at least one dose of vaccine. But U.S. demand for shots has slumped, to the disappointment of public health experts.

FDA Updates

- As part of the FDA’s effort to protect consumers, on May 18, 2021, the agency issued a warning letter to [Umbrella](#) for selling an unapproved product with unproven COVID-19 claims. Consumers concerned about COVID-19 should consult with their health care provider.
- The FDA recently posted the updated translations for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers in multiple languages. The translations can be found [here](#).
- The agency updated its FDA COVID-19 Response [At-A-Glance Summary](#), which provides a quick look at facts, figures and highlights on the FDA's response efforts.

Dr. Debra Kaysen on Individual and Collective Stress & Grief

"The COVID-19 global pandemic is an event unparalleled in scope for most of us, save for those who lived through the Great Depression and World War Two. In terms of public mental health, is it accurate to think of this as a collective traumatic event causing some of the same injury as a personal trauma?" Visit the [Stanford Medicine website](#) to read this article.