

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



## NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 08/25/21

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.

*“We will either find a way or make one.” – Anibal Barca*

### Policy Updates

#### **FDA Approves Pfizer Vaccine**

On August 23, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine has been known as the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, and will now be marketed as Comirnaty, for the prevention of COVID-19 disease in individuals 16 years of age and older. The vaccine also continues to be available under emergency use authorization (EUA), including for individuals 12 through 15 years of age and for the administration of a third dose in certain immunocompromised individuals. Read the [FDA press release](#) online.

#### **NHPCO Statement on Consistent Vaccine and Testing Policy**

On Monday, NHPCO issued a statement advocating for consistent COVID vaccine and testing requirements for health workers. This is a challenging issue for providers and NHPCO calls for a clear timeline and financial resources to support implementation, including and not limited to Provider Relief Funding. NHPCO realizes that a national vaccine mandate may cause further frustration for providers in the short term, and we are concerned about that. However, taking the long view, it’s clear that consistent requirements will strengthen public trust in the healthcare system and help stabilize staffing. Read [NHPCO’s statement](#) (08/23/21) online.

#### **CMS Released Analyses on Nursing Home Resident COVID-19 Outcomes**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released several analyses of the impact of COVID-19 on Medicare beneficiaries in nursing homes and COVID-19 vaccine administration claims among Medicare beneficiaries. [In the analysis](#), CMS found that nursing home residents are disproportionately represented in COVID-19 diagnoses, hospitalizations, and deaths, reflected in the following key findings:

- Nursing home residents were 14 times more likely than Medicare beneficiaries in the community to be diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Nursing home residents were 12 times more likely than Medicare beneficiaries in the community to be hospitalized due to COVID-19.
- 43 percent of nursing home resident beneficiaries who were hospitalized due to COVID-19 died within 30 days, compared to 22 percent of beneficiaries from the community.
- Certain co-morbidities such as chronic kidney disease were associated with increased risk of COVID-19 diagnosis and hospitalization and beneficiaries with end stage renal disease also faced increased risk of hospitalization, but institutional status had a larger effect on adverse outcomes.

## **Medicare To Increase Reimbursement for At-Home COVID-19 Vaccines**

As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's ongoing commitment to increasing access to vaccinations and improving health equity, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is expanding opportunities for people to receive COVID-19 vaccinations in their home. To ensure Medicare beneficiaries who have difficulty leaving their homes or are otherwise hard-to-reach can receive the vaccination, healthcare providers can now receive additional payments for administering vaccines to multiple residents in one home setting or communal setting of a home. Read the [CMS press release](#).

## **Provider Update**

### **AHA Wants OSHA to Withdraw COVID-19 Standard as ANA Seeks to Bolster it**

The [Fierce Healthcare website](#) reports "The American Hospital Association (AHA) wants the Biden administration to withdraw a COVID-19 emergency protection standard because it believes hospitals are already doing enough to protect front-line workers. At the same time, the American Nurses Association (ANA) wants the standard to be even stronger, asking for vaccine mandates to be included in the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) temporary standard, which requires employers to provide certain protections such as vital equipment like N95 masks."

### **Drop in COVID-19 Vaccine Efficacy Against Delta Seen in U.S. Nursing Homes**

"The effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines for people in American nursing homes and long-term care facilities, where residents are often elderly and frail, has dropped since the Delta variant became dominant in the United States, government researchers said on Wednesday. Despite this decline, the vaccines are still highly effective at preventing illness severe enough to require hospitalization, according to research published in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report." Read more in this [article from Reuters](#).

### **Fauci: U.S. Can Get Control of Pandemic by Spring if Vaccinations Rise**

An article [published on Axios](#) reports, "NIAID director Anthony Fauci told CNN on Monday the U.S. could 'start getting back to a degree of normality' by next spring if more Americans are vaccinated against COVID-19. 'There's no guarantee, because it's up to us,' Fauci said in his interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper, noting that another variant could emerge unless the current surge is brought under control."

### **Covid Deaths Could 'Climb even higher in the next couple weeks'**

[CNBC reports](#), "Dr. Ashish Jha, the dean of Brown University's School of Public Health, warned about the toll of the pandemic as Covid deaths in the U.S. climb, yet again, to more than 1,000 a day. The delta variant has continued to drive a deadly surge that's overwhelming hospitals and pushing cases to levels the country hasn't seen since February. The U.S. is averaging roughly 147,000 new infections every day, according to Johns Hopkins."

## **Resources**

### **HHS/APR TRACIE Resource**

Visit the TRACIE website to access: [COVID-19 Workforce Virtual Toolkit: Resources for Healthcare Decision-Makers Responding to COVID-19 Workforce Concerns](#).