

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 10/20/21

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.

*“There are dark shadows on the earth, but its lights are stronger in the contrast.”
– Charles Dickens*

Policy Updates

HHS Extends Public Health Emergency

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced on October 18, 2021 that the [Public Health Emergency \(PHE\) has been extended for another 90 days](#). The extension is effective October 18, 2021 and will continue for 90 days until January 16, 2022. Providers should note that the [CMS 1135 waiver flexibilities for health care providers](#) includes 13 waiver provisions for hospice providers. These provisions will remain in effect as long as a COVID-19 public health emergency is in effect. Additionally, Section 3706 of the [CARES Act](#) is a provision that allows hospice physicians and nurse practitioners to conduct recertification face-to-face encounters through telehealth “during the COVID-19 emergency period. Note that the statutory provision is “telehealth” which has been defined by CMS as including both audio and visual components. This provision remains in effect with the extension of the PHE.

Biden Administration Announces Update on COVID-19 Vaccinations for Kids Ages 5-11

In anticipation of the FDA’s independent advisory committee meeting on October 26 and the CDC’s independent advisory committee meeting on November 2-3, today the Biden Administration is announcing a plan to ensure that, if a vaccine is authorized for children ages 5-11, it is quickly distributed and made conveniently and equitably available to families across the country. The start of a vaccination program for children ages 5-11 will depend on the independent FDA and CDC process and timeline, but our planning efforts mean that we will be ready to begin getting shots in arms in the days following a final CDC recommendation. These steps will be critical in ensuring that we are staying ahead of the virus by keeping kids and families safe, especially those at highest risk.” [Download the Fact Sheet](#) from the White House website.

HHS Announces \$100 Million State Loan Repayment Programs

HHS is announcing the availability of \$100 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding for state-run programs that support, recruit, and retain primary care clinicians who live and work in underserved communities. This funding represents a five-fold increase to the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) [State Loan Repayment Program](#) (SLRP) and helps improve health equity by ensuring that clinicians working in high-need communities remain in them. HRSA’s Bureau of Health Workforce is accepting applications for these grants from all 50 states, Washington D.C., and U.S. territories. HRSA estimates that it will make up to 50 awards of up to \$1 million per year, over the program’s four-year project period. Lean more on the [HHS website](#).

Provider Update

U.S. COVID-19 Cases Fall for 4th Consecutive Week

COVID-19 cases have declined nationwide for the fourth consecutive week, according to the CDC's COVID data tracker weekly [review](#) published October 15. Learn more in this article from [Becker's Hospital Review](#).

FDA Advisers Back Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Booster

[As Roll Call reports](#), "Advisers to the Food and Drug Administration voted, 19-0, to authorize a Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 booster shot at least two months after the first dose, providing some reassurance to the 14 million Americans who received its vaccine and face a higher risk of mild cases than other vaccinated people. FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials said at the meeting that real-world evidence suggests the single dose shot is less effective than the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, including against hospitalization. Johnson & Johnson argued two doses of its vaccine would ramp up efficacy to 94 percent, comparable to those other authorized vaccines."

J&J Recipients will Likely be able to Mix and Match Boosters

"The Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will likely allow recipients of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 to mix and match vaccine boosters depending on their individual health. Fauci acknowledged that data suggests that boosting the J&J vaccine with one of the mRNA vaccines produces more antibodies than a second shot of the J&J vaccine." Read this [article from Axios](#) for more details.

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