

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 12/01/21

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.

*"What I've really learned over time is that optimism is a very, very important part of leadership."
– Bob Iger*

Policy Updates

Temporary Halt to CMS COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Nationwide

As reported in an NHPCO Regulatory Alert earlier today, "Late on November 30, a Louisiana federal district court judge issued a preliminary injunction that temporarily halted CMS' COVID-19 vaccine requirement for healthcare workers nationwide (PDF). The ruling was in a lawsuit brought by the State of Louisiana and joined by the states of Utah, Indiana, Montana, Idaho, Arizona, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia, but the judge determined that health care workers in other states also would be affected by the CMS mandate and therefore applied the preliminary injunction nationwide, except in the 10 states already subject to an injunction pursuant to a separate case, as described below. CMS is expected to file an appeal, but the timing on further action isn't yet known." NHPCO members may [download the Regulatory Alert](#) from the NHPCO website.

Provider Update

Omicron and Other Coronavirus Variants: What You Need to Know

An article published on the [Kaiser Health News](#) website reports, "Americans, already weary of a pandemic nearly two years long, were dealt a new blow during the long Thanksgiving weekend: the announcement that a new coronavirus variant had emerged. The omicron variant, officially known as B.1.1.529, surfaced in November in several southern African nations."

First Confirmed Case of Omicron Variant Detected in the United States

The California and San Francisco Departments of Public Health have confirmed that a recent case of COVID-19 among an individual in California was caused by the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529). The individual was a traveler who returned from South Africa on November 22, 2021. The individual had mild symptoms that are improving, is self-quarantining and has been since testing positive. All close contacts have been contacted and have tested negative. Read the [CDC press release](#).

NASEM Webinar: Social Isolation at EOL in Era of COVID-19

On December 8, 2021, the Forum on Aging, Disability and Independence and the Roundtable on Quality Care for People with Serious Illness will host a collaborative webinar from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. EST on social isolation and loneliness. Among other topics, the workshop will examine how we currently address

social isolation and loneliness in the context of the health care system, quality metrics used in palliative care, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on issues of social isolation and disparities among certain populations, and how we may expand the current research to improve the quality of life for people approaching the end of life with serious illness or significant disability. [Register online.](#)

A Reason for Optimism on Omicron: Our Immune Systems are Not Blank Slates

[STAT reports](#), “The emergence of a new Covid-19 variant with a startlingly large constellation of mutations has countries around the world sounding alarms. While the concerns are understandable, immunologists say people need to remember a critical fact: Two years and 8 billion vaccine doses into the pandemic, our immune systems are not blank slates. Omicron may more easily sidestep some of the immunity of some vaccinated and previously infected people. But there’s good reason to think people with some immune protections may avoid the worst of what Covid infections can do to immunologically naïve people. ‘The virus is going to not find it as easy compared to the situation in January 2020 or December 2019. It’s just completely different now,’ Ali Ellebedy of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis told STAT’s Helen Branswell.”

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