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

# NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 03/23/20

*NHPCO has created this update for hospice and palliative care providers to share the most recent news and helpful links regarding this ongoing public health crisis.*

## Policy Updates

**Senate Bill on COVID-19**
The Senate failed to approve a procedural vote for the third COVID-19 package.  This package includes three provisions for hospice providers, including the elimination of the sequestration 2% cut for all Medicare providers, a provision to allow hospice face-to-face encounters to be conducted through telehealth, and an emergency fund for health care providers.   Republicans and Democrats are still negotiating at this time.  House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is drafting a separate House bill.

**PPE**
On March 21, 2020, President Trump announced that the responsibility for PPE has moved from State Health Departments to FEMA, who issued a press release about COVID-19.

The standard procedure when FEMA is the federal authority in response to a federally declared emergency is as follows:
- Provider request to local/county authorities
- Local/county authorities to state
- State to Regional FEMA office

Since this is a new process for PPE, providers may want to reach out to their local emergency management agencies to ensure that hospice is "on the list" for PPE supplies.

**State Emergency Management Agencies**
This FEMA web page contains contact information for emergency management agencies and offices.

**HAN Virtual Advocacy Day**
The Hospice Action Network will hold its virtual advocacy day on Tuesday March 24, 2020.  The focus is on supporting hospices during the COVID-19 Pandemic.  Use this Action Alert to ask Congress to support hospices during the COVID-19 Pandemic by issuing a blanket 1135 waiver and increasing funding and availability of PPE to hospices.

- **TAKE ACTION**

## Provider Updates

**Relief for Participating in Quality Reporting Programs in Response to COVID-19**
CMS announced it is granting exceptions from reporting requirements and extensions for clinicians and providers participating in Medicare quality reporting programs with respect to upcoming measure reporting and data submission for those programs. CMS is implementing additional extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy exceptions and extensions for upcoming measure reporting and data submission deadlines for hospice providers.

| 2019 Data Submission | 2020 Data Submission |
|---|---|
| Deadlines for October 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019 (Q4) data submission optional. If Q4 is submitted, it will be used to calculate the 2019 performance and payment (where appropriate). | Data from January 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020 (Q1-Q2) does not need to be submitted to CMS for purposes of complying with quality reporting program requirements. |

**COVID-19 Provider Enrollment Relief FAQs**
CMS released Frequently Asked Questions on Medicare Provider Enrollment Relief related to COVID-19 including the toll-free hotlines available to provide expedited enrollment and answer questions related to COVID-19 enrollment requirements.

**HIPAA Compliant Video Communication**
Some providers have inquired about video communication products telehealth services that are HIPAA compliant. According to last week's OCR notice, the following vendors represent that they provide HIPAA-compliant video communication products and that they will enter into a HIPAA BAA (Business Associate Agreement):

- Skype for Business / Microsoft Teams, Updox, VSee, Zoom for Healthcare, Doxy.me, Google G Suite Hangouts Meet, Cisco Webex Meetings / Webex Teams, Amazon Chime, and GoToMeeting

For full details of the notice, access: OCR Enforcement Discretion Remote Communication (03/17/20).

## Resources

**COVID-19 Checklists and Tools to Accelerate Relief for State Medicaid & CHIP Programs**
CMS announced new resources to support state Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP) during the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. CMS now has a full suite of tools available to maximize responsiveness to state needs. The agency has created four checklists that will together make up a comprehensive Medicaid COVID-19 federal authority toolkit to make it easier for states to receive federal waivers and implement flexibilities in their program.  Read the CMS press release online.

**Additional Resource Links**

- [1115 Waiver Opportunity and Application Checklist](#)
- [1135 Waiver Checklist](#)
- [1915(c) Appendix K Template](#)
- [Medicaid Disaster State Plan Amendment Template](#)

**CDC Resources Related to COVID-19**

- [Updated Healthcare Professionals: Frequently Asked FAQs](#) (CDC, Updated 03/22/2020)
- [Resources for Managing Stress and Anxiety](#)

-###-