

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 03/24/20

NHPCO has created this update for hospice and palliative care providers to share recent news and helpful links.

“You are there for your community. NHPCO is there for you.”

Policy Updates

Senate Close to a Deal on Nearly \$2 Trillion Third COVID-19 Emergency Stimulus Package The broad legislative package includes a \$500 billion fund designed to lend money to corporations that have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, food stamps, worker protections, other economic stimulus measures, as well as some healthcare related provisions. Negotiations are ongoing and a vote is expected tonight or tomorrow morning and includes at least two provisions that directly impact hospice providers including, the elimination of the sequestration 2% cut for Medicare hospice providers and a provision to allow hospice face-to-face encounters to be conducted through telehealth. A third provision, an emergency fund for health care providers for COVID-19 related expenses is also being negotiated and could be at least \$100 billion or more. After Senate passage the House will likely pass the measure and send to President Trump for his signature. At the same time the House will continue to work on a 4th COVID-19 related piece of legislation.

1. **Face-to-face hospice telehealth provision.** The draft legislation allows face-to-face encounters for recertification for hospice care to be completed using telehealth during the emergency period.
2. **Proposal to suspend sequestration cuts.** Draft legislation also includes the temporary suspension of the 2 percent sequestration cut to hospice, beginning on May 1, 2020 and ending on December 31, 2020.

CMS Answers NHPCO Questions on Flexibility

NHPCO requested additional written clarification on flexibilities for hospice. Today (3/24/2020), we received the following email from CMS:

*We [CMS] are aware of the need to issue additional guidance to hospices about the flexibilities already included in the CoPs when it comes to determining on a case-by-case basis how a visit should be made. As we [CMS] stated on the call [with NHPCO], the **hospice CoPs don't specify how or how often direct clinical visits are made.** Hospice providers are required to provide services that meet the needs of the patient based on the plan of care that is person-centered and individualized. **CMS encourages hospices to address these issues on a case by case basis and make sure to document how the hospice is meeting the goals of care in a safe and appropriate manner.** We are working on issuing revised guidance, but do not have a projected release date at this time.*

I hope this can help you reassure hospice providers that we hear their concerns and are committed to working with them to get through this public health emergency. As always, please reach out to us when we can be of service.

CMS Issues Guidance on Survey Process During COVID-19

CMS Quality, Safety and Oversight Group (QSOG) issued [guidance](#) on the survey process for all providers during the national emergency. Standard surveys for hospices will not be authorized, it reiterates the visitor restriction and includes hospice facilities, reiterates the allowance for hospice workers in nursing homes and also states that if a state has established more restrictive criteria, the provider must follow the more restrictive guidance.

NHPCO Requests Suspension of TPE from MACs

NHPCO has been in communication with the three Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) with a request to suspend Targeted Probe and Educate (TPE) efforts for hospice providers for the duration of the COVID-19 national emergency. The MACs have been in discussion with CMS on this suspension and have conveyed to us that CMS must make the final decision and convey that suspension to the MACs. We have also requested this suspension from CMS.

Provider Updates

OIG Alert on COVID-19 Fraud Schemes

The OIG just released a fraud alert regarding fraud schemes, including marketing fake COVID-19 test kits and unapproved treatments through telemarketing calls, social media platforms, and door-to-door visits. This alert has general information about these schemes and how to protect yourself and your community against bad actors. Read full alert: [COVID-19 Fraud Alert](#).

Resources

Quick References Regarding “Rumor vs. Truth” on COVID Treatments

Many thanks to Bridget McCrate Protus, PharmD, and Director of Drug Information with Optum who has developed and is sharing quick references regarding ["Rumors vs. Truth"](#) on treatments related to COVID-19, along with a list of [governmental, organizational, and some publisher resources](#) with hyperlinks directly to the COVID-19 collections and a brief description of content available.

Reminder: COVID-19 Executive Dialogue on March 25

If you have not already registered for the free webinar, [COVID-19 Executive Dialogue](#), that NHPCO is offering on Wednesday, March 25 from 2:00pm – 4:00pm ET, please do so as soon as possible. If you're not able to participate in the webinar that is open to members and non-members, the archive recording will be added to the [nhpco.org/coronavirus](#) page as soon as it is available.

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