

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 03/31/20

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

CMS Issues FAQs for Provider Burden Relief

On March 30, CMS issued a [set of FAQs](#) specifically addressing provider burden relief. Among the FAQs is discussion of Medicare FFS medical review. **CMS has now suspended most Medicare Fee-For-Service (FFS) medical review during the emergency period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.** This includes:

- Pre-payment medical reviews conducted by Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) under the Targeted Probe and Educate program.
- Post-payment reviews conducted by:
 - MACs
 - Supplemental Medical Review Contractor (SMRC) reviews
 - Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC)
- No **additional documentation requests will be issued** for the duration of the PHE for the COVID-19 pandemic and more...

CMS Announces 1135 Blanket Waiver. Hospice Included

On March 30, CMS issued a set of blanket 1135 waivers that apply to various Medicare provider types, including hospice. Long requested by NHPCO and state hospice and palliative care organizations, these temporary regulatory waivers and new rules will provide some relief and maximum flexibility to respond to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The waivers include:

- Waive the Requirement for Hospices to Use Volunteers: including the 5% patient care hours.
- Comprehensive Assessments: extended the timeframes for updating the assessment from 15 to 21 days.
- Waive Non-Core Services: includes waiver of hospice requirement to provide physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology.
- Waive Onsite Visits for Hospice Aide Supervision: removes the requirement for a nurse to conduct an onsite supervisory visit every two weeks.

CMS Announces Interim Final Rule with Telehealth Guidance for Hospices

- Guidance to conduct face-to-face encounters through telehealth.
- Guidance for using telehealth to provide routine home care visits.
- And more....

See [NHPCO's press release](#) issued today. NHPCO members will find a Regulatory Alert with additional analysis in the [Regulatory Alerts and Updates page](#).

Provider Updates

HQRP Reporting Clarification Related to COVID-19 Pandemic

[CMS issued a recent Memo](#) that provided clearer guidance related to HQRP reporting exemptions. See following excerpt:

CMS is granting an exemption to the Hospice Quality Reporting Program (QRP) reporting requirements. Medicare-certified Hospices are exempt from the reporting of data on measures, Hospice Item Set (HIS) data and Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys, required under Hospice QRP for calendar years (CYs) 2019 and 2020 for the following quarters. For HIS, the quarters are based on submission of HIS admission or discharge assessments. For CAHPS, the quarters are based on patient deaths in 2019 and 2020.

Hospice QRP: o October 1, 2019–December 31, 2019 (Q4 2019) o January 1, 2020–March 31, 2020 (Q1 2020) o April 1, 2020–June 30, 2020 (Q2 2020).

Resources

New/Updated CDC Resources

- [Downloadable Videos](#) are now available on a variety of COVID-19 prevention topics.
- [Interim Clinical Guidance for Management of Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#) (3/30/20).

Chaplaincy in the Time of COVID-19

- [Chaplaincy in the Time of COVID-19](#), is a resource to provide guidance, knowledge, and examples from the field to provide effective chaplaincy spiritual care to those people who have been impacted the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

NHPCO Webinar Slide-Set

- [Slides from the Telehealth and COVID-19 webinar hosted today](#) (03/31/20).

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