

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



NHPCO COVID-19 Update – 04/08/20

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.”

Message to Our Readers

NHPCO publishes this Update on days when we have new information and resources to share. While the crisis is still ahead for many communities, the flow of new information might slow down in days ahead. Please don't be alarmed if you do not receive a COVID-19 Update on a given day. And we remind you that we have a [PDF archive](#) of all our Updates available online.

Policy Updates

CMS Clarifies Several Hospice Issues on CMS COVID-19 Office Hours

CMS has now established CMS COVID-19 Office Hours, to be held every Tuesday and Thursday from 5-6 pm ET. NHPCO received a pre-posting transcript of the call, which is quoted below. A [recording of each call and the transcript are posted on the CMS website.](#)

- **Telephone calls for RHC:** On the April 7, 2020 call, CMS confirmed that “you can use a landline for routine home care (RHC) visits in lieu of an in-person visit.” CMS also reported that they “are requiring two-way audiovisual communication for the face to face requirement, but I [CMS] can take your concerns down and see if there is potential for that in the future.”
- **SIA:** Question on telehealth visits and SIA. CMS responded that “they [CMS] can definitely take that back for consideration. As you know, the SIA 4 visits in the last seven days of life and so the current thinking is telehealth might be part of the routine home care waiver and not rise to the level of requiring us to pay an add-on for that but that is something we can take back and think about further.”
- **Initial nursing assessments via telehealth:** Question on telehealth for initial nursing assessments. CMS responded that “I [CMS] don't believe we have a requirement it has to be face-to-face, so we are including that within the telehealth as well.” An additional CMS speaker stated that “it is correct that hospices may use telehealth to the extent the use of telehealth is actually capable of providing a full assessment of a patient and caregivers need. And that is really what it comes down to as far as compliance is concerned: Were you able to fully assess the patient's needs in a way that allows you to develop accurate care plan and deliver services.”

NHPCO Hosts Members-Only Call on Hospice Virtual Visits

This afternoon, April 8, NHPCO hosted a webinar for NHPCO members with Acevedo Consulting principals Jean and Chris Acevedo, on virtual visits, what is allowed, what types of visits can go on the claim form, how should the face-to-face encounter be provided and when can it be billed, and finally, when telephone calls are acceptable for communication with patients and families. A copy of the slides and the recording of the webinar can be found on the [NHPCO website, for members](#). *(Tip, make sure you are already logged on to the NHPCO website and then follow the link.)*

Resources

HPNA COVID-19 Patient Care Guides

The Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association has developed a series of Primary Palliative Nursing COVID-19 Patient Care Guides. These guides are written by national nursing experts in the hospice and palliative nursing field and highlight key nursing information about anxiety, communication, pain, delirium, dyspnea, nausea, terminal secretions and nursing care and support at end-of-life. This information can be [found on the HPNA website](#).

VitalTalk Tips App

For clinicians who care for patients with serious illness and their families, having great communication skills makes a difference—your patients will understand their medical situation better, and build trust with you faster, and you'll be able to guide them to medical decisions that match their values. VitalTalk has created an app that contains communication skill tips, focused on the moments where clinicians most often get stuck. The VitalTalk Tips app is available for [iPhone](#) and for [Android](#) devices.

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