

NHPCO Participates in COVID-19 Stakeholder Call; Requests Guidance for Home-Based Providers

To: NHPCO Members
From: NHPCO Policy Team
Date: March 3, 2020

NHPCO participated in an Office of the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response COVID-19 stakeholder call on March 2, 2020 to represent hospice and palliative care providers in the U.S. and to provide feedback on the needs of seriously ill and dying individuals receiving care from hospice and palliative care. The federal facilitators of the call included the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Institutes for Health (NIH). Invited participants on the call included Health Care Coalitions; National Hospital Preparedness Program participants; and nongovernmental associations serving the needs of long-term care facilities and vulnerable populations. NHPCO asked for specific guidance for home-based healthcare providers from the federal partners on this call and we are following up through contacts at HHS on this request. We will keep our membership updated related to this issue. We are also updating our Emergency Preparedness webpage to include a link specific COVID-19 information web page.

Current Federal Action

The joint federal agencies stated they are currently responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus and their public health and medical response is aggressive and multi-layered, with the goal of detecting introductions of this virus in the United States, understanding virus transmission, and reducing potential spread and impact. Alex M. Azar II, Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency on 1/31/20 and the expectation remains that there will be more cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. in the future. The joint federal plan is directed towards infection control and mitigation actions to slow transmission of the virus. They also stated they are engaged in work related to increasing availability of N95 masks for healthcare workers as well as increasing general personal protective equipment manufacturing to increase supply.

A Note about 1135 Waivers

The topic of 1135 waivers related to was not part of the remarks made by the federal entities on the call, but NHPCO has had inquiries from some of our members about it. Since the President has not declared a disaster or emergency under the Stafford Act or National Emergencies Act, there is no current allowance for blanket or specific 1135 waivers. This means that the CMS Conditions of Participation for hospice providers must be followed for compliance.

Updated Resources Available from Joint Federal Partners

- [COVID-19 Healthcare Planning Checklist](#)
- [Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#)
- [Interim Guidance: Public Health Communicators Get Your Community Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Interim Guidance: Get Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Resources for Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [HHS ASPR, the Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange \(TRACIE\)](#)
- [ASPR COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

NHPCO will share updates with the membership on a regular basis. Members are advised to read weekly [NewsBriefs](#) that comes out on Thursday afternoons for news as well.

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