

## **CMS NEWS ALERT May 19, 2020**

As part of the ongoing White House Task Force efforts taken in response to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), following is a summary of recent Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) actions. To keep up with the important Task Force work being done in response to COVID-19, click here [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov). For information specific to CMS, please visit the [CMS News Room](#) and [Current Emergencies Website](#). CMS updates these resources on an ongoing basis throughout the day; the information below is current as of May 19, 2020 at 4:00 pm ET.

### **Trump Administration Issues Guidance to Ensure States Have a Plan in Place to Safely Reopen Nursing Homes**

CMS announced new guidance for state and local officials to ensure the safe reopening of nursing homes across the country. The guidance released today is part of President Trump's Guidelines for Opening Up America Again. It details critical steps nursing homes and communities should take prior to relaxing restrictions implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including rigorous infection prevention and control, adequate testing, and surveillance. The recommendations allow states to make sure nursing homes are continuing to take the appropriate and necessary steps to ensure resident safety and are opening their doors when the time is right.

[Press Release](#)

[Guidance](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### **CMS Releases Additional Waivers for Hospitals and Ground Ambulance Organizations**

CMS continues to release waivers for the healthcare community that provide the flexibilities needed to take care of patients during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). CMS recently provided additional blanket waivers for the duration of the PHE that:

- Modify existing physical environment waivers to allow for increased flexibilities for surge capacity and patient quarantine at hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, and critical access hospitals as a result of COVID-19; and
- Modify the data collection period and data reporting period for ground ambulance organizations.

[Emergency Declaration Blanket Waivers](#)

### **Medicare Payment for COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests**

Earlier this year, CMS took action to ensure America's patients, health care facilities, and clinical laboratories were prepared to respond to COVID-19. To help increase testing, CMS developed two codes that laboratories can use to bill for certain COVID-19 lab tests, including serology tests. CMS has updated its guidance to include payment details for additional CPT codes created by the American Medical Association. There is no cost-sharing for Medicare patients.

[Guidance](#)

### **CMS Gives States Additional Flexibility to Address Coronavirus Pandemic**

CMS has approved over 200 requests for state relief in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including recent approvals for Alaska, Iowa, Hawaii, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, and Virginia. These approvals help to ensure that states have the tools they

need to combat COVID-19. This is done through a wide variety of waivers, amendments, and Medicaid state plan flexibilities, including support for programs that care for the elderly and people with disabilities. CMS also developed a [toolkit](#) to expedite the application and review of each request and has approved these requests in record time. These approved flexibilities support President Trump's commitment to a COVID-19 response that is locally executed, state managed, and federally supported.

[Section 1135 Waivers](#)

[Section 1115\(a\) Waivers](#)

[1915\(c\) Waiver Appendix K Amendments](#)

[Medicaid State Plan Amendments](#)

[CHIP State Plan Amendments](#)