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IHA COVID Resources and Advocacy

August 18, 2020

CMS to resume routine inspections of providers and suppliers, issues updated enforcement guidance to states and posts toolkit to help nursing homes

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced it will resume routine inspections of all Medicare- and Medicaid-certified providers and suppliers to improve the safety and quality of life of patients and residents. CMS had previously suspended certain routine inspections as part of its response to COVID-19 to prioritize infection control and immediate-jeopardy situations and to give health care providers and suppliers time needed to respond to the spread of COVID-19.

In the guidance released today, CMS directed the resumption of onsite revisit surveys, non-immediate jeopardy complaint surveys and annual recertification surveys as soon as resources are available. CMS also is providing guidance on resolving enforcement cases that were on hold because of survey prioritization changes. The agency also will temporarily expand the desk review policy, when state surveyors ensure that facilities return back into compliance with federal requirements without an onsite survey, to include noncompliance reviews except for immediate-jeopardy citations that have not been removed.

On July 31, CMS posted the latest results from the targeted nursing home infection-control inspections. CMS has imposed more than $15 million in civil money penalties to more than 3,400 nursing homes during the public health emergency for noncompliance with infection-control requirements and the failure to report COVID-19 data.

CMS is also issuing updated guidance for the reprioritization of routine state survey agency activities on clinical laboratory improvement amendments. This updated guidance will provide flexibility and discretion to state survey agencies so they can resume their survey activities based on the status of COVID-19 infections in their states.

CMS is posting updates to the "Toolkit on State Actions to Mitigate COVID-19 Prevalence in Nursing Homes." The toolkit details actions and best practices by organizations, state governments nationwide and US territories to help nursing homes meet the needs of nursing home residents since the onset of the pandemic. The toolkit contains information available for providers and administrators of nursing homes to learn from an array of plans that state governments and other public health entities have put in place in a short time to contain the spread of the virus in nursing homes and meet the needs of America's most vulnerable.

HHS expands eligibility for general distribution funds

HHS has clarified that those who bill Medicare, Medicaid, Medicaid Managed Care or CHIP, or are a dental provider, are eligible to apply for general distribution funding if they have not already received 2% of their patient revenue from the fund. First-time or previous applicants also may apply if they haven't already received 2% of their patient revenue.

This includes Medicare Part A providers who experienced a change in ownership and billed Medicare fee-for-service in 2019 or 2020 and had previously been ineligible to apply.

The deadline for applying for this general distribution funding is **Friday, Aug. 28.** For more details, including how to apply, visit HHS' webpage.

Appropriate-use criteria program testing extended

The educational and operations testing period for the appropriate-use criteria program has been extended through calendar year 2021. There are no payment consequences associated with the program during calendar years 2020 and 2021. Stakeholders are encouraged to use this period to learn, test and prepare for the appropriate-use criteria program.

CEO update call
The next CEO update call is scheduled from **1-2 pm Wednesday, Aug. 26**. Click HERE to register.

Educational opportunities

- ***Noon-1 pm Thursday, Aug. 20,*** **Leadership and Resiliency: Navigating Through and Beyond COVID-19 – Win When: The 21st Century Challenges of Health Equity –** From broken community partnerships to diminished funding, how do we overcome the 21st century challenges of health equity? This presentation motivates clinicians, researchers and health care leaders to explore the role, recognition and remediation of inequity in medicine. The presentation also teaches health care providers and biomedical researchers how to clinically confront the deadly "isms" that prevent quality care and public wellness. This session, and the entire series, is complimentary. Register HERE.

- ***2-3 pm Tuesday, Sept. 1,*** **Implementing a Successful Rural Telemedicine Program –** This webinar will examine the value and benefit of inpatient telemedicine programs, with an emphasis on its use in rural hospitals. The Access Physicians team will discuss specific subspecialties that can be provided through telemedicine to help hospitals retain patients, improve clinical outcomes and be financially successful. The presentation also will provide a road map to implementing those programs. Register HERE.

- ***2-3 pm Thursday, Sept. 17,*** **Gratitude: The Path to Resilience, Well-being and Joy –** Gratitude isn't just a practice that makes one feel good. It can boost resilience, improve sleep, be a buffer against anxiety and depression, and reduce burnout in health care professionals. This webinar will explore meditation, journaling and expressive art practices designed to cultivate gratitude and boost resilience. Attendees also will learn how gratitude can enhance on-the-job effectiveness. Register HERE.

- ***8:30 am-12:30 pm Friday, Sept. 18,*** **Iowa Society for Healthcare Engineering Virtual Conference –** The society's fall conference provides education to promote quality patient care, optimize facilities for the COVID-19 environment and prepare for health care's future through improved engineering practices. Register HERE.

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