

March 25, 2020

Rural Health Information during COVID-19



Dear Rural Stakeholders,

It is important to have consistent and efficient communication to provide rural health stakeholders with the information needed during this global pandemic. The rural health programs at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) are working on providing you with regular updates and resources amid this outbreak.

For critical information relating to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), we recommend that you regularly monitor information on the [Iowa Department of Public Health COVID-19 Page](#). For additional resources and updates, see the following pages.

Please reach out for technical assistance and for any questions you may have. We are an ongoing resource for you.

Best,

Rural Health Programs

Iowa Department of Public Health

For questions, contact:

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- Data Privacy and Security
 - The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced, effective immediately, that it will exercise its enforcement discretion and that it will not impose penalties for noncompliance with the regulatory requirements under the HIPAA Rules against covered health care providers in connection with the good faith provision of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency, see: [Notification of Enforcement Discretion for Telehealth Remote Communications During the COVID-19 Nationwide Public Health Emergency](#)
- The Iowa Insurance Division's COVID-19 information can be found on the [Iowa Insurance Division COVID-19 Resources](#) page.
- The Trump Administration announced the expansion of telehealth coverage to Medicare beneficiaries, starting March 6. See [CMS Medicare Telemedicine Health Care Provider Fact Sheet](#) and [Medicare Telehealth Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- An update on billing services related to COVID-19 can be found on [Letter # 2119-MC-FFS-CVD](#). A list of [all DHS Informational Letters](#).

IDPH Rural Health Program Updates

- **PRIMECARRE Loan Repayment Program**: Providers and sites may have concerns about compliance with their service obligation during the COVID-19 emergency. Participants who are required to be away from their approved service site more than the allotted seven weeks per service year; become unemployed as a direct result of the outbreak; or are directed by their employer to provide care outside of the PRIMECARRE approved site should provide notification via [IowaGrants](#) correspondence.
- **Certificate of Need (CON)**: According to the Governor's proclamation of March 17, institutional health facilities, which includes hospitals and nursing homes, that add beds specifically to deal with COVID-19 are exempt from the CON process through March 31.
- **Volunteer Health Care Provider Program (VHCPP)**: For health care providers who would like to volunteer their services, any provider holding a current VHCPP agreement with the Volunteer Health Care Provider Program (VHCPP) shall be afforded the protection of an employee of the state. Individual provider applications can be accessed [here](#) and submissions will be processed as quickly as possible.