

March 27, 2020

## **Rural Health Information during COVID-19**

Dear Rural Stakeholders,



To continue to have consistent and efficient communication to provide rural health stakeholders with the information needed during this global pandemic, here are updates from the rural health programs at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH).

As mentioned in the previous update, 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](#). In addition, discover the latest resources, maps and information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) on [coronavirus.iowa.gov](https://coronavirus.iowa.gov).

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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## What's New:

**Phase 3 Coronavirus Legislation Expands Telehealth to RHCs:** Temporarily permits RHCs to bill for telehealth under Medicare: expands the Medicare telehealth services to rural health clinics as the distant site.

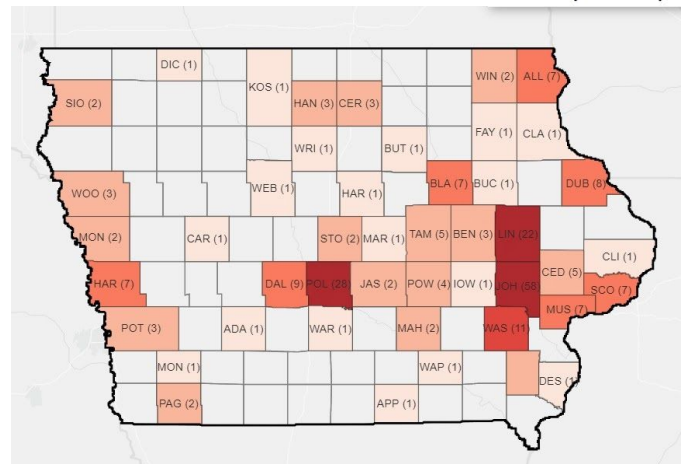
To read about the provisions of the CARES Act as they relate to Public Health, Hospitals, Community Health Centers, Drug Access, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Veterans' Health Care, Telehealth, Medicine and Supplies, see [What's Inside the Senate's \\$2 Trillion Coronavirus Aid Package](#).

**UPDATE:** The House sends the \$2 Trillion Coronavirus Rescue Package to the President's desk for signature.

Nathan Baugh, Director of Government Affairs for the National Association of Rural Health Clinics, explains:

- *“Due to the Coronavirus, CMS and Congress have greatly expanded the Medicare telehealth benefit to allow Medicare beneficiaries to safely seek care through a video-conference style system. Before this pandemic, telehealth was only available for rural Medicare beneficiaries, and was typically used to get specialty care from specialists in larger towns and cities. Medicare patients still had to physically go to an “originating site” and thus the convenience was limited. Now however, both of these requirements have been eliminated and all Medicare patients can receive a telehealth visit from the comfort of their home. Congress and the Administration have also waived the requirement that telehealth visits only be with established patients and Medicare is [allowing](#) providers and patients to use popular video chat applications such as Facetime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, or Skype”*

Iowa COVID-19 Cases by County





**The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** approved **1135 Waiver Flexibilities for Iowa**. Read more: [Section 1135 Waiver Flexibilities - Iowa Coronavirus Disease 2019:](#)

**The Department of Inspections and Appeals** includes information on COVID-19, and provides important updates on their website: <https://dia.iowa.gov/about/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>.

**The State of Iowa and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** have made available several waivers to assist in managing patient or resident needs during the COVID-19 response. [Read the DIA memo about what steps a health facility should take](#) for an employee, resident, patient, or tenant who has tested positive for COVID-19. (March 26, 2020). [Read the memo outlining what type of facilities qualify, and how to apply for a waiver.](#) (March 19, 2020)

The [Mason City \(IA\) Globe Gazette](#) (3/26, Murphy) reports that Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds on Thursday, March 26th ordered the suspension of all nonemergency surgeries, medical procedures, and dental procedures. In order to encourage the use of telehealth, Reynolds also ordered insurance companies to reimburse health care providers for telehealth services at the same rate as in-person services.

**The Society for Human Resource Management** has created resources to help prepare employers for the possibility of business closures, working from home, quarantines and other outcomes of a disease outbreak. Click [here](#) to learn more.

**The Iowa Department of Human Services** created an [Iowa Medicaid COVID-19 Provider Toolkit](#) that addresses frequently asked questions related to telehealth, home delivered meals, premiums suspended, social security income and unemployment, behavioral health services, home/community-based services, psychiatric medical institutions for children, operations, and MCOs.