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Wednesday, April 7, 2021

CMS begins recouping COVID-19 accelerated and advance payments

CMS [released an article](#) informing Medicare providers and suppliers who requested and received COVID-19 accelerated and advance payments that it began recovering those payments March 30, depending on the one-year anniversary of their first payments. Hospitals that requested these payments can learn more at the [COVID-19 accelerated and advance payments](#) website.

FDA adjusts Moderna vaccine-dosage guidance

The Food and Drug Administration [has said](#) that Moderna can add up to 50% more doses per vial of its COVID-19 vaccine. Moderna had been shipping 10-dose vials. The FDA's change will enable shipments to contain up to 15 doses per vial. In doing so, the FDA also will permit vaccinators to extract an 11th dose from existing 10-dose vials. Such a change is contingent on the availability of certain syringes and needles. Read the FDA's updated [provider fact sheet](#) for more details.

Gov. Reynolds opposes vaccine passports, signs new public health disaster proclamation

During her weekly news conference, Gov. Kim Reynolds said she is in discussion with the state Legislature about limiting vaccine passports, which would verify people have been vaccinated against COVID-19. "Passports" for travel or at entry points to venues have been discussed by several states and have sparked a political divide. The White House has said the federal government will not roll out a system requiring Americans to carry vaccine credentials.

In opposing the passports, Gov. Reynolds said vaccination should remain a personal choice. A passport system would create a "two-tiered society" and have privacy implications. She is looking into how broad the ban would be, including whether it would cover the private sector.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the state passed 1 million residents with at least one dose of vaccine. Of those, more than 675,000 Iowans are fully vaccinated, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health. Also Tuesday, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced it would award Iowa \$30 million to help with vaccine distribution.

Meanwhile, the number of positive tests in the state remains higher than it was in mid-March. There were about 3,700 positive cases last week, compared to about 3,100 positive cases the week of March 13. The 14-day positive test rate is 4.9%, while the seven-day positive test rate is 5.2%.

Late last week, Gov. Reynolds signed a new public health disaster proclamation to extend Iowa's COVID-19 protocols for another 30 days. The most recent proclamation would have expired Sunday, April 4. The proclamation continues to strongly encourage Iowans, businesses and organizations to take reasonable public health measures consistent with IDPH guidance.

IDPH releases updated COVID-19 vaccine information

IDPH has released the following vaccination information:

- Most-recent [COVID-19 vaccine information brief](#) (changes are highlighted in yellow).
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Billing Information](#).
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Webinar, April 2](#).
- [Vaccine Shortage Order Rescinded, April 5](#).
- [Post-order Vaccination Policy, April 5](#).

Health care provider questions about COVID-19 vaccine can be directed to the COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center at 800-831-6293, ext. 1, or emailed to COVID19Vaccine@idph.iowa.gov.

AHA responds to Kaiser Health News/Washington Post story about hospital finances

AHA has provided [key messages](#) for hospitals in response to a recent [Kaiser Health News/Washington Post story](#) about hospital finances and federal support during the pandemic. The article, "Some of America's wealthiest hospital systems ended up even richer, thanks to federal bailouts," attempts to make the point that some large health systems' profits have increased from pre-pandemic levels after receiving government funding.

AHA submitted a [letter to the editor](#) in response to the article, emphasizing the article minimizes that hospitals have provided essential services to their patients and communities during this pandemic, all while facing their greatest financial crises. US hospitals also lost more than \$320 billion in 2020 because of lost revenue from cancelled procedures and low patient volumes, and the higher costs of acquiring personal protective equipment and staff, and treating COVID-19 patients.

COVID-19 risk low from surfaces; CDC updates cleaning guidelines

Recent studies have shown the risk of contracting COVID-19 from a contaminated surface is generally less than 1 in 10,000. In most cases, household cleaners rather than disinfectants are sufficient to ward off virus levels, the CDC said in [updated guidance](#) published April 5. The primary mode of infection is through exposure to respiratory droplets, the agency said.

FBI warns of COVID-19 vaccination scams

The FBI office in Omaha is warning residents about a new scam targeting people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine. An increasing number of those vaccinated are being asked by email or text message to participate in a fraudulent postvaccine survey. If they participate, they are promised a prize or cash. No postvaccine surveys are being conducted by Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson and Johnson.

HHS updates provider relief fund FAQs

HHS has released updated [provider relief fund FAQs](#). Key updates include:

- A change in the definition of “parent organization” to “eligible health care entities” when transferring general-distribution payments to subsidiaries (see FAQ’s Ownership Structures and Financial Relationships section).
- A reiteration of HHS’ [Jan. 15 Notice of Reporting Requirements](#), which specifies that relief fund payments must be expended no later than Wednesday, June 30. HHS will provide direction about how to return unused funds. (see FAQ’s Terms and Conditions section).
- Revision of language about cost-based reimbursement in which a ceiling is applied. The revised FAQ clarifies that when the Medicare- or Medicaid-reimbursed amount does not fully cover the cost, those “non-reimbursed costs” (changed from “incremental costs”) are eligible for reimbursement under provider relief funds. “Costs for care to commercial payer patients” is identified as an example of when costs are not reimbursed under cost-based reimbursement. (see FAQ’s Use of Funds section).
- The removal of a FAQ about Medicaid disproportionate share hospital payments for uncompensated costs for hospital services to Medicaid beneficiaries. This FAQ had placed restrictions on applying relief-fund payments to expenses for treating Medicaid and uninsured patients for those hospitals that received Medicaid disproportionate-share payments. (see FAQ’s Use of Funds section).

CDC releases COVID-19 sharps disposal information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has provided information designed to help COVID-19 vaccinators and others helping at COVID-19 mass-vaccination sites reduce needlestick injuries and exposures to bloodborne pathogens, like hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. The recently released information is:

- [CDC Blog: Preventing Needlestick Injuries at COVID–19 Vaccination Sites](#)
- [Safe and Proper Sharps Disposal During the COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Campaign](#)
- [Strategies for Sharps Disposal Container Use During Supply Shortages for Managers and Purchase Agents](#)

IDPH provides COVID-19 resources for rural health

The latest COVID-19 resources for rural health providers are:

- [COVID-19 Vaccine Education Initiative](#): Vaccine education resources designed to reach different audiences, including communities of color disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Includes TV, radio, print and digital public service announcements.
- [COVID-19: Sustained Federal Action Is Crucial as Pandemic Enters Its Second Year](#): Discusses the federal government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Provides an overview of federal actions on health care and economic policy areas through March 10, including data on vaccine administration and COVID-19 relief spending. Offers 28 new recommendations to federal agencies regarding public health, the economy and program integrity that would improve the federal response.
- [Financial Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Federally Qualified Health Centers](#): Infographic describing the estimated financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural federally qualified health centers and the communities they serve.
- [Vaccination Is Local: COVID-19 Vaccination Rates Vary by County and Key Characteristics](#): Explores COVID-19 vaccination rates using county-level data from the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Identifies characteristics associated with higher or lower county vaccination rates, including demographics, social vulnerability index and metropolitan status.

- [Voices From the Field: A Blog About Resilience During the Pandemic](#): Seven-part blog series discusses physical, spiritual and mental wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Features behavioral health providers and leaders detailing methods used to promote wellness in six states. Highlights perspectives from rural and urban areas.

Educational opportunity

- [Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Webinar](#). Janssen is hosting **daily (Monday-Friday) educational webinars for COVID-19 vaccine administrators through the end of April**. The content of each webinar will be the same, so you only need to attend one session. Click the link above to register. Health care provider questions about the COVID-19 vaccine can be directed to the COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center at 800-831-6293, ext. 1, or emailed to COVID19Vaccine@idph.iowa.gov.



Click here for the latest
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