



Nursing Home Weekly: Recap of LeadingAge Updates

August 7, 2020

Fiscal year 2020 payment and policy changes for nursing homes – On July 31 CMS issued a final rule that updates Medicare payment rules and the value-based purchasing program for nursing homes. A CMS fact sheet on the final rule can be [found here](#); the final rule itself can be [found here](#). Read a LeadingAge summary here - <https://leadingage.org/regulation/cms-releases-snf-pps-fy-2021-final-rule>

Nursing homes will receive an aggregate \$750 million Medicare pay increase for fiscal year 2021 under a final rule announced Friday by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. It would amount to a 2.2% net increase [starting Oct. 1](#), when fiscal year 2021 begins. CMS also plans to apply a 5% cap to any decreases in a provider's wage index from fiscal 2020 to 2021 under the rule. That cap will be informed by revised geographic delineations provided by the White House Office of Management and Budget to identify a provider's status as an urban or rural facility and to calculate the wage index. The final rule also finalizes changes to the ICD-10 code mappings used under the Patient Driven Payment Model to classify skilled nursing patients/residents into payment groups. Additionally, the rule finalizes updates to the SNF Value-Based Purchasing program to reflect previously finalized policies and updates the 30-day Phase One Review and Correction deadline to the baseline period quality measure quarterly report.

Three day stay waiver - Many members have asked if the 3-day stay waiver is still in effect. Yes. The 3-day stay waiver remains in effect with the extension of the public health emergency. There has been a lot of confusion about this waiver and the benefit period waiver, though. The 3-day stay applies to everyone everywhere, but the benefit period requires direct impact from COVID-19. This waiver is in effect until either the end of the public health emergency (currently October 23-ish) or until CMS notifies us otherwise. There is no indication that they plan to end it any time soon.

Proposed 9% cut to therapy payments- CMS released its 2021 proposed Physician Fee Schedule and cuts to therapy were among the elements of the proposal. Included in the proposal were some continuations and changes to current telehealth provisions. A CMS [fact sheet](#) issued Monday said that nursing homes would be allowed to increase telehealth visit coverage from once every 30 days to once every three days.

More on Provider Relief Funds - HHS is extending until Aug. 28 the deadline for eligible state Medicaid providers, including assisted living operators, to apply for monies from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Provider Relief Funds. Medicare providers who missed the opportunity to apply for additional funding from the Phase 1 Medicare General Distribution now have a second chance, starting August 10 and going until August 28. These funds aim to offer providers financial relief up to 2 percent of their annual revenues. Some providers with low Medicare revenues did not complete this

application. There is also a window from August 19 – August 28 for providers who had a change of ownership to apply for funds.

Antigen testing updates – In light of many questions about point of care testing, antigen testing, whether CMS will mandate staff testing and others related to the new testing instruments CMS is sending to all nursing home, LeadingAge posted [this Q&A](#) today to address the frequently asked questions.

The Department of Health and Human Services has published a list that now includes 2,400 nursing homes – an additional approximately 1,800 more than the 636 that have already received antigen testing machines. The aim is to distribute the second tranche by mid-August. The list is at [this link](#). To access the list, go to the link. About ¼ of the way down the page, under “Supporting COVID-19 Testing”, a link is embedded to access the list of facilities. When you click on this link, it opens a zip file containing the excel spreadsheet that lists the facilities. Separate tabs within the same excel file list the hotspot counties and the methodology for prioritizing facilities.

CDC guidance on reporting lab data - CDC updated [guidance](#) on reporting COVID-19 lab data. The guidance aligns with what we have been reporting on HHS Lab Data Reporting Guidance, and may serve as another resource. Remember: all nursing homes that use a point-of-care testing device must have a CLIA certificate of waiver, must use the device in the location for which the waiver is issued, and must report testing data to the state/local health department according to the process outlined by the state.

New CAST Case study: Communicate without removing PPE -As the pandemic changes how healthcare professionals operate, the Vocera Badge helps providers communicate hands-free, without needing to remove personal protective equipment. A new CAST case study, “[Increasing Staff Efficiencies During COVID-19 Through Communications Technology](#),” shares how team members at Hardin Memorial Health used this technology as part of their COVID-19 response.

Advance Care Planning and Serious Illness Communication -In the face of COVID-19, advance care planning is more important than ever. We’ve gathered materials and resources to help you have conversations with residents and clients who are high risk for serious complications of COVID-19. Visit the [Advance Care and Serious Illness Resources](#) page for trusted resources offering tools, tips, advice, and best practices.

New QuickCast: Lessons from the Pandemic on Addressing Loneliness -Looking for expert access on the quick? Free QuickCasts offer on-demand, short-form learning opportunities. In this 20-minute QuickCast, Jennifer Molinsky highlights lessons learned in addressing loneliness among older adults—and the challenges related to the equitable deployment of strategies. [Watch now](#) and [check out more mental health online resources on the Learning Hub](#).

Changes to the daily member call - As the pandemic continues to evolve, we are mindful that your organizational priorities are evolving as well. Beginning on August 3, we are going to deliver our member update calls on Mondays and Wednesdays at 3:30pm ET, and we will continue to post recordings on our website. Content will include legislative, regulatory, and operational information from the policy team, LeadingAge members, and other subject matter experts. We encourage you to continue to let us know what topics you’d like to hear us talk about. [Register here](#).