

# Meadows Institute COVID-19 Regulatory & Reimbursement Newsletter

## *Letter to Providers #45: State and Federal Updates – February 26, 2021*

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With federal and state health care policies changing in response to COVID-19, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (Meadows Institute) is issuing *COVID-19 Regulatory & Reimbursement Newsletters* to support providers. In these newsletters, we highlight recent changes and extensions to regulatory and reimbursement rules, as well as newly published or updated guidance and answers to frequently asked questions.

These newsletters, along with additional information on mental health resources during a pandemic, are posted here: <https://mmhpi.org/work/covid19/>. If you would like to have additional organizations added to our distribution list or have follow up questions on the content, please email Catie Hilbelink at [chilbelink@mmhpi.org](mailto:chilbelink@mmhpi.org).

## Texas Updates

### Extended Flexibilities

#### Multiple Medicaid Flexibilities

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 23, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>The following Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) COVID-19 flexibilities have been extended through March 31, 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Correction to ‘COVID-19 Guidance: targeted case management through remote delivery’</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Waiver extension for durable medical equipment certification and receipt form</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telephone (audio-only) behavioral health services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telephone (audio-only) medical services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Rural Health Clinic reimbursement for telemedicine and telehealth services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">School Health and Related Services (SHARS) provided through telemedicine or telehealth</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telehealth service for occupational, physical, and speech therapy</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telephone (audio-only) early childhood intervention specialized skills training</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telephone (audio-only) nutritional counseling services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Texas Health Steps checkup guidance extended through July 31, 2020</a></li></ul> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-multiple-medicaid-covid-19-flexibilities-extended-through-march-31-2021">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-multiple-medicaid-covid-19-flexibilities-extended-through-march-31-2021</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

### Healthy Texas Women and Family Planning Program

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|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>    | February 24, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Summary</b> | The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has extended Healthy Texas Women and Family Planning Program COVID-19 related telemedicine (physician-delivered) and telehealth (non-physician delivered) flexibilities through March 31, 2021.     |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-telemedicine-physician-delivered-and-telehealth-non-physician-delivered-services">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-telemedicine-physician-delivered-and-telehealth-non-physician-delivered-services</a> |

### CLASS Telehealth Therapies

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 23, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>The following Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) professional and specialized therapy services are available by telehealth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical therapy</li><li>• Occupational therapy</li><li>• Speech and language pathology</li><li>• Recreational therapy</li><li>• Music therapy</li><li>• Behavior support</li><li>• Dietary services</li><li>• Cognitive rehabilitation therapy</li></ul> <p>Initially effective March 15, 2020, these flexibilities have been extended through March 31, 2021. Acceptable telehealth formats are synchronous audiovisual interaction or asynchronous store and forward technology. Use these with synchronous audio interaction between the client and the distant site provider.</p> <p>The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has relaxed <a href="#">HIPAA requirements</a> to allow use of video for telehealth services. Texas Medicaid recognizes OCR's HIPAA enforcement discretion as it relates to telehealth platform requirements. Therapies must have a treatment plan. The goals and outcomes must support being provided through telehealth. Revision of therapy hours may be added to an IPC and authorized by HHSC per the process outlined in <a href="#">IL 2020-46</a>.</p> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-covid-19-update-telehealth-guidance-class-professional-and-specialized-therapies">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-covid-19-update-telehealth-guidance-class-professional-and-specialized-therapies</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Children with Special Health Care Needs Services Program

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 24, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>As part of its continued response to COVID-19, the Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Services Program will provide reimbursement for previously identified telemedicine and telehealth services through March 31, 2021.</p> <p>Effective dates remain as stated in the original notifications, which are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telephone (audio only) medical services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telephone (audio only) behavioral health services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">RHC and FQHC reimbursement for telemedicine (physician-delivered) and telehealth (non-physician delivered) services</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Claims for telehealth service for occupational, physical, and speech therapy for the CSHCN Services Program</a></li></ul> <p>All services listed in the CSHCN Services Program Provider Manual, Chapter 19, “Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and Rural Health Clinics (RHC),” Chapter 29, “Outpatient Behavioral Health,” and Chapter 38, “Telecommunication Services,” continue to remain eligible for CSHCN Services Program reimbursement. Providers can refer to these chapters for additional information about the CSHCN Services Program telemedicine and telehealth service benefits.</p> <p>Additionally, the requirement to obtain the client or guardian signature on the CSHCN Services Program Documentation of Receipt Form is waived through March 31, 2021.</p> |
| <b>Links</b>   | <p><a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-cshcn-covid-19-telehealth-and-telemedicine-extensions-through-march-31-2021">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-cshcn-covid-19-telehealth-and-telemedicine-extensions-through-march-31-2021</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-client-signature-requirement-waived-cshcn-documentation-receipt-form-response-covid">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-client-signature-requirement-waived-cshcn-documentation-receipt-form-response-covid</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

### 1915(c) Waivers: Face to Face Services Coordination Suspension

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 23, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>The suspension of face-to-face service coordination visits for fee-for-service (FFS) Medicaid 1915(c) waiver case managers and service coordinators is extended through March 31, 2021. This temporary policy applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS)</li><li>• Texas Home Living (TxHML)</li><li>• Deaf-Blind with Multiple Disabilities (DBMD)</li><li>• Home and Community-based Services (HCS)</li><li>• General Revenue Service Coordinators</li><li>• Community First Choice Service Coordinators</li><li>• Pre-admission Screening and Resident Review Habilitation Coordinators</li></ul> <p>Case managers, service coordinators, and habilitation coordinators are encouraged to complete visits by phone, telehealth, or telemedicine.</p> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-update-covid-19-guidance-ffs-service-coordinators-and-case-managers-february-22">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-update-covid-19-guidance-ffs-service-coordinators-and-case-managers-february-22</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

### HCS and TxHML Providers

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 24, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>HHSC's temporary waiver of certain requirements in Sections 3710, 4381.3, 4381.7(6) and 4381.7(7) of the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Billing Guidelines and the Texas Home Living Billing (TxHML) Guidelines has been extended through March 31, 2021. HHSC published a revision to this guidance in <a href="#">IL 2021-08 In-Home Day Habilitation Information for Program Providers</a>, which replaces IL 2021-07.</p> <p>Additionally, the following temporary policy change has also been extended through February 28, 2021: HHSC lifted the prohibition on service providers of respite and CFC PAS/HAB from living in the same home as the person receiving HCS and TxHML program services. This provides access to needed services for people living in their own or family's home. A person's spouse or a minor child's parent is still prohibited from being a paid service provider of these services due to guidelines.</p> |
| <b>Links</b>   | <a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-home-day-habilitation-information-program-providers-covid-19-il-2021-08">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-24-home-day-habilitation-information-program-providers-covid-19-il-2021-08</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

<https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/02/covid-19-update-temporary-change-hcs-txhtml-policy-service-providers-respite-cfc-pashab-feb-22>

## Guidance for New and Initial Medicaid Prior Authorizations

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 23, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>HHSC directed the Texas Medicaid &amp; Healthcare Partnership (TMHP) to process new and initial prior authorization requests, including recertification requests, by relaxing document submission timeframes for providers if they are unable to provide certain required documentation during the COVID-19 emergency. This direction will remain in effect through March 31, 2021. The guidance applies to all state plan services, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acute care services</li><li>• Long-term services and supports</li><li>• Personal assistance services</li><li>• Personal care services</li><li>• Community First Choice</li><li>• Private duty nursing</li><li>• Day activity and health services</li><li>• Durable medical equipment and supplies</li></ul> <p>Examples of such documentation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual-required timely signatures from physicians and other providers</li><li>• Client signatures</li><li>• Up-to-date visit with primary care or ordering physician</li><li>• Certification of timely face-to-face visits</li></ul> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <p><a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-covid-19-guidance-new-and-initial-medicaid-prior-authorizations">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-23-covid-19-guidance-new-and-initial-medicaid-prior-authorizations</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## Reopening Visitation Emergency Rules

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 22, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>HHSC extended the <a href="#">COVID-19 Response--Expansion of Reopening Visitation</a> emergency rules for intermediate care facilities. The extension takes effect on February 13, 2021 and will expire on April 13, 2021.</p> <p>HHSC also extended the <a href="#">Expansion of Reopening Visitation</a> emergency rules that require facilities to offer certain types of limited indoor and outdoor visitation as well as essential caregiver visits. The extension takes effect on February 13, 2021 and will expire on April 13, 2021.</p>                                                  |
| <b>Links</b>   | <p><a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-22-icf-covid-19-expansion-reopening-visitation-emergency-rules-extended-april-13-2021">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-22-icf-covid-19-expansion-reopening-visitation-emergency-rules-extended-april-13-2021</a></p> <p><a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/02/hhsc-extends-expansion-reopening-visitation-emergency-rules-alf-providers-april-13">https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/02/hhsc-extends-expansion-reopening-visitation-emergency-rules-alf-providers-april-13</a></p> |

## Chemical Dependency Treatment Facility Requirements

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 12, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>HHSC posted an amended guidance letter replacing the previous GL 20-3008, issued on October 16, 2020, to notify providers that effective February 14, 2021, emergency rules §500.41, CDTF Telemedicine or Telehealth During the COVID-19 Pandemic; §500.42, CDTF Maximum Caseloads During the COVID-19 Pandemic; §500.43, CDTF Service Delivery Through Two-Way, Real-Time Internet or Telephone Communications During the COVID-19 Pandemic; and §500.44, CDTF Treatment Planning and Service Provision Documentation Deadlines During the COVID-19 Pandemic, in 26 Texas Administrative Code Title, Part 1, Chapter 500, Subchapter D are extended for an additional 60 days. The emergency rule extension is effective until April 14, 2021 and can be viewed in the Texas Register under docket number 202004337.</p> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <p><a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/provider-portal/facilities-regulation/memos/gl-20-3008.pdf">https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/provider-portal/facilities-regulation/memos/gl-20-3008.pdf</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor Intern (LCDC-I) Requirements

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|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>    | February 12, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p><a href="#">GL 20-5002-A</a>, regarding the extension of emergency rules related to Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor Intern (LCDC-I) requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic has been posted. Effective February 14, 2021, this emergency rule was extended for 60 days.</p> <p>This emergency rule temporarily permits the following to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and ensure that LCDC interns and their supervisors are able to continue working and providing treatment to their patients during the COVID-19 pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• certain LCDC interns with more than 1,000 hours of supervised work experience may temporarily provide services in person or through two-way, real-time internet or telephone communications; and</li><li>• certain qualified counselor intern supervisors may temporarily provide two-way, real-time internet or telephone communications.</li></ul> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/02/lcdc-i-requirements-during-covid-19-pandemic-amended-gl-20-5002-a">https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/02/lcdc-i-requirements-during-covid-19-pandemic-amended-gl-20-5002-a</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Texas Launches COVID-19 Media Campaign

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|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>    | February 10, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) launched elements of its COVID-19 media campaign to encourage vaccination. Most recently, the state released its “Take the shot!” <a href="#">video</a> as well as a <a href="#">video</a> featuring vaccinated Texans over age 65 talking about seeing their grandchildren again. The ads are the first in a \$2.3 million public awareness campaign being launched by the state to increase acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine and inform the public on how to get the shot.</p> |

## COVID-19 Vaccine Billing FAQs for Vaccinators

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>    | February 10, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>HHSC Long-term Care Regulation (LTCR) published COVID-19 Vaccine Billing <a href="#">Frequently Asked Questions</a> (FAQs). This guidance is for facilities that enrolled with DSHS to be a vaccine provider. This FAQ document is not applicable to facilities that were vaccinated via a pharmacy or other health care institution, or for facilities that received vaccines through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Pharmacy Partnership for Long-term Care Program.</p> |

**Link** | <https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-10-ltcr-publishes-covid-19-vaccine-billing-fags-vaccinators>

## HHSC Adopts New COVID-19 Vaccination Data Reporting Emergency Rules for ICF/IID Providers

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|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>    | February 22, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>Effective February 12, 2021, HHSC adopted new COVID-19 vaccination data reporting emergency rules. The rules require intermediate care facilities for individuals with an intellectual disability (ICFs/IID) or related conditions to accurately report COVID-19 vaccination data for staff and residents to HHSC within 24 hours of completing a round of vaccinations, in the format established by HHSC. The data will allow HHSC to accurately track vaccinations of staff and residents in long-term care facilities in Texas.</p> <p>HHSC has published <a href="#">Provider Letter 2021-05</a> with instructions on how to report vaccination data information to HHSC using Survey Monkey. Read the <a href="#">ICF/IID rules</a>.</p> <p>Facilities must begin reporting vaccination data immediately using an online survey. Complete the <a href="#">survey here</a>.</p> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-22-hhsc-adopts-new-covid-19-vaccination-data-reporting-emergency-rules-icfiid">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-22-hhsc-adopts-new-covid-19-vaccination-data-reporting-emergency-rules-icfiid</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## Community Vaccination Sites in Dallas, Houston

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 10, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>Gov. Abbott announced that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is establishing mass community vaccination sites in the Dallas Fort Worth metroplex and Houston. The pilot sites will be based at AT&amp;T Stadium, Fair Park, and NRG Stadium and are intended to support vaccination for underserved areas.</p> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-fema-launch-community-vaccination-sites-in-dallas-houston">https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-fema-launch-community-vaccination-sites-in-dallas-houston</a>                                                                                              |

## “High Hospitalization” List Updates

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 21, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Summary</b> | Trauma Service Areas R, S, V, P, H, E, Q, M have been removed from the list of TSAs that have reached the state’s “high hospitalization” threshold. Only TSAs I (El Paso) and T (Laredo) remain on the list. As a reminder, TSAs in that category are asked to scale down elective surgeries and procedures. Executive orders GA 31 and 32 lay out the threshold for high hospitalizations and impact on elective procedures. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/GA3031/">https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/GA3031/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## Federal Updates

### Biden Renews National Emergency Declaration

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 24, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>President Biden renewed the U.S. Declaration of National Emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the Federal Register and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, Biden sent to the Federal Register for publication <a href="#">the notice</a> stating that the national emergency declared in Proclamation 9994 of March 13, 2020, beginning March 1, 2020, concerning the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2021.</p> <p>President Biden also <a href="#">announced</a> a new effort to make masks more easily available to communities hard hit by the pandemic. The Biden Administration will deliver more than 25 million masks to over 1,300 Community Health Centers across the country as well as 60,000 food pantries and soup kitchens. President Biden also issued <a href="#">a proclamation</a> remembering the 500,000 Americans lost to COVID-19.</p> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/24/a-letter-on-the-continuation-of-the-national-emergency-concerning-the-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-pandemic/">https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/24/a-letter-on-the-continuation-of-the-national-emergency-concerning-the-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-pandemic/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## HHS Announces Actions to Expand COVID-19 Testing

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 17, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Summary</b> | The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced new actions to expand COVID-19 testing capacity across the country. First, they will expand COVID-19 testing for schools and underserved populations. HHS will partner with the Department of Defense (DOD) to make a \$650 million investment to expand testing opportunities for K-8 schools and underserved congregate settings, such as homeless shelters, directly through new coordination “hubs.” Second, the Administration will ramp up the domestic manufacturing of testing supplies and raw materials to address testing shortages. Third, the Biden Administration, through CDC, will rapidly increase genomic sequencing of the virus to better prepare for the threat of variants and slow the spread of disease. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/02/17/biden-administration-announces-actions-expand-covid-19-testing.html">https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/02/17/biden-administration-announces-actions-expand-covid-19-testing.html</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## PREP Act Protections Expanded for Federal Employees, Contractors, Volunteers

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 10, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Summary</b> | HHS amended its declaration providing liability protection under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act to include federal government employees, contractors, and volunteers authorized to prescribe, administer, deliver, distribute or dispense COVID-19 medical countermeasures. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/legal/prepact/Pages/COVID-Amendment-6.aspx">https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/legal/prepact/Pages/COVID-Amendment-6.aspx</a>                                                                                                                            |

## Sentinel Event Alert: Health Care Workers in Crisis

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| <b>Summary</b> | The Joint Commission issued a Sentinel Event Alert focused on the stress and strain impacting frontline caregivers as the pandemic continues. This is the first in a series of special edition Sentinel Event Alerts addressing concerns among health care workers; the alerts provide education, examples, and links that may be helpful as leaders work to support frontline staff.       |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.jointcommission.org/resources/patient-safety-topics/sentinel-event/sentinel-event-alert-newsletters/sentinel-event-alert-62-se-health-care-workers-in-the-midst-of-crisis/">https://www.jointcommission.org/resources/patient-safety-topics/sentinel-event/sentinel-event-alert-newsletters/sentinel-event-alert-62-se-health-care-workers-in-the-midst-of-crisis/</a> |

## Pfizer Vaccine Stability

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 19, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Summary</b> | New data from Pfizer indicates that its COVID-19 vaccine is more stable than previously believed when stored -25°C to -15°C (-13°F to 5°F), temperatures more commonly found in pharmaceutical freezers and refrigerators. Pfizer said it submitted the data supporting this conclusion to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), with the hope that the agency would allow for vaccine vials to be stored at these temperatures for a total of two weeks as an alternative or complement to storage in an ultra-low temperature freezer. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biontech-submit-covid-19-vaccine-stability-data">https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biontech-submit-covid-19-vaccine-stability-data</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## ICF/IID: Quality Safety and Oversight Memo

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 11, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Summary</b> | <p>The Centers for Medicare &amp; Medicaid Services (CMS) issued <a href="#">The Quality Safety &amp; Oversight Memo QSO-21-14-ICF-IID-PRTE</a>. The memo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviews guidance for visitation in ICF/IIDs during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The document provides ways an ICF/IID can more safely facilitate in-person visitation and address the psychosocial needs of residents.</li><li>• Encourages a person-centered approach to visits, when possible.</li><li>• Outlines:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Visitation types and the expectations surrounding each type.</li><li>○ Survey considerations.</li><li>○ Available resources.</li></ul></li></ul> |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-11-cms-issues-memo-qso-21-14-icfiid-and-prtf">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-02-11-cms-issues-memo-qso-21-14-icfiid-and-prtf</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Medicaid, CHIP COVID-19 Data Summary

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| <b>Summary</b> | CMS released updated Medicaid and CHIP COVID-19 preliminary data summaries with information on services through July 31, 2020. The information includes updates on COVID-19 treatment and options, service use among Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries during the public health emergency, services delivered via telehealth among Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries during the public health emergency, and services for mental and substance use disorder among Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.medicaid.gov/state-resource-center/downloads/covid19-data-snapshot.pdf">https://www.medicaid.gov/state-resource-center/downloads/covid19-data-snapshot.pdf</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## CDC Reports and Updated Guidance

### Report on Vaccine Safety Monitoring

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 26, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Summary</b> | CDC issued a study of the first month of COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring. In short, the monitoring offers reassurance about the safety of the two approved COVID-19 vaccines. Local and systemic reactions were common; rare reports of anaphylaxis were received. No unusual or unexpected reporting patterns were detected. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e3.htm?s_cid=mm7008e3_w">https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e3.htm?s_cid=mm7008e3_w</a>                                                                                                                                                                          |

### Vaccine Intent and Nonintent

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 12, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Summary</b> | CDC issued a new report focused on vaccine intent, perceptions, and reasons for not vaccinating. From September to December 2020, intent to receive COVID-19 vaccination increased from 39.4% to 49.1% among adults and across all priority groups, and nonintent decreased from 38.1% to 32.1%. Younger adults, women, non-Hispanic Black adults, adults living in nonmetropolitan areas, and adults with less education and income, and without health insurance continue to have the highest estimates of nonintent to receive COVID-19 vaccination. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7006e3.htm?s_cid=mm7006e3_x">https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7006e3.htm?s_cid=mm7006e3_x</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Quarantine Guidance

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 10, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Summary</b> | CDC's updated guidance indicates that people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 do not have to quarantine after a virus exposure. Vaccinated individuals with an COVID-19 exposure are not required to quarantine if they are fully vaccinated, within three months following receipt of the last dose in the series, and asymptomatic. People who do not meet those criteria should still quarantine after exposure. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html">https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Double Masking

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 13, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Summary</b> | CDC released updated guidance on how to correctly wear a mask. The new guidance recommends masks with two or more layers that fit snugly against your nose and sides of your face and includes recommendations related to double masking. See the CDC <a href="#">report</a> and <a href="#">article</a> about mask effectiveness. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html</a>                                                                                                                                                                |

## CMS Storm Assistance to Texas

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| <b>Date</b>    | February 22, 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Summary</b> | CMS issued a <a href="#">news release</a> about the storm assistance it is providing to Texas via waivers and other flexibilities to ensure hospitals and other facilities can continue to provide access to care despite the effects of the storm. The release includes information about dialysis care, Medicare Advantage and Part D, medical equipment and supplies, and other tools/action in response to the public health emergency declared in Texas. |
| <b>Link</b>    | <a href="https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-offers-comprehensive-support-state-texas-combat-winter-storm">https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-offers-comprehensive-support-state-texas-combat-winter-storm</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |