

**Meadows Institute COVID-19 Regulatory & Reimbursement Newsletter**

***Letter to Providers #55: State and Federal Updates – May 7, 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 Rachael McLaughlin at [rmclaughlin@mmhpi.org](mailto:rmclaughlin@mmhpi.org).

## Texas Updates

### FQHCs and RHCs Reimbursement for COVID-19 Vaccine Administration

<b>Date</b>	April 19, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Beginning March 23, 2021, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) can be reimbursed for COVID-19 vaccine administration services with procedure codes 0001A, 0002A, 0011A, 0012A, and 0031A.</p> <p>These vaccine administration procedure codes are benefits for Medicaid, Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Services Program, Healthy Texas Women (HTW), and Family Planning Program (FPP) clients when services are rendered in an office, outpatient hospital, or other location setting.</p>
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-19-fqhcs-and-rhcs-reimbursement-covid-19-vaccine-administration-services">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-19-fqhcs-and-rhcs-reimbursement-covid-19-vaccine-administration-services</a>

### Testing in Pharmacy Reimbursable

<b>Date</b>	April 13, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	<p>On April 13, 2021, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) updated the fee-for-service medical claims system to reimburse pharmacists and pharmacy providers for COVID-19 tests in the pharmacy setting. Pharmacies and pharmacists interested in administering COVID-19 tests to people enrolled in Medicaid must complete an enrollment application at <a href="http://tmhp.com">tmhp.com</a>. For people enrolled in Medicaid managed care, pharmacies and pharmacists must enroll with the MCO in their service area. To learn more, visit the <a href="#">Texas Vendor Drug Program website</a>.</p>
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-26-some-covid-19-laboratory-procedure-codes-updated-become-benefits-pharmacists-and">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-26-some-covid-19-laboratory-procedure-codes-updated-become-benefits-pharmacists-and</a>

## Vaccine Updates

### State Urges Providers to Order Vaccine

<b>Date</b>	April 30, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	<p>The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) sent a <a href="#">letter</a> to vaccine providers urging them to shift from allocation to ordering vaccines as needed. DSHS allocated 446,460 first doses of COVID-19 vaccine to providers that requested it for this week. That represents 753 sites in 101 counties and leaves more than 500,000 additional doses available to providers. Those doses will be shipped to the DSHS pharmacy in Austin and used to fill vaccine requests. In the following weeks, providers should continue to request vaccine as needed, and DSHS will place or fill orders for those amounts, rather than drawing down all doses in the state allotment.</p> <p>Texas has now administered more than 18.3 million doses of vaccine. More than 11 million people have received at least one dose, and over 7.9 million are now fully vaccinated. That means nearly half of all eligible Texans have gotten a COVID-19 shot, and more than one-third are fully vaccinated.</p> <p>Many of the large vaccine providers have reduced their vaccine requests as shots become more widely available at smaller, more convenient locations around the state like pharmacies and doctors' offices. People can register with the <a href="#">Texas Public Health Vaccine Scheduler</a>, which will match them with a vaccine appointment through a participating public health entity in their county.</p>
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/news/releases/2021/20210501.aspx">https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/news/releases/2021/20210501.aspx</a>

### Pediatric Provider Enrollment

<b>Date</b>	May 3, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	<p>In anticipation of the expansion of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine's Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to include adolescents ages 12 year and older, DSHS is encouraging all pediatric providers to enroll in the COVID-19 Vaccine Program <a href="#">here</a>. Currently, the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for ages 16 years and older. The enrollment requires facilities to complete the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Agreement and include specific contact and storage information. For questions or issues about enrolling for the COVID-19 Vaccine Program, please contact the DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Helpdesk at (877) 835-7750, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, or email <a href="mailto:COVID19VacEnroll@dshs.texas.gov">COVID19VacEnroll@dshs.texas.gov</a>.</p>

## Updates on Flexibilities and Emergency Rules

### TMB Renews Emergency Rule Related to Issuance of Prescriptions

<b>Date</b>	May 3, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	The Texas Medical Board’s emergency rule related to the issuance of certain prescriptions during the COVID-19 disaster has been renewed for 60 days. The emergency rule continues to allow physicians to use telemedicine to issue previous prescription(s) for scheduled medications to established chronic pain patients if the physician has, in the past 90 days, seen a patient in-person or via a telemedicine visit using two-way audio and video communication. The rule now expires on June 30, 2021, or at the end of the governor’s COVID-19 disaster declaration, whichever is shorter.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Emergency-Rule-Related-to-Issuance-of-Prescriptions-Renewed.html?soid=1103464106918&amp;aid=2EGiJRzcSMU">https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Emergency-Rule-Related-to-Issuance-of-Prescriptions-Renewed.html?soid=1103464106918&amp;aid=2EGiJRzcSMU</a>

### HTW: Telemedicine and Telehealth

<b>Date</b>	April 30, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	This is an update to the article titled, “ <a href="#">Telemedicine (Physician Delivered) and Telehealth (Non-Physician Delivered) Extended Through April 20, 2021 or Through April 30, 2021</a> ,” which was posted on March 26, 2021. Healthy Texas Women (HTW) and Family Planning Program (FPP) COVID-19 related flexibilities have been extended through May 31, 2021.  For more information, call the TMHP Contact Center at (800) 925-9126.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-30-telemedicine-physician-delivered-and-telehealth-non-physician-delivered-extended">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-30-telemedicine-physician-delivered-and-telehealth-non-physician-delivered-extended</a>

## CSHCN: Guidance for New and Initial Prior Authorizations

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<b>Date</b>	April 30, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	<p>This is an update to the article titled, "<a href="#">Guidance for Providers Regarding New and Initial Prior Authorizations</a>," which was posted on July 2, 2020. To help ensure continuity of care during the COVID-19 response, HHSC has directed TMHP to move forward with processing new and initial prior authorization requests, including recertification requests, by relaxing document submission timeframes for providers that are unable to provide certain required documentation during the COVID-19 emergency.</p> <p>This direction will remain in effect through May 31, 2021. This guidance applies to all Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Services Program services requiring prior authorization. Examples of such documentation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CSHCN Services Program Provider 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; and</li><li>• Certification of timely face-to-face visits.</li></ul>
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-30-covid-19-guidance-new-and-initial-cshcn-prior-authorizations">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-30-covid-19-guidance-new-and-initial-cshcn-prior-authorizations</a>

## In-Home Day Habilitation Requirements

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<b>Date</b>	April 27, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	<p>HHSC is temporarily waiving certain requirements in Sections 3710, 4381.3, 4381.7(6) and 4381.7(7) of the Home and Community-based Services Billing Guidelines and the Texas Home Living Billing Guidelines. This is in response to COVID-19 and to provide access to needed day habilitation services.</p> <p>HHSC has published a revision to this guidance, <a href="#">IL 2021-20 In-Home Day Habilitation Information for Program Providers for COVID-19 (PDF)</a>, which replaces IL 2021-16. It extends the temporary guidance through May 31, 2021.</p>
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/04/hhsc-publishes-home-day-habilitation-information-program-providers-covid-19-il-2021-20">https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/04/hhsc-publishes-home-day-habilitation-information-program-providers-covid-19-il-2021-20</a>

### NF Providers: End of MDS Authorization Extensions

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<b>Date</b>	April 27, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	HHSC is informing nursing facilities that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced it is ending the emergency blanket waiver of the timeframe requirements for completing and transmitting the nursing facility minimum data set (MDS) assessment authorizations, effective May 10, 2021. Therefore, HHSC will no longer have the authority to extend MDS assessments after the effective date. MDS assessment authorizations ending May 1, 2021 through May 9, 2021 will be extended for 90 days.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-27-update-end-nursing-facility-mds-authorization-extensions-nursing-facility-providers">https://www.tmhp.com/news/2021-04-27-update-end-nursing-facility-mds-authorization-extensions-nursing-facility-providers</a>

### Meaningful Activities in ALFs within COVID-19 Regulations Webinars

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<b>Date</b>	May 4, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	Assisted Living Facility (ALF) program providers can register for a webinar that highlights the importance of providing activities and maintaining as much normalcy as possible during the pandemic in the interest of residents' psychosocial well-being within COVID-19 regulations.  <b>Meaningful Activities in ALFs within COVID-19 Regulations</b> Tuesday, May 11, 2021 10 - 11 a.m.  <a href="#">Register for the COVID-19 webinar.</a>
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/05/meaningful-activities-alfs-within-covid-19-regulations-webinars">https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/05/meaningful-activities-alfs-within-covid-19-regulations-webinars</a>

## Federal Updates

### CMS Updates on Extensions Information

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<b>Date</b>	May 5, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	CMS updated their documents providing information on <a href="#">blanket waivers for health care providers</a> and <a href="#">FAQs for Medicare fee-for-service billing</a> .

### CMS Revises NF Guidance on Testing, Visitation, and Group Activities

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<b>Date</b>	April 29, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	CMS has revised Quality Safety & Oversight Memos <a href="#">QSO-20-38-NH (PDF)</a> and <a href="#">QSO-20-39-NH (PDF)</a> . In addition, CMS updated their <a href="#">toolkit</a> for states to mitigate COVID-19 in nursing homes. The revised memos provide updated guidance on testing, visitation, and communal activities based on CDC guidance and vaccination status.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/04/cms-revises-nf-guidance-testing-visitation-group-activities">https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2021/04/cms-revises-nf-guidance-testing-visitation-group-activities</a>

### Increasing Vaccination Access

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<b>Date</b>	May 4, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	President Biden announced that he is focusing on increasing access to vaccinations by directing tens of thousands of pharmacies in the federal pharmacy program to offer walk-in appointments; redirecting Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) resources to support more pop-up clinics, smaller community vaccination sites, and more mobile clinics; shipping new allocations of the vaccine to rural health clinics across the country; and providing additional funding to help communities do outreach and engagement to help get people vaccinated.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/04/fact-sheet-president-biden-to-announce-goal-to-administer-at-least-one-vaccine-shot-to-70-of-the-u-s-adult-population-by-july-4th/">https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/04/fact-sheet-president-biden-to-announce-goal-to-administer-at-least-one-vaccine-shot-to-70-of-the-u-s-adult-population-by-july-4th/</a>

## HHS Updates

### New Program Covering COVID-19 Costs

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<b>Date</b>	May 3, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a new program covering costs of administering COVID-19 vaccines to patients enrolled in health plans that either do not cover vaccination fees or cover them with patient cost-sharing. Since providers cannot bill patients for COVID-19 vaccination fees, the new COVID-19 <a href="#">Coverage Assistance Fund</a> addresses an outstanding compensation need for providers on the front lines vaccinating underinsured patients. FAQs are available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/05/03/hhs-launches-new-reimbursement-program-for-covid19-vaccine-administration-fees-not-covered-by-insurance.html">https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/05/03/hhs-launches-new-reimbursement-program-for-covid19-vaccine-administration-fees-not-covered-by-insurance.html</a>

### Funding to Expand COVID-19 Training and Support for Health Centers

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<b>Date</b>	April 29, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	HHS, through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), awarded over \$32 million to 122 organizations that provide training and technical assistance support to HRSA Health Center Program-supported health centers nationwide. These organizations—Primary Care Associations (PCAs), National Training and Technical Assistance Partners (NTTAPs), and Health Center Controlled Networks (HCCNs)—will use the funds to provide health centers with critical COVID-19 related training, technical assistance, and health information technology support.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/04/29/hhs-awards-over-32-million-american-rescue-plan-funding-expand-covid-19-training-support-health-centers.html">https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/04/29/hhs-awards-over-32-million-american-rescue-plan-funding-expand-covid-19-training-support-health-centers.html</a>



## Nearly \$1 Billion for Rural COVID-19 Response

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<b>Date</b>	May 4, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	HHS announced the availability of nearly \$1 billion to strengthen COVID-19 response efforts and increase vaccinations in rural communities. HRSA, a part of HHS, will increase the number of vaccines sent to rural communities, expand testing and other COVID-19 prevention services, and work to increase vaccine confidence by empowering trusted local voices with additional funding for outreach efforts in underserved communities.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/05/04/hhs-announces-nearly-1-billion-from-american-rescue-plan-for-rural-covid-19-response.html">https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/05/04/hhs-announces-nearly-1-billion-from-american-rescue-plan-for-rural-covid-19-response.html</a>

## \$250 Million to Develop and Support a Community-Based Workforce to Increase COVID-19 Vaccinations in Underserved Communities

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<b>Date</b>	May 4, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	HHS, through HRSA, announced the availability of approximately \$250 million to develop and support a community-based workforce who will serve as trusted voices sharing information about vaccines, increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence, and address any barriers to vaccination for people living in vulnerable and medically-underserved communities.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/05/04/hhs-announces-250-million-from-american-rescue-plan-to-develop-and-support-underserved-communities.html">https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/05/04/hhs-announces-250-million-from-american-rescue-plan-to-develop-and-support-underserved-communities.html</a>

## CDC Reports and Updated Guidance

### Updated Masking Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People

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<b>Date</b>	April 27, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	CDC announced updated masking guidance for fully vaccinated people, indicating they no longer need to wear masks indoors or outdoors when in small groups with other fully vaccinated friends and family, and in some circumstances can go maskless with unvaccinated people. The guidance states that vaccinated people can gather or conduct activities outdoors without wearing a mask except in certain crowded settings and venues.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html</a>

### Updated Infection Control Guidance for Health Care Personnel

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<b>Date</b>	April 27, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	CDC updated its health care infection prevention and control recommendations for health care personnel, ending its recommendation of expanded screening testing of asymptomatic health care personnel who are fully vaccinated. The guidance also includes new information on COVID-19 vaccine protection in people who are immunocompromised and circumstances when, if all participants are fully vaccinated, visitation or communal activities could occur without use of source control or physical distancing.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html</a>

### Anxiety-Related Adverse Event Clusters After Janssen COVID-19 Vaccination

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<b>Date</b>	April 30, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	Five mass vaccination sites reported 64 anxiety-related events, including 17 events of syncope (fainting) after receipt of Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. The reporting rates of syncope to VAERS after Janssen COVID-19 and influenza vaccines (2019–20) were 8.2 and 0.05 per 100,000 doses, respectively. Vaccine providers should be aware of anxiety-related events after vaccination and observe all COVID-19 vaccine recipients for any adverse reactions for at least 15 minutes after vaccine administration.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7018e3.htm?s_cid=mm7018e3_w">https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7018e3.htm?s_cid=mm7018e3_w</a>

### Safety Monitoring of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 Vaccine

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<b>Date</b>	April 30, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	By April 21, 2021, nearly 8 million doses of the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine had been administered. Review of safety monitoring data found that 97% of reported reactions after vaccine receipt were nonserious, consistent with preauthorization clinical trials data. Seventeen thrombotic events with thrombocytopenia have been reported, including three non-CVST events. Ongoing monitoring for rare and common adverse events after vaccination is important for evaluating the balance between risks and benefits for each authorized COVID-19 vaccine, including the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7018e2.htm?s_cid=mm7018e2_w">https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7018e2.htm?s_cid=mm7018e2_w</a>

## Modeling of Future COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths, by Vaccination Rates and Nonpharmaceutical Intervention Scenarios

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<b>Date</b>	May 5, 2021
<b>Summary</b>	Data from six models indicate that, with high vaccination coverage and moderate nonpharmaceutical intervention (NPI) adherence, hospitalizations and deaths will likely remain low nationally, with a sharp decline in cases projected by July 2021. Lower NPI adherence could lead to substantial increases in severe COVID-19 outcomes, even with improved vaccination coverage. High vaccination coverage and compliance with NPIs are essential to controlling COVID-19 and preventing surges in hospitalizations and deaths in the coming months.
<b>Link</b>	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7019e3.htm?s_cid=mm7019e3_w">https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7019e3.htm?s_cid=mm7019e3_w</a>