

COVID-19 Emergency Declaration

Health Care Providers Fact Sheet

The Trump Administration is taking aggressive actions and exercising regulatory flexibilities to help healthcare providers combat and contain the spread of 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). In response to COVID-19, CMS is empowered to take proactive steps through 1135 waivers and rapidly expand the Administration's aggressive efforts against COVID-19. As a result, the following blanket waivers are available:

- **Skilled Nursing Facilities**

CMS is waiving the requirement at Section 1812(f) of the Social Security Act for a 3-day prior hospitalization for coverage of a skilled nursing facility (SNF) stay provides temporary emergency coverage of (SNF services without a qualifying hospital stay, for those people who need to be transferred as a result of the effect of a disaster or emergency. In addition, for certain beneficiaries who recently exhausted their SNF benefits, it authorizes renewed SNF coverage without first having to start a new benefit period.

Second, CMS is waiving 42 CFR 483.20 to provides relief to SNFs on the timeframe requirements for Minimum Data Set assessments and transmission.

- **Critical Access Hospitals**

CMS is waiving the requirements that Critical Access Hospitals limit the number of beds to 25, and that the length of stay be limited to 96 hours.

- **Housing Acute Care Patients In Excluded Distinct Part Units**

CMS is waiving requirements to allow acute care hospitals to house acute care inpatients in excluded distinct part units, where the distinct part unit's beds are appropriate for acute care inpatient. The Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) hospital should bill for the care and annotate the patient's medical record to indicate the patient is an acute care inpatient being housed in the excluded unit because of capacity issues related to the disaster or emergency.

- **Durable Medical Equipment**

Where Durable Medical Equipment Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) is lost, destroyed, irreparably damaged, or otherwise rendered unusable, contractors have the flexibility to waive replacements requirements such that the face-to-face requirement, a new physician's order, and new medical necessity documentation are not required. Suppliers must still include a narrative description on the claim explaining the reason why the equipment must be replaced and are reminded to maintain documentation indicating that the DMEPOS was lost, destroyed, irreparably damaged or otherwise rendered unusable or unavailable as a result of the emergency.

- **Care for Excluded Inpatient Psychiatric Unit Patients in the Acute Care Unit of a Hospital**
CMS is waiving to allow acute care hospitals with excluded distinct part inpatient psychiatric units that, as a result of a disaster or emergency, need to relocate inpatients from the excluded distinct part psychiatric unit to an acute care bed and unit. The hospital should continue to bill for inpatient psychiatric services under the Inpatient Psychiatric Facility Prospective Payment System for such patients and annotate the medical record to indicate the patient is a psychiatric inpatient being cared for in an acute care bed because of capacity or other exigent circumstances related to the hurricane. This waiver may be utilized where the hospital's acute care beds are appropriate for psychiatric patients and the staff and environment are conducive to safe care. For psychiatric patients, this includes assessment of the acute care bed and unit location to ensure those patients at risk of harm to self and others are safely cared for.

- **Care for Excluded Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit Patients in the Acute Care Unit of a Hospital**
CMS is waiving requirements to allow acute care hospitals with excluded distinct part inpatient Rehabilitation units that, as a result of a disaster or emergency, need to relocate inpatients from the excluded distinct part rehabilitation unit to an acute care bed and unit. The hospital should continue to bill for inpatient rehabilitation services under the inpatient rehabilitation facility prospective payment system for such patients and annotate the medical record to indicate the patient is a rehabilitation inpatient being cared for in an acute care bed because of capacity or other exigent circumstances related to the disaster or emergency. This waiver may be utilized where the hospital's acute care beds are appropriate for providing care to rehabilitation patients and such patients continue to receive intensive rehabilitation services.

CMS is waiving requirements to allow IRFs to exclude patients from the hospital's or unit's inpatient population for purposes of calculating the applicable thresholds associated with the requirements to receive payment as an IRF (commonly referred to as the "60 percent rule") if an IRF admits a patient solely to respond to the emergency and the patient's medical record properly identifies the patient as such. In addition, during the applicable waiver time period, we would also apply the exception to facilities not yet classified as IRFs, but that are attempting to obtain classification as an IRF.

- **Supporting Care for Patients in Long-Term Care Acute Hospitals (LTCH)s**
Allows a long-term care hospital (LTCH) to exclude patient stays where an LTCH admits or discharges patients in order to meet the demands of the emergency from the 25-day average length of stay requirement which allows these facilities to be paid as LTCHs.
- **Home Health Agencies**
Provides relief to Home Health Agencies on the timeframes related to OASIS Transmission. Allows Medicare Administrative Contractors to extend the auto-cancellation date of Requests for Anticipated Payment (RAPs) during emergencies.

- **Provider Locations**

Temporarily waive requirements that out-of-state providers be licensed in the state where they are providing services when they are licensed in another state. This applies to Medicare and Medicaid.

- **Provider Enrollment**

- Establish a toll-free hotline for non-certified Part B suppliers, physicians and non-physician practitioners to enroll and receive temporary Medicare billing privileges
- Waive the following screening requirements:
 - Application Fee - 42 C.F.R 424.514
 - Criminal background checks associated with FCBC - 42 C.F.R 424.518
 - Site visits - 42 C.F.R 424.517
- Postpone all revalidation actions
- Allow licensed providers to render services outside of their state of enrollment
- Expedite any pending or new applications from providers

- **Medicare appeals in Fee for Service, MA and Part D**

- Extension to file an appeal
- Waive timeliness for requests for additional information to adjudicate the appeal;
- Processing the appeal even with incomplete Appointment of Representation forms but communicating only to the beneficiary;
- Process requests for appeal that don't meet the required elements using information that is available.
- Utilizing all flexibilities available in the appeal process as if good cause requirements are satisfied.

Medicaid and CHIP

When the President declares an emergency through the Stafford Act or National Emergency Act, and the Secretary declares a Public Health Emergency, the Secretary is authorized to waive certain Medicare, Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) authorities under Section 1135 of the Social Security Act.

There is no specific form or format that is required to submit the request for a Section 1135 waiver, but the state should clearly state the scope of the issue and the impact. States and territories may submit a Section 1135 waiver request directly to Jackie Glaze, CMS Acting Director, Medicaid & CHIP Operations Group Center for Medicaid & CHIP Services by e-mail (Jackie.Glaze@cms.hhs.gov) or letter.

The following are examples of flexibilities that states and territories may seek through a Section 1135 waiver request:

- Waive prior authorization requirements in fee-for-service programs
- Permits providers located out of state/territory to provide care to another state's Medicaid enrollees impacted by the emergency
- Temporarily suspend certain provider enrollment and revalidation requirements to increase access to care.
- Temporarily waive requirements that physicians and other health care professionals be licensed in the state in which they are providing services, so long as they have an equivalent licensing in another state, and
- Temporarily suspend requirements for certain pre-admission and annual screenings for nursing home residents
- States and territories are encouraged to assess their needs and request these available flexibilities, which are more completely outlined in the Medicaid and CHIP Disaster Response Toolkit. For more information and to access the toolkit, visit:
<https://www.medicare.gov/state-resource-center/disaster-response-toolkit/index.html>.

For questions please email: 1135waiver@cms.hhs.gov