

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
COVID-19 Call with Home Health, Hospice & Palliative Care Providers
July 7, 2020
3:00 p.m. ET

OPERATOR: This is Conference #: 9480618.

Alina Czekai: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining our July 7th CMS COVID-19 Call with Home Health Hospice and Palliative Care Providers. This is Alina Czekai, leading stakeholder engagement on COVID-19 in the Office of CMS Administrator Seema Verma. As always, CMS appreciates the care that home health hospice and palliative care providers have offered to patients during this public health emergency.

And while today we don't have any major updates from the agency, we do encourage you to join our office hours later today at 5:00 p.m. Eastern for questions and answer session with our CMS subject matter experts. As always, you can continue to reach us with any questions or comments at our COVID-19 mailbox which is covid-19@cms.hhs.gov.

And today we have a terrific guest speaker lined up who has offered to share best practices and insights with you all. Today I'm pleased to introduce Ms. Susan Lloyd. She is the President and CEO of Delaware Hospice. Ms. Lloyd, over to you.

Ms. Lloyd?

Susan Lloyd: Good afternoon.

Alina Czekai: Do we have you – great.

Susan Lloyd: Yes. Good afternoon. This is Susan Lloyd. I am the President and CEO as was stated and Delaware Hospice serves all three counties in our state and several adjacent counties in Pennsylvania. We're provider of hospice care, palliative care, pediatric care, and also have some specialty programs that help with patients that have nonmedical needs such as our transitions program and our grief and loss support program called New Hope for Children.

We've been active members of the NHPCO, the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and are delighted to be able to participate today. Delaware was affected early in the pandemic and the pressure to respond was intensive the weeks that have gone on and we work to adjust. Certainly, we have the same concerns as most healthcare providers around PPE. We also had to make the transformation from face-to-face visits to telehealth visits.

We were very fortunate to get strong support both from CMS and our state in helping to work through these pretty significant changes. We also are working very hard with our healthcare partners, especially in the nursing home settings and hospitals as we all work to accommodate and learn new ways of doing things to care for COVID-19 patients as well as others.

We also needed to implement working remotely. We used to stand up and go down the hallway and talk to each other but now we Zoom all day. We did have a long list of accommodations but the focus was really on our staff to keep them safe and that their patients and families would be safe which would result in the community as a whole being safer.

Policies and procedures, guidance from CDC as well as CMS helped us to make changes that were necessary during this entire time. By May, we began to think about reopening of our offices which is sort of a strange term because as we all know we're never really closed but we were just in different locations than we were accustomed to.

So, our emergency preparedness team was meeting frequently and we started to think about how we could make a slow transition and develop our plan, so in June we implemented that plan. We made sure that our daily staff screenings were completed, that workstations were evaluated and steps were taken to deep clean as well as to accommodate to make sure that we could do social distancing. We bought a lot of flexiglass and we also purchased a lot of masks and other types of barriers.

Hand sanitizers, wipes and visual cues are very big part of our program. We also implemented a mandatory education programs to get everyone onboard with our plan. And we made it mandatory, so that they would complete it

prior to coming back into the offices and would be aware of what was required of them when they did.

As the weather got warmer and warmer, we continue to remind staff about safe practices outside of work as well. What they do on their off hours definitely affects what happens when they come back to work, especially during COVID-19. We had daily leadership calls to keep in touch with each other about what needed to be done for the day. We did town halls to roll out the plan to issue the staff over Zoom and answered any questions and concerns that they had.

Twice a week we did updates out on our – out on our intranet as well as to do an all staff e-mail. These were from leadership and again addressed any updates including things such as day care information, day camp information, staff support and other things that our caregivers would need to keep themselves going in this time.

As we say, we need to care for ourselves in order to be able to care for others. This especially became important in the last several weeks since we've seen protests and riots that are also an overlay obviously to the care that's being provided in the community.

Last week I saw some of our co-workers who hadn't seen each other for several months just let out screams of joy about seeing each other in person, even if they were behind a mask. We've done several things early on in this pandemic, things that we feel is time to do again to keep the morale and the spirits of our staff and caregivers up.

Things like our goody bags, distribution of thank you notes, window displays to keep them going, side talk at the entrances that just say thank you, we appreciate you. For our patients and families, increase contacts, especially through telehealth are extremely important and we're staying mindful that they are dealing with the end of the life of a loved one.

We were also mindful of all of the support from CMS to help us deal with the pandemic. And we are very appreciative to Administrator Verma for her support and understanding of the vital role we play in caring for our

community, even in these challenging times. Thank you so much for the opportunity to share and I'm ready for questions.

Alina Czekai: Thank you so much Susan. Operator, let's open up the line to take questions from the audience. Thank you.

Operator: That is noted. Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to start the question-and-answer session. And to do that, you will need to press "star," "1" on your telephone keypad. Again, please press "star" then the number "1" on your telephone keypad to ask a question. We'll pause for just a moment to compile the Q&A roster.

Once again, ladies and gentlemen, if you would like to ask a question, please press "star" then the number "1" on your telephone keypad. We don't have questions on queue. Presenters, please continue.

Alina Czekai: Thank you, operator and thank you everyone for joining our call today. Special thanks to Susan for sharing her perspective and what her organization is doing as we address COVID-19 as a nation.

As a reminder, we do have Office Hours later today at 5:00 p.m. Eastern and we encourage you to join that session if you have any questions related to CMS waivers or any billings or more technical questions. And you can always reach us at our COVID-19 mailbox which is covid-19@cms.hhs.gov.

Again, we appreciate all that you were doing for patients and their families around the country as we continue to address COVID-19 as a nation. This concludes today's call. Have a great rest of your day.

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