



CMS Snapshot

October 15-22, 2020

Delivered to you by the Partner Relations Group in the Office of Communications

All releases below are from 2pm Thursday, October 15 through 2pm Thursday, October 22, 2020.

News Releases

*October 15- [HHS Issues Challenges to Find Best Practices in Maternal Health](#). Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health announced two challenges to improve maternal health. The first challenge will address care for women with hypertension who are pregnant and/or postpartum, while the second challenge will address breastfeeding initiation and continuation disparities among breastfeeding mothers. The partnership will bridge data gaps in maternal health outcomes across the country.

*October 15- [HHS Awards Contract to Improve Maternal Health Data Collection and Drive Clinical Quality Improvement](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health (OWH) within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health announced an \$8 million nationwide contract with Premier, Inc. to improve maternal health data and create a network of at least 200 hospitals to deploy clinical, evidence-based best practices in maternity care. This announcement builds upon HHS's Improving Maternal Health in America Initiative as outlined in the President's FY 2021 Budget. This vital data will inform policy and validate evidence-based practice to improve maternal and infant health outcomes.

*October 15- [Trump Administration Approves Innovative State-Led Health Reform to Expand and Strengthen Coverage for Georgia Residents](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), under the leadership of President Trump, announced action it has taken to advance an innovative package of state-led reforms that were crafted in response to the guidance and unprecedented flexibility offered by the Trump Administration. As a result of the state and CMS's actions, thousands of uninsured Georgians will gain access to coverage.

*October 15- [Trump Administration Announces Historically Low Premiums and New Insulin Benefit as Medicare Open Enrollment Begins](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that 2021 Medicare Open Enrollment is officially open and will run through December 7, 2020. More than 60 million people with Medicare can review health and

drug plans, and make changes to their healthcare coverage for next year, based on their financial and medical needs, from the comfort of their homes.

*October 15- [CMS Changes Medicare Payment to Support Faster COVID-19 Diagnostic Testing](#). Under President Trump's leadership, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today announced new actions to pay for expedited coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) test results. CMS previously [took action](#) in April 2020 by increasing the Medicare payment to laboratories for high throughput COVID-19 diagnostic tests from approximately \$51 to \$100 per test. Today, CMS is announcing that starting January 1, 2021, Medicare will pay \$100 only to laboratories that complete high throughput COVID-19 diagnostic tests within two calendar days of the specimen being collected.

*October 16- [Trump Administration Partners with CVS and Walgreens to Provide COVID-19 Vaccine to Protect Vulnerable Americans in Long-Term Care Facilities Nationwide](#). To meet the Trump Administration's [Operation Warp Speed](#) (OWS) goals, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ([HHS](#)) and Department of Defense ([DoD](#)) today announced agreements with CVS and Walgreens to provide and administer COVID-19 vaccines to residents of long-term care facilities (LTCF) nationwide with no out-of-pocket costs. Protecting especially vulnerable Americans has been a critical part of the Trump Administration's work to combat COVID-19, and LTCF residents may be part of the prioritized groups for initial COVID-19 vaccination efforts until there are enough doses available for every American who wishes to be vaccinated.

*October 16- [Trump Administration Provides Saliva Test at Surge Testing Site in Waco, TX](#). Starting today, communities that are part of the federal surge testing effort for COVID-19, supported by the Trump Administration, have a new option: a test that uses samples of saliva collected by spitting into a sterile container. Made by [Fluidigm](#) Corporation and supported in part by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the easy-to-use saliva test detects SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, on a molecular level using a microfluidics platform. The accuracy of the test is comparable to other molecular-level tests of nasal swab samples, according to a clinical study conducted by the manufacturer. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has traditionally provided nasal swab tests from other manufacturers to surge testing sites, which remain a choice for community officials.

*October 16- [CMS Survey Data Illustrates Impact of COVID-19 on Medicare Beneficiaries' Daily Life and Experiences](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released data showing that 21% of Medicare beneficiaries report forgoing non-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) care due to the pandemic, and nearly all - 98% - of beneficiaries have taken preventative measures to keep themselves safe from the virus.

*October 19- [Premiums for HealthCare.gov Plans Are Lower for Third Consecutive Year](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a report showing the trend of lower premiums and increased issuer participation for HealthCare.gov will continue for 2021 year. The average premium for the second lowest cost silver plan (also called the benchmark

plan) dropped by 2% for the 2021 coverage year and, when looking at states that are using HealthCare.gov in both 2020 and 2021, 22 more issuers will offer coverage in 2021, for a total of 181 issuers delivering more choice and competition for consumers.

*October 20- [OCR Resolves Religious Discrimination Complaints after Maryland and Virginia Hospitals Ensure Patients Can Receive Safe Religious Visitations During COVID-19](#). Today, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announces the resolution of two religious discrimination complaints ensuring clergy access to patients for religious purposes during the COVID-19 pandemic, one involving MedStar's Southern Maryland Hospital Center (MSMHC) that is part of the MedStar Health System, and the second one involving Mary Washington Healthcare (MWHC) in Virginia.

*October 20- [CMS Approves Nebraska Medicaid Demonstration to Provide Pathway to Enhanced Benefits for Eligible Adults](#). Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced its approval of Nebraska's new Medicaid Section 1115 demonstration called "Heritage Health Adult." This demonstration is designed to create a pathway for certain Nebraska adults with newly gained Medicaid coverage to access additional benefits if they participate in certain activities to promote health and independence. This demonstration is effective October 20, 2020, through March 31, 2026, with implementation beginning April 1, 2021.

October 21- [Trump Administration Takes Action to Further Expand Access to Vaccines, COVID-19 Tests](#). Today, under the leadership of President Trump, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH), issued [guidance - PDF](#) under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act (PREP Act) authorizing qualified pharmacy technicians and State-authorized pharmacy interns to administer childhood vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines when made available, and COVID-19 tests, all subject to several requirements. This guidance clarifies that the pharmacy intern must be authorized by the State or board of pharmacy in the State in which the practical pharmacy internship occurs, but this authorization need not take the form of a license from, or registration with, the State board of pharmacy.

*October 22- [Trump Administration Marks the Signing of the Geneva Consensus Declaration](#). On Thursday, October 22, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and HHS Secretary Alex Azar participated in the virtual signing of the Geneva Consensus Declaration, a historic document that further strengthens an ongoing coalition to achieve better health for women, the preservation of human life, support for the family as foundational to a healthy society, and the protection of national sovereignty in global politics.

*October 22- [HHS Expands Relief Fund Eligibility and Updates Reporting Requirements](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), is announcing the latest Provider Relief Fund (PRF) application period has been expanded to include provider applicants such as residential treatment facilities,

chiropractors, and eye and vision providers that have not yet received Provider Relief Fund distributions. On [October 1, 2020](#), HHS announced it would be making up to \$20 billion in new Phase 3 General Distribution funding available for providers on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic.

CMS has developed a [Virtual Toolkit](#) to help you stay informed on CMS and HHS materials available on the COVID-19. Please share these materials, bookmark the page, and check back often for the most up-to-date information. For more information, please email partnership@cms.hhs.gov