



## CMS Snapshot

**December 10-17, 2020**

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

All releases below are from 2pm Thursday, December 10 through 2pm Thursday, December 17, 2020.

### News Releases

\*December 10- [CMS Proposes New Rules to Address Prior Authorization and Reduce Burden on Patients and Providers](#). Today, under President Trump's leadership, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a proposed rule that would improve the electronic exchange of health care data among payers, providers, and patients, and streamline processes related to prior authorization to reduce burden on providers and patients. By both increasing data flow, and reducing burden, this proposed rule would give providers more time to focus on their patients, and provide better quality care.

\*December 11- [Trump Administration purchases additional 100 million doses of COVID-19 investigational vaccine from Moderna](#). The Trump Administration, through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Department of Defense (DoD), will purchase an additional 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine candidate, called mRNA-1273, from Moderna.

\*December 11- [Statement from HHS and DoD on FDA Emergency Use Authorization of a COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate](#). Today the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to Pfizer for its COVID-19 vaccine, the first authorization for a COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. Operation Warp Speed and private sector partners now begin distributing the first allocation of doses to sites designated by the public health jurisdictions and five federal agencies with which OWS and CDC have been working to plan distribution.

\*December 12- [Statement from CMS Administrator Seema Verma on FDA Emergency Use Authorization of a COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate](#). "Today's announcement is a historic turning point in the fight against the virus. The beginning of the end of this chapter in our world's history has arrived. Our hearts and minds continue to be with those who have lost loved ones, and I urge states to prioritize nursing homes and vulnerable seniors in their distribution of the vaccine. As we approach more widespread distribution, all Americans can take comfort in the fact that CMS has laid the groundwork to guarantee that every American can get the vaccine for free."

\*December 14- [CMS Solicits Public Comment for a New Demonstration to Offer Inpatient Rehabilitation Providers Flexibilities and Reduce Medicare Fraud](#). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today announced it is seeking public comment on a new Review Choice Demonstration (RCD) for Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility (IRF) services. This demonstration develops improved methods for the identification, investigation, and prosecution of potential Medicare fraud. The demonstration would also help ensure the right payments are made at the right time for IRF services through either pre-claim or post-payment review; thus, protecting the Medicare Trust Fund from improper payments, reducing the number of Medicare appeals, and improving IRF compliance with Medicare program requirements.

\*December 14- [HHS Announces Joint Final Rule Regarding Equal Treatment of Faith-Based Organizations in HHS-Supported Social Service Programs](#). Today, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a joint final rule with eight other agencies—the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Agriculture, the Agency for International Development, and the Department of Veterans Affairs—to implement President Trump’s Executive Order No. 13831, on the Establishment of a White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative (May 3, 2018).

\*December 15- [HHS Announces that CDC will Award Nearly \\$227 million for COVID-19 Vaccine Preparedness and Response Activities](#). The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announces that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will award \$140 million for COVID-19 vaccine preparedness and almost \$87 million for tracking and testing to 64 jurisdictions, including all 50 states and U.S. territories.


\*December 15- [HHS Secretary Azar Statement on FDA Authorization of First Fully At-Home, Over-the-Counter COVID-19 Test](#). On Tuesday, the Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the first over-the-counter (OTC) fully at-home diagnostic test for COVID-19 that does not require a prescription, the Ellume COVID-19 Home Test, which was developed with \$30 million in support from the NIH’s RADx Tech program. HHS Secretary Alex Azar issued the following statement.

\*December 16- [CMS Office of the Actuary Releases 2019 National Health Expenditures](#). Total national healthcare spending in 2019 grew 4.6%, which was similar to the 4.7% growth in 2018 and the average annual growth since 2016 of 4.5%, according to a study conducted by the Office of the Actuary at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and published today ahead of print by *Health Affairs*.

\*December 16- [OCR Facilitates Safe Clergy Access for Patients at Mt. Sinai Hospital 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 a religious discrimination complaint, thus ensuring

clergy access to patients for religious purposes during the COVID-19 pandemic for the entire Mt. Sinai Health System in New York (Mt. Sinai).

\*December 16- [HHS Increases and Begins Distributing Over \\$24 Billion in Phase 3 COVID-19 Provider Relief Funding](#). Today, the Trump Administration, through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is announcing it has completed review of Phase 3 applications from the Provider Relief Fund (PRF) program and will distribute \$24.5 billion to over 70,000 providers. Up from the [\\$20 billion originally planned](#), the addition of another \$4.5 billion in funding is being used to satisfy close to 90 percent of each applicant's reported lost revenues and net change in expenses caused by the coronavirus pandemic in the first half of 2020.

\*December 16- [Winners of HHS Design-a-thon to Develop Innovative Digital Health Tools for COVID-19 At-Anywhere Diagnostic Tests Announced](#). Sixteen winning designs (listed below) selected from the HHS [COVID-19 At-Anywhere Diagnostics Design-a-thon](#)  aim to increase speed, quality, comprehensiveness, and utility of SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test data. This effort will help maintain visibility and increase reporting accuracy on SARS-CoV-2 infection rates across the country. Another contest objective is to ensure that all SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic tools can securely transmit test results to local and national public health authorities, as well as health care providers and patients, ensuring a timely public health response.

\*December 16- [HHS Secretary Azar Statement on EUA for At-Home Use of BinaxNOW Card Test](#). On Wednesday, the Food and Drug Administration issued a new emergency use authorization (EUA) for Abbott's BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card Home Test, allowing individuals to perform the test at home with a prescription. The test will be offered in partnership with a telehealth service that will guide users step-by-step and report all test results to the relevant public health authorities in accordance with local, state and federal requirements

\*December 16- [HHS to Disallow \\$200M in California Medicaid Funds Due to Unlawful Abortion Insurance Mandate; Refers Vermont Medical Center to DOJ for Lawsuit Over Conscience Violations](#). Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office for Civil Rights (OCR) makes two announcements regarding enforcement of federal conscience laws. First, HHS will disallow \$200 million in federal Medicaid funds going to California in the upcoming quarter due to the state illegally mandating that all health care plans subject to regulation by the California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) cover abortion without exclusion or limitation. If the State does not come into compliance, additional disallowances will be imposed at a rate of \$200 million per quarter.

\*December 17- [OCR Issues Audit Report on Health Care Industry Compliance with the HIPAA Rules](#). Today, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released its 2016-2017 HIPAA Audits Industry Report that reviewed selected health care entities and business associates for compliance with certain provisions of the HIPAA Privacy, Security, and Breach Notification Rules.

\*December 17- [HHS Continues COVID-19 Testing Support to States, Territories, and High-Risk Groups](#). Today, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced three ways the federal government will continue supporting SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) testing efforts by states and territories, especially for nursing homes, into the first quarter of 2021. The new commitments build upon more than \$31 billion in resources that the U.S. government has provided to help ensure that states and their facilities that care for seniors and others at high risk of death and illness from COVID-19 have adequate testing supplies.

\*December 17- [HHS Releases First National Strategic Plan to Address Sexually Transmitted Infections](#). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is releasing the first-ever national plan to address the public health crisis caused by alarming increases in rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the United States over the past six years. The [STI National Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#) (STI Plan) sets national goals, objectives, and strategies to respond to the STI epidemic. The plan will serve as a roadmap to help federal and non-federal stakeholders at all levels and in all sectors reverse the sharp upward trends in STI rates.

## Fact Sheets

\*December 10- [Reducing Provider and Patient Burden by Improving Prior Authorization Processes, and Promoting Patients' Electronic Access to Health Information CMS-9123-P: Fact Sheet](#). Building on the CMS Interoperability and Patient Access final rule (CMS-9115-F), this proposed rule would place new requirements on Medicaid and CHIP managed care plans, state Medicaid and CHIP fee-for-service programs, and Qualified Health Plans (QHP) issuers on the Federally-facilitated Exchanges (FEEs) to improve the electronic exchange of health care data, and streamline processes related to prior authorization.

## Blogs

\*December 12- [“We are ready to distribute vaccines all across America”](#). In a matter of days, our nation may begin distributing and administering tens of thousands of doses of a safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine. Are we ready? I have been asked, and have asked myself, that single question more times than I can count.

\*December 16- [Experience, Dedication, Resiliency, and Innovative Flexibility: Title X Family Planning Program Turns 50](#). [Title X of the Public Health Service Act](#) established the National Family Planning Program at HHS in 1970. For 50 years, Title X clinics have ensured access to a broad range of family planning methods and related health services for millions of women, men, and adolescents with priority given to persons from low-income families.

\*December 16- [2021 Open Enrollment is over. See if you can still get coverage](#). The deadline for 2021 Marketplace insurance that starts January 1 has passed. If you missed it, you may still be

able to get or change 2021 coverage 2 ways: with a [Special Enrollment Period](#) or through [Medicaid](#) or the [Children's Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\)](#).

\*December 17- [There's now an easier way to find medical equipment & supplies](#). When you or a loved one needs medical equipment like a wheelchair, hospital bed, or walker, it may be hard to know where to start, and what suppliers carry the equipment you need. That's why we've launched an improved [supplier directory](#) to help you more easily search for suppliers of Medicare-covered equipment and supplies.

*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](mailto:partnership@cms.hhs.gov)*