

March 31, 2020

Rural Health Information during COVID-19

Dear Rural Stakeholders,

To continue to have consistent and efficient communication to provide rural health stakeholders with the information needed during this global pandemic, here are updates from the rural health programs at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH).

As mentioned previously, for critical information relating to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), we recommend that you regularly monitor information on the [Iowa Department of Public Health COVID-19 Page](#). In addition, discover the latest resources, maps and information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) on coronavirus.iowa.gov.

For additional resources and updates, see the following pages. Please reach out for technical assistance and for any questions you may have.

We are an ongoing resource for you.

Best,

Rural Health Programs

Iowa Department of Public Health

For questions, contact:

Samra Hiros, MPH

State Office of Rural Health

E-mail: Samra.Hiros@idph.iowa.gov.

Phone: (515) 423-7900



March 31, 2020

HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy issued the below update to States:

Today, at President Trump's direction, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today is issuing an unprecedented array of temporary regulatory waivers and new rules to equip the American healthcare system with maximum flexibility to respond to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Made possible by President Trump's recent emergency declaration and emergency rule making, these temporary changes will apply immediately across the entire U.S. healthcare system for the duration of the emergency declaration. This allows hospitals and health systems to deliver services at other locations to make room for COVID-19 patients needing acute care in their main facility.

The changes complement and augment the work of FEMA and state and local public health authorities by empowering local hospitals and healthcare systems to rapidly expand treatment capacity that allows them to separate patients infected with COVID-19 from those who are not affected.

CMS's temporary actions announced today empower local hospitals and healthcare systems to:

- ***Increase Hospital Capacity – CMS Hospitals Without Walls;***
- ***Rapidly Expand the Healthcare Workforce;***
- ***Put Patients Over Paperwork; and***
- ***Further Promote Telehealth in Medicare***

You can find a copy of the full press release:

- [*Trump Administration Makes Sweeping Regulatory Changes to Help U.S. Healthcare System Address COVID-19 Patient Surge*](#)

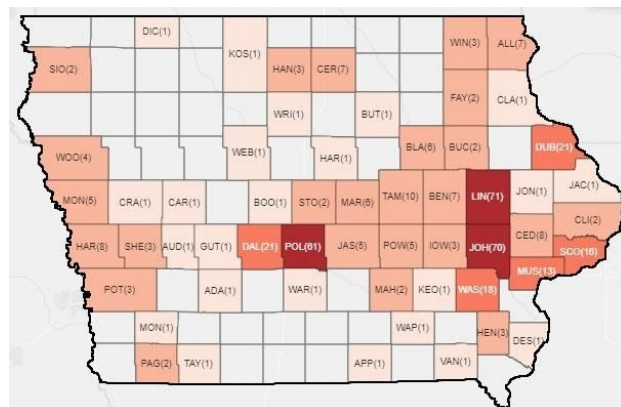
For additional background information on the waivers and rule changes, go to:

- [*Additional Background: Sweeping Regulatory Changes to Help U.S. Healthcare System Address COVID-19 Patient Surge.*](#)

For more information on the COVID-19 waivers and guidance, and the Interim Final Rule, please go to the CMS COVID-19 flexibilities webpage:

- [*CMS Current Emergencies Coronavirus Waivers*](#)

Iowa COVID-19 Cases by County



These actions, and earlier CMS actions in response to COVID-19, are part of the ongoing White House Coronavirus Task Force efforts. To keep up with the important work the Task Force is doing in response to COVID-19, visit www.coronavirus.gov.

For a complete and updated list of CMS actions, and other information specific to CMS, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).

For more information, please visit FORHP's FAQ page:

<https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/coronavirus-frequently-asked-questions>.

Other updates from HRSA:

*We are pleased to announce that the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy received \$180 million in the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) to support COVID-19 related activities, of which nearly \$150 million will go to hospitals responding to this health crisis. The funds will support rural hospitals which are seeing increased demands for clinical services and equipment, as well as experiencing short-term financial and workforce challenges related to responding to meeting the needs of patients with the COVID-19 seeking care at their facilities. This funding will be awarded to states through the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP) grant mechanism and we anticipate the award amounts to be **approximately** \$90,000 per hospital. Please note that all [SHIP-eligible](#) hospitals can receive these funds, regardless of current SHIP participation. This is complementary funding through other COVID-19 programs, such as the one announced for [financial relief for Medicare providers](#). While this funding will be awarded to SHIP, it is specifically for COVID-19 needs as outlined above, and not associated with existing SHIP funding categories.*

More information to come.

Other Resources:

COVID-19 Hospital Reporting: A letter from Vice President Pence, dated March 29, 2020, requests all hospitals to report COVID-19 test result reporting and NHSN COVID-19 module information to HHS. See the [letter from Vice President Pence](#), [instructions for reporting COVID-19 in the NHSN Patient Impact and Hospital Capacity Module](#), and [instructions for completion of the COVID-19 Patient Impact and Hospital Capacity Module](#) for more information.

Accelerated and Advance Payments for Medicare Providers: In order to increase cash flow to providers of services and suppliers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, CMS has

expanded its current Accelerated and Advance Payment Program to a broader group of Medicare Part A providers and Part B suppliers. For more information, please see the following:

- [Press Release: Trump Administration Provides Financial Relief for Medicare Providers](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Expansion of the Accelerated and Advance Payments Program for Providers and Suppliers During COVID-19 Emergency](#)

COVID-19 and rural communities Q&A:

- [Commonwealth Q&A: Response to COVID-19 Lags in Rural Communities](#)