

May 15, 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](https://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:

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## Updates:

**Reopening Guidance from the Iowa Department of Public Health:** The IDPH has made available the below reopening guidance:

- [IDPH Reopening Guidance](#) (5.12.20)
- [IDPH Reopening Guidance - Direct Client Services](#) (5.13.20)

**Interim Final Rule Updating Requirements for Notification of Confirmed and Suspected COVID-19 Cases Among Residents and Staff in Nursing Homes:** Provides an overview of a May 2020 CMS interim final rule outlining COVID-19 infection control, surveillance, and reporting requirements for nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Discusses updates to the "COVID-19 Focused Survey for Nursing Homes." Includes responses to Frequently Asked Questions regarding long-term care facility requirements for reporting confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19. [Comments Requested: Proposed Updates for FY2021 Medicare Inpatient and Long-term Care Hospital Payments](#) - July 10. To read more, see [Interim Final Rule Updating Requirements for Notification of Confirmed and Suspected COVID-19 Cases Among Residents and Staff in Nursing Homes](#)

**CMS Proposed Policies and Payment updates for acute care and long-term care hospitals for the 2021 Federal fiscal year:** In recognition of the significant impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency, CMS has limited annual rulemaking required by statute to focus primarily on essential policies. Of note to rural hospitals, CMS has decided to delay a proposed update to the Overall Hospital Quality Star Rating methodology in recognition of the significant impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency. CMS noted its intention to return to this topic in future rulemaking. CMS is also proposing to expand the definition of displaced resident under the Graduate Medical Education policy to provide greater flexibility. To read more, see [CMS released proposed policies and payment updates for acute care and long-term care hospitals for the 2021 Federal fiscal year.](#)

## Resources:

**Best Practices in Adoption of Telehealth: COVID 19 and Beyond Mini-Series:** A series of Project ECHO sessions to teach healthcare providers the best methods of providing care to patients through telemedicine consultations and thereby limiting exposure to COVID-19. To access, click on [Best Practices in Adoption of Telehealth: COVID 19 and Beyond Mini-Series.](#)

**Medicare Coverage and Payment of Virtual Services:** A video released on May 8, 2020 provides answers to common questions about the expansion of Medicare telehealth services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Includes a discussion of the changes as they relate to Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Transcript available by clicking the dots above the Subscribe tab, then selecting Open Transcript. To see video, click on [Medicare Coverage and Payment of Virtual Services.](#)

### **Details on HHS' Distribution of Emergency Funds to Hospitals with High COVID-19**

**Admissions and Rural Providers:** Provides an overview of the methodologies the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will use to distribute COVID-19 related funding to hospitals with high numbers of COVID-19 admissions, rural hospitals, Critical Access Hospitals, Rural Health Clinics, and health centers. Includes a comparison of the terms of conditions of the different CARES Act funding programs. To read more, see [Details on HHS' Distribution of Emergency Funds to Hospitals with High COVID-19 Admissions and Rural Providers](#).

**COVID-19 in Rural America - May 3, 2020:** Reports on COVID-19 cases in rural areas between March 16, 2020 and May 3, 2020. Includes maps and charts looking at changes over time, comparing nonmetro to metro cases, and examining rural per capita COVID-19 rates. Based on data collected by the New York Times. To read more, see [COVID-19 in Rural America - May 3, 2020](#).

**COVID-19 State Emergency Response: Temporarily Suspended and Waived Practice Agreement Requirements:** Provides information about temporary changes to regulations related to nurse practitioners' scope of practice, supervision, and protocol requirements in all 50 states, Washington D.C., and the Atlantic Territories. Features an interactive map showing full practice states, those that have waived or suspended some or all practice agreement requirements, and those that have taken no action. To read more, see [COVID-19 State Emergency Response: Temporarily Suspended and Waived Practice Agreement Requirements](#).

**National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative - COVID-19 Tribal Elder Resources:** Features resources and information for Native American elders related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Provides guidance pertaining to social distancing, food security, and mental health for Native elders. To read more, see [National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative - COVID-19 Tribal Elder Resources](#):

**Guidance for Law Enforcement and First Responders Administering Naloxone:** Provides guidance for naloxone administration by law enforcement and first responders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Details recommendations for administering both intranasal and intramuscular naloxone. See [Guidance for Law Enforcement and First Responders Administering Naloxone](#):

### **Recent News:**

May 13, 2020 -- [Most Rural Hospitals Have Little Cash Going into COVID](#): Days cash on hand is an estimate of the number of days an organization could operate if no cash were collected or received. Many rural hospitals have a history of low cash levels and other short-term assets and are therefore ill-prepared for the loss of revenue during the pandemic.

May 12, 2020 -- [COVID-19 Now Reaching Into Rural America](#) describes how the COVID-19 threat is growing in rural areas, including concerns about the older and sicker population that tends to reside in rural communities. Discusses where the virus may be transmitted in small towns, challenges associated with testing and contact tracing, and the struggles of rural hospitals.

May 11, 2020 -- As coronavirus spreads to rural areas of North Carolina, data shows a disproportionate burden of cases per capita. This article discusses how COVID-19 accentuates existing rural disparities and how tight social connections contribute to the transmission. Describes the approaches state health departments are taking to help allocate resources to rural hospitals. Read more on [Coronavirus Gains a Foothold in Rural North Carolina](#).

May 11, 2020 -- Doctors Without Borders sent a team of nine to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic unfolding in the Navajo Nation. This article discusses how Native Americans are at a much higher risk for complications from the disease due to limited access to healthcare, food, and water, as well as higher chronic disease rates. Read more on [Doctors Without Borders Dispatches Team to the Navajo Nation](#).

May 8, 2020 -- The Small Business Administration (SBA) has issued an interim final rule for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to supplement the previously posted interim final rules by providing guidance on nondiscrimination obligations and additional eligibility requirements. Comments on the changes are due by June 8, 2020. To read more, see [SBA: Business Loan Program Temporary Changes; Paycheck Protection Program-Nondiscrimination and Additional Eligibility Criteria](#)

May 7, 2020 -- The agricultural industry has been struggling for years, and challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic only add to the pressures farmers are currently under. This article discusses how rural mental healthcare gaps, stigma, lack of health insurance, and financial blows from COVID-19 make it difficult for farmers to receive the mental healthcare they need. See [Economic Blow of the Coronavirus Hits America's Already Stressed Farmers](#)

May 7, 2020 -- Expanded access to telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic has made it easier for patients in rural areas to receive necessary care, but the urban-rural broadband divide poses separate challenges. Rural health advocates hope the telehealth flexibilities will become permanent to help providers continue to connect with their patients. To read more, see [Expanded Telehealth Has Provided a Boost for Rural America. Will It Last?](#)

May 7, 2020 -- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) extended the deadline for healthcare providers to attest the receipt of payments from the Provider Relief Fund and accept the Terms and Conditions. The funding will be used to support healthcare-related expenses or lost revenue from COVID-19 and providers receiving payments will now have 45

days. To read more, see [HHS Extends Deadline for Attestation, Acceptance of Terms and Conditions for Provider Relief Fund Payments to 45 Days](#)

May 6, 2020 -- Remote Area Medical (RAM) typically provides free healthcare services via pop-up medical clinics to those in rural areas who cannot otherwise afford care, but the coronavirus pandemic brought RAM operations to a halt. In an effort to help, RAM organized volunteers to run drive-through test sites in rural communities. To read more, see [No Seat on the Sidelines: Medical Nonprofit Finds a New Way to Serve](#)

### **Webinars:**

[HRSA: Intimate Partner Violence/Sheltering in Place](#) – **Wednesday, May 20 at 2:00 pm CST.** This one-hour webinar will address domestic violence during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The event is hosted by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Administration for Children and Families, and will include Dr. Kimberly Chang, a physician from Asian Health Services.

[AgriSafe: How Mediation Can Help Farmers](#) – **Wednesday, May 20 at 12:00 pm CST.** The AgriSafe Network explains how mediation can help resolve conflicts and reduce stress unique to agricultural producers.

[AgriSafe: COVID-19 Weekly Think Tank](#) – **Thursday, May 21 at 11:00 am CST.** The AgriSafe Network holds a weekly discussion with rural health and safety professionals to identify risks that farmers, farm workers, and ranchers face as it relates to COVID-19.

[Application Assistance for RCORP-Planning Funding](#) – **Wednesday, May 27 at 2:00 pm CST.** Applicants to the [Rural Communities Opioid Response Program-Planning \(RCORP-Planning\)](#) funding opportunity, can get assistance during this 90-minute webinar. **Call-In Number: 1-888-469-0646; Participant Code: 4761843.** Those who cannot make the call can access a recording at 1-888-704-1108; passcode 52720.

### **Past Webinar (Recordings):**

[Rural Health and COVID-19: In Case You Missed It:](#) A recording of the Rural Health and COVID-19 webinar is now available! Check it out for an overview of the rural health-focused efforts by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

[Guidance for Certifying Deaths Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\):](#) April 16, 2020 webinar sponsored by the CDC's Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) division. Provides an overview of the importance of mortality data, discusses a National

Center for Health Statistics publication for clinicians who may need to certify a death involving COVID-19, and presents a summary of COVID-19 surveillance through the National Vital Statistics System. Includes transcript. Additional links: [Video](#)

[Indian Health Service - COVID-19 Webinar Recordings](#): Features a number of webinar recordings of Indian Health Service trainings related to COVID-19. Discusses issues such as emotional well-being, domestic violence, and telebehavioral health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.