

April 8, 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:

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In the News:

Apr 8, 2020 -- [When It Starts Getting into Your Local Hospital, It Becomes Real!](#) offers a look inside a small, rural hospital in Louisiana, on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic. With limited beds, ventilators, and personal protective equipment, hospital staff do everything they can to care for their patients, including enduring the personal toll of COVID-19.

Apr 7, 2020 -- [Dispatch from a Country Doctor: Seeing Patients Differently in the Time of Coronavirus](#) features a doctor from rural Maryland who currently sees most of his patients via telehealth appointments due to the coronavirus pandemic. Describes how new telehealth rules have made it easier to care for patients remotely and highlights ways his office is adapting to challenges.

Apr 7, 2020 -- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) delivered nearly \$34 billion to healthcare providers battling COVID-19 in the last week. The funding is provided through the expansion of the Accelerated and Advance Payment Program to ensure Part A providers and Part B suppliers have access to the resources needed to combat the pandemic, to read more: [CMS Approves Approximately \\$34 Billion for Providers with the Accelerated/Advance Payment Program for Medicare Providers in One Week](#)

Apr 7, 2020 -- [HHS: Enforcement Discretion under HIPAA to Allow Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information by Business Associates for Public Health and Health Oversight Activities in Response to COVID-19](#): Notice from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stating that it will exercise its discretion in how it applies the Privacy Rule under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 and will not impose potential penalties for violations of certain provisions of HIPAA during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This enforcement discretion is effective until the public health emergency declaration expires.

Apr 6, 2020 -- [CMS: Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Policy and Regulatory Revisions in Response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#): Notice of interim final rule with comment period from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to create broad flexibilities for healthcare facilities and providers so that they can adequately provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Includes details about changes to payment policies and regulations for a variety of services

Funding for COVID-19 response:

[Small Business Administration Coronavirus Relief Programs](#): Relief programs established by the CARES Act to address the economic disruption to small businesses and nonprofit organizations caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. **For General Inquiries:** answerdesk@sba.gov. **For local assistance:** [SBA District Offices](#)

[Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program Grants](#): Grants to improve telemedicine and distance learning services in rural areas through the use of telemedicine, computer networks, and related advanced technologies. A second application window will be open between April 14 - July 13, 2020. For questions, contact: thomas.jensen@usda.gov.