

New CMS Guidance and Resources for States and Health Plans Related to COVID-19

Medicare Part A and Part B Enrollment Equitable Relief for the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is providing “equitable relief” – extra time to enroll in Part B or premium-Part A (from March 17, 2020 through June 17, 2020). This relief is especially important in the 14 states without a Part A buy-in agreement (AL, AZ, CA, CO, IL, KS, KY, NE, NJ, NM, MO, SC, UT, and VA), where low income individuals who do not qualify for premium-free Part A can normally only enroll in “conditional” Part A during the General Enrollment Period (GEP), the annual period from January 1 through March 31, with coverage effective July 1. If individuals file for conditional Part A by the June 17, 2020 equitable relief deadline, SSA will process their applications as if they had applied during the 2020 GEP. States can then start paying eligible individuals’ Parts A and B premiums (and cost-sharing) under the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) program, as early as July 1, 2020. States will need to pay any applicable premium increases for late enrollment.

For more information about the equitable relief due to COVID-19, see: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Eligibility-and-Enrollment/OrigMedicarePartABEligEnrol/index>

This equitable relief will last from March 17, 2020 through June 17, 2020. **Eligible beneficiaries who wish to take advantage of the equitable relief must file their enrollment request by June 17, 2020.**

Updated Guidance for Medicare Advantage and Part D Plans

On May 13, CMS released a [memo](#) providing answers to questions related to two memos it released on [April 21](#) and [April 24](#) for Medicare Advantage and Part D plans (including D-SNPs and Medicare-Medicaid Plans (MMPs)) describing guidance for plans related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance contains several points of potential interest for states with integrated care initiatives, including several clarifications regarding implementation of mid-year supplemental benefit enhancements.

New CMS Toolkit on State Actions to Mitigate COVID-19 Prevalence in Nursing Homes

Also on May 13, CMS released a new [toolkit](#) developed to aid nursing homes, governors, states, departments of health, and other agencies with additional resources to aid in the fight against COVID-19 within nursing facilities. The toolkit is comprised of innovative approaches compiled by QIO programs from a variety of front line health care providers, governors’ COVID-19 task forces, associations and other organizations, and experts, and is intended to serve as a catalogue of resources dedicated to addressing the specific challenges facing nursing homes as they combat COVID-19.

The Integrated Care Resource Center is a national initiative of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to help states improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of care for individuals dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. The state technical assistance activities are coordinated by Mathematica and the Center for Health Care Strategies. For more information, visit www.integratedcareresourcecenter.com.

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