



COVID-19: Financial Relief Available for You and Your Practice

Apply Now for Medicare Advance Payments and Learn About Other Relief Efforts

April 2, 2020

Dear colleagues,

COVID-19 continues to hit grim milestones around the world. In addition to making nearly a million people sick and taking the lives of tens of thousands, COVID-19 is also taking a financial toll on individuals and businesses — including many of you. As you work to make sure your community is able to fight COVID-19, “normal” visits for nonurgent situations have been drastically reduced or even completely stopped. The AAFP understands the strain this is putting on you, and we have been fighting hard in D.C. to get you much-needed relief. **Over the past week, we've had some big wins that we hope will get you the resources you need to continue to serve your patients and local community.**

Financial relief was the focus of this week's Virtual Town Hall that we host every Wednesday at 7 p.m. CT. If you missed last night's session, you can watch the replay on our [COVID-19 Member Communications page](#). Don't forget that the weekly Virtual Town Hall is acceptable for one Live or Enduring Materials CME credit each week, so be sure to [evaluate the activity and claim your credit](#).

In addition, here are some important highlights of the various financial relief programs, along with some additional information you may find helpful:

Financial Relief

The AAFP has established a new [COVID-19 financial relief page](#) to provide details about the various programs that you may qualify for. Here are the key highlights (visit the page for more specifics):

- **Medicare advance/accelerated payments:** In order to lessen financial hardship and increase cash flow to physicians and clinicians impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has [expanded its current Accelerated and Advance Payment Program](#). This allows physician practices to request an advance of up to 100% of the Medicare payment amount for a three-month period. **Apply now for Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payments to protect your practice's cashflow from the impact of COVID-19.**
 - You can receive up to 100% of prepaid Medicare fee-for-service claims.
 - You have to apply through your regional Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC).
 - **Do it now!!** To accelerate this process, the AAFP has compiled [MACs' specific contact information](#) with direct links to instructions and forms.

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- See [the AAFP's frequently asked questions about this program](#) for more information.
- **Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act:** This bill provides \$2 trillion that aims to give financial relief to small businesses, support health care workers, get medical supplies to the front lines, fund research for treatments and vaccines, and stimulate the U.S. economy. We worked hard to educate Congress on the need to support family physicians and primary care through the COVID-19 crisis, and the CARES Act contains several provisions that are important for family physicians. Visit [the COVID-19 financial relief page](#) to learn more. Be sure to check out the loss calculator the AAFP developed to help you gather the key information you'll need when the process for applying for relief becomes available.

AAFP Membership Requirements

Between your focus on serving patients and the cancellation of all live, in-person AAFP CME events through May 31, we want to make sure you have one less thing to worry about. Earlier this week, we announced the following changes related to CME requirements and dues:

- Any members whose CME re-election cycle ends on Dec. 31, 2020, and who have not yet met the CME requirement will have an additional year to do so. Further details on this change can be found on [AAFP.org](#) soon.
- Members whose three-year cycle ended on Dec. 31, 2019 will now have until Dec. 31, 2020 to report their CME to remain eligible for membership (original deadline was May 5, 2020).
- Any members who have not yet paid their 2020 dues will now have until July 14, 2020, to submit payment.

At the same time we shared these changes, the [ABFM also announced moves](#) to prevent physicians from losing their Family Medicine Certification.

Payment and Practice Management

The AAFP's push to give members broad latitude to use telehealth in the fight against COVID-19 delivered a substantial win this week when [CMS announced plans to temporarily relax a number of key regulations](#). Payment for Medicare telephone- or audio-only visits are now covered, and [telehealth services can receive the same rate as an in-person visit when used with the correct modifier and place of service code](#). The move allows family physicians to be paid for the work they are providing their patients. While this is a big win, our advocacy fight for appropriate payment for our members will continue.

Education

- **New webinar series!** We want to help you get the latest evidence-based medicine along with the experience of your peers both nationally and internationally to help you be prepared and informed about this ongoing crisis. We are launching a new webinar series where you will have live interaction with physician experts and have a chance to ask

questions. This is a one-hour live, online CME session. The first session will take place tomorrow, April 3, at 7 p.m. CT. Visit the [COVID-19 CME page](#) for more details.

- A new COVID-19 case study series is now live in the *Pandemic Self-Study Package: COVID-19* and also can be found on the [COVID-19 CME page](#).

Supplies

- We know that access to PPE continues to be an issue. We continue to urge the federal and state governments to deliver supplies where they are needed most – to the front lines.
- You should be able to provide your own PPE if it is not available through your practice or health care system, and you should not be required to serve patients without the appropriate PPE. As a reminder, the AAFP issued an [official statement last week](#) supporting your ability to exercise your own professional judgement as it relates to PPE.

Don't forget to visit [the AAFP's COVID-19 microsite](#) every day as we continue to add new resources, tools and advocacy information to help you easily find and understand what is most important for family physicians.

Before I close, I'd like to ask you to share something in your personal social media channels. As physicians, we know one of the best things people can do to stop the spread of this virus is to stay home. Unfortunately, many people aren't taking this seriously or don't understand what social distancing really means. That is why several of our colleagues came together to write Americans a prescription on behalf of all family physicians to STAY HOME. Check out the [video message](#) and please share it in your social channels.

You are all making an amazing difference in your local community and are the heroes and sheroes in this battle — thank you!

Keep up the fight!

Gary L. LeRoy, MD
President
American Academy of Family Physicians