



COVID-19: Additional Financial Relief, Reopening Resources and New HHS Telehealth Website The AAFP Is Here to Support You as You Serve Your Patients and Community

April 23, 2020

Dear colleagues,

The past week has been a busy and interesting one on the COVID-19 front, from possible new financial relief on the horizon to states discussing plans to “reopen.” Before I share some new information and resources you may find helpful, I want to address reopening.

As states develop plans regarding when and how to loosen stay-at-home restrictions, with a few states planning to lift some restrictions as early as this weekend, we know you may have a lot of questions about what to consider for your patients, staff and community. Although we recognize that decisions regarding when and how to expand operations of your practice are largely influenced by local events and data, the AAFP plans to provide you with guidance to consider and resources that you may find helpful as you determine the best course of action for your practice. Keep an eye on our [COVID-19 microsite](#), where this information will be available soon.

Financial Relief

- **Additional CARES Act funding:** On Tuesday, the Senate passed legislation that enhanced portions of the funds included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the House is scheduled to consider this legislation today. If passed, the bill will allocate an additional \$250 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), \$50 billion for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program and \$75 billion for the provider relief fund. If you applied for the PPP or EIDL programs and your application wasn't fully processed before funding ran out, contact your lender regarding next steps. We've heard that some are holding those applications until the additional funding is received, so you may not need to reapply. It is important to note that every lender is handling the application process differently.
- **Provider relief fund:** Yesterday, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced its plans for distributing the remainder of the provider relief funds authorized by the CARES Act. While we are still digging into all of the details, here is what we currently know about the next wave of funding:
 - An additional \$20 billion that will go to Medicare providers. This will be allocated based on providers' share of 2018 net patient revenues. HHS will begin disbursing this funding on April 24 based on providers' cost reports, and, as we understand it, the department has indicated that only hospitals filing cost reports will be eligible. HHS has stated that providers “without adequate cost report data on file” will need to submit revenue information via a portal that will be opened later this week. The AAFP plans to seek clarification on whether and how physicians can access these funds.

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- \$20-plus billion in funding that appears to be targeted at “high-impact areas,” rural health clinics and hospitals, and the Indian Health Service. We plan to voice our concerns to HHS that this portion of funding isn’t available directly for physicians.
- An unspecified portion that will be dedicated to those providing care to the uninsured. The uninsured funding program will be administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and providers can begin submitting claims in May.
- **CMS Accelerated and Advance Payment Program:** This week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that it is extending the Accelerated and Advance Payment Program to CPC+ Track 1 and Track 2 participants. Eligible participants may request Program Year 2020 third-quarter nonclaims-based payments in advance. The deadline to submit this [request](#) is midnight PDT on Tuesday, April 28.

Telehealth

HHS recently launched a new [telehealth website](#) that is a collaboration between CMS, HRSA and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC). The AAFP partnered with HHS to contribute to the design of this site, which is meant to be a one-stop compilation of federal guidance and helpful stakeholder-developed telehealth resources. The “For Patients” section of the site instructs patients seeking telehealth services to start by calling their doctor (which is aligned with [AAFP policy](#) and advocacy efforts). The “For Providers” section of the site links to resources developed by the AAFP.

I will close with a couple of quick updates about other AAFP resources available to you on an ongoing basis:

- **Make your voice heard:** As the federal government considers additional legislation, it is critical that Congress hears from you about the importance of family medicine and the need for support. With our [Speak Out tool](#), you can easily contact your members of Congress to let them know the impact COVID-19 is having on your practice and that much more must be done to support family physicians.
- **Virtual Town Hall:** Last night’s Virtual Town Hall featured two physicians from Rush University Medical Center. They shared how they are adapting during the COVID-19 crisis to the challenges of evolving clinical needs and processes, balancing life at home while managing telehealth visits, advising and influencing health system leadership, and demonstrating the value of family medicine to their health system during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. If you missed it, be sure to check out the replay on our [COVID-19 communications page](#). As a reminder, the weekly virtual Town Hall is available for one [live](#) or [enduring](#) credit each week, so be sure to evaluate the session and claim your credit.
- **Webinar series:** Our Friday evening COVID-19 webinar series is a one-hour, live, online CME session that provides you with an opportunity for real-time interaction with physician experts and offers a chance to ask questions. This week’s topic is *Ventilator Management and the COVID-19 Crisis: What Family Physicians Need to Know*, so join us tomorrow, April 24, at 7 p.m. CDT. Visit the [COVID-19 CME page](#) for more details.

For a couple of months, I've been sending you weekly COVID-19 email updates (most recently on Thursdays). Going forward, I plan to send you important updates on an as-needed basis. Please continue to visit the [AAFP's COVID-19 microsite](#) every day because we regularly add new resources, tools and advocacy information.

I appreciate the challenges you all continue to face regarding patient care, financial health and how to expand your practice operations in a thoughtful and safe way. Your resilience in the face of this pandemic is nothing short of extraordinary.

Thank you for everything you do!

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