



## NEWS ALERT

March 10, 2020

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### **COVID-19 Response News Alert: CMS Issues Frequently Asked Questions on Guidance to State Survey Agencies Suspending Non-Emergency Survey Inspections**

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to ensure surveyors with State Survey Agencies and accrediting organizations charged with inspecting nursing homes and other health care facilities, understand the changes in guidance issued on March 4 suspending non-emergency survey inspections, allowing them to focus on the most current serious health and safety threats, like infectious diseases and abuse.

This shift in survey prioritization will further enable State Inspectors to address the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

It is important to note that CMS remains committed to ensuring continuity of oversight activities during this time, therefore any information or complaints that raise concerns related to immediate jeopardy or allegations of abuse will be investigated. For situations specific to COVID-19, CMS will coordinate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as other state and local health departments on the timing and conduct of investigations.

Additionally, surveys for existing in-process enforcement actions, and surveys mandated by law to occur within specific time intervals will continue uninterrupted, as well as initial certification surveys for new providers to support building healthcare capacity.

The guidance to State Survey Agencies can be found here:

<https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurveycertificationgeninfopolicy-and/suspension-survey-activities>

The link to the related FAQs can be found here:

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid19survey-activity-suspension-fqs.pdf>

This FAQ, and earlier CMS actions in response to the COVID-19 virus, are part of the ongoing White House Task Force efforts. To keep up with the important work CMS is doing in response to COVID-19, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).

aSummary of CMS Public Health Action on Coronavirus to date:

On March 9, 2020: CMS delivered detailed guidance on the screening, treatment and transfer procedures healthcare workers must follow when interacting with patients to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a hospice setting. CMS also issued additional guidance specific to nursing homes to help control and prevent the spread of the virus.

<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-issues-clear-actionable-guidance-providers-about-covid-19-virus>

On March 9, 2020: CMS issued a fact sheet with additional guidance for healthcare providers and patients about the telehealth benefits in the agency's Medicare program. Expanded use of virtual care, such as virtual check-ins, are important tools for keeping beneficiaries healthy, while helping to contain the community spread of the COVID-19 virus.

<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/telehealth-benefits-medicare-are-lifeline-patients-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

On March 9, 2020: CMS published guidance to hospitals with emergency departments (EDs) on patient screening, treatment and transfer requirements to prevent the spread of infectious disease and illness, including COVID-19. Medicare-participating hospitals are to follow both CDC guidance for infection control and Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) requirements.

<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-issues-call-action-hospital-emergency-departments-screen-patients-coronavirus>

March 6, 2020: CMS issued frequently asked questions and answers (FAQs) for healthcare providers regarding Medicare payment for laboratory test and other services related to the 2019-Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/covid-19-response-news-alert-cms-issues-frequently-asked-questions-assist-medicare-providers>

March 5, 2020: CMS issued a second Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) code for certain COVID-19 laboratory tests, in addition to three fact sheets about coverage and benefits for medical services related to COVID-19 for CMS programs. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-develops-additional-code-coronavirus-lab-tests>

March 4, 2020: CMS issued a call to action to healthcare providers nationwide and offered important guidance to help State Survey Agencies and Accrediting Organizations prioritize their inspections of healthcare. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-announces-actions-address-spread-coronavirus>

February 13, 2020: CMS issued a new HCPCS code for providers and laboratories to test patients for COVID-19. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/public-health-news-alert-cms-develops-new-code-coronavirus-lab-test>

February 6, 2020: CMS gave CLIA-certified laboratories information about how they can test for SARS-CoV-2. <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurveycertificationgeninfopolicy-and-memos-states-and/notification-surveyors-authorization-emergency-use-cdc-2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-real-time-rt>

February 6, 2020: CMS issued a memo to help the nation's healthcare facilities take critical steps to prepare for COVID-19. <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurveycertificationgeninfopolicy-and-memos-states-and/information-healthcare-facilities-concerning-2019-novel-coronavirus-illness-2019-ncov>

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