

January 12, 2024

Reminder - Winter Weather Planning

The Section for Long-Term Care Regulation (SLCR) recently sent out the following reminder on their listserv.

If your facility experiences a loss of a necessary service (electricity, water, gas, phone, etc.), contact SLCR via the Regional Office emergency phone line and keep them informed of your status. If, for some reason, the facility cannot contact SLCR staff through the regional office phone number, you should contact the hotline. The emergency protocol is located here.

When you call, be prepared to answer to the following:

([READ MORE](#))

COMRU Update

The online application link (Level 1 form/Level of Care) for applications submitted prior to 07/16/2023 (green link) **will no longer be available after 02/01/2024.**

Application started prior to 07-16-2023

SNFs will want to ensure they have printed or saved a copy of the processed Level 1 form/Level of Care form and Level 2 screening (if applicable) for resident records as these are required per regulation and may be requested during the state survey process.

- Additionally, please remember that all processed applications are to be deleted from the COMRU online application system 60 days after completion.

Should you have any questions, please contact COMRU via email (COMRU@health.mo.gov).

Also, mark your calendars for this upcoming MHCA webinar on COMRU!

COMRU: *What You Need to Know* is a FREE webinar for MHCA members and will be held on **January 23 from 2-3 pm**. Ammanda Ott, Specialist/Supervisor of COMRU, will share the top reasons for corrections and returns of applications; how to correctly check the status of an online application; and answer any other questions.

Please click [here](#) to register.

Candida Auris Health Advisory and Informational Webinar

Please take the time to review this [Candida Auris Information Sheet](#) from DHSS. As a reminder, *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) is considered an urgent threat according to the CDC. Should you have any questions, please contact the DHSS Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 573-751-6113 or 800-392-0272 (24/7) or info@health.mo.gov.

([READ MORE](#))

Reimbursement Update

As previously reported, CMS has approved the State Plan Amendment (SPA) for the \$10 PPD rate increase and the \$.87 increase to the VBP incentive effective July 1, 2023. Mo Health Net Division (MHD) is working to get its emergency regulation filed and will begin going through its internal processes in order to timely institute the increases.

Please note, upon CMS approval of a SPA, it typically takes the state between 4-6 weeks to process the increase. An emergency regulation must be filed and approved. Once the emergency regulation takes effect, which is approximately 10 days after it is filed, MHD can begin working on rate letters and other processes it must follow before paying the new rates. We anticipate facilities will receive their rate letters and begin being paid their new rate around the first half of February.

Once facilities begin receiving their new rate, then MHD will begin to work on the retro payment back to July 1, 2023. We anticipate facilities will see the retro payment within 2 – 4 weeks after the new rate is paid. Please note, and as further explained below, the state will utilize the retro payment for the 7/1/23 \$10 PPD and VBP increase to offset any recoupments necessary as a result of decreases to rates for the semi-annual CMI/VBP adjustments on 1/1/23, 7/1/23 and 1/1/24.

As a reminder, MHD is waiting to release the January 1, 2024 rates for the semi-annual CMI/VBP adjustment and will combine the 1/1/24 rate adjustment notice in conjunction with the \$10 PPD and VBP increase notice letter at the same time. This should result in a smoother process for not only the state, but also facilities.

Once the 1/1/24 rate letter is released it will be inclusive of the \$10 PPD and VBP increase. As stated above, the state believes it will be able to process the new rate around the first of February. Therefore, any adjustments upward or downward as a result of the 1/1/24 CMI/VBP will be part of the retro mass adjusted payment of the \$10 and increase in VBP incentive payment. Again, we will keep you updated as we learn more.

Respiratory Protection in Long-Term Care

Respirators are a specific and more advanced type of personal protective equipment (PPE) and come with a host of regulatory requirements over and above those requirements that apply to other PPE. Most LTC facilities had no need for respirators before the pandemic because any patients with airborne infectious diseases were transferred and care for in appropriate and capable alternate facilities. Moving forward, however, respirators and the compliance obligations that come with them are now part of the expected infection control and employee safety programs in most LTC facilities. Importantly, OSHA has an entire standard devoted to respirators, the [Respiratory Protection Standard \(29 CFR 1910.134\)](#). While the OSHA standard can be complicated and is highly dependent on the type of hazard and respirator used, the following highlights the basic requirements that affect most LTC facilities.

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

SNF Consolidated Billing CY2024 Code Updates

CMS recently posted the updated Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Consolidated Billing Calendar Year (CY) 2024 HCPCS codes on its [website](#) in the downloads section. Provider billers should review the updated January 2024 [HCPCS codes \(ZIP\)](#) file to accurately bill for Part A SNF stays. See the [general explanation of the major categories \(PDF\)](#), including additional exclusions. The related CMS instructions to the Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) with a January 1, 2024, effective date can be found [here](#).

SNF Providers: Do You Need to Revalidate Your Enrollment Record Soon?

CMS recently posted an updated [Medicare Revalidation List](#) for providers to find out in advance of an official notice if you must revalidate your Medicare enrollment record. CMS usually posts revalidation due dates six to seven months in advance; but at a minimum, the Agency will establish your date at least 90 days in advance. A due date of “TBD” means that CMS hasn’t set your due date, and you don’t need to do anything now. Please see [Revalidations \(Renewing Your Enrollment\)](#) for more information.

CMS Promotes Free Health Information Handler Service to Help Providers Submit Medical Review Documentation Electronically

In a recent CMS MLN Connects newsletter, the Agency posted information for providers to learn about the [CMS Health Information Handler \(CMS HIH\)](#). This is a free service to help providers upload and [submit medical documentation electronically](#) to their respective Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) or other approved entity using the following formats:

- Portable document format (PDF)
- Extensible markup language (XML)
- JavaScript object notation (JSON)

With the CMS HIH, providers can respond electronically to prior authorization and additional document requests for an unlimited number of transactions. CMS promotes this as a fast, safe, and secure environment that is easily accessible.

The benefits of the CMS HIH include:

- Hosted on CMS Amazon Web Services cloud;
- Adheres to all CMS security and privacy standards; and
- Accommodates small or large users.

To learn more and get started, please contact cmshih@cms.hhs.gov. You can also [subscribe](#) to the MLN Connects newsletter and [read past editions](#).

CMS Updates CLIA Waived Tests Effective January 1, 2024

CMS recently issued [revised guidance](#) to its Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) to inform them of new Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA) waived tests approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Since these tests are marketed immediately after approval, CMS must notify its contractors of the new tests so that the contractors can accurately process claims. There are 104 newly added waived complexity tests. This Recurring Update Notification applies to Chapter 16, section 70.8 of the Internet Only Manual (IOM).

While these tests are bundled into the SNF Part A payment rates, many SNF providers bill for certain CLIA waived tests under Medicare Part B for long stay residents. Billing staff of such providers are encouraged to review the NEW Waived Tests MLN Matters Article to learn more about:

- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) Requirements

- New CLIA-waived tests approved by the FDA as of December 5, 2023
 - Use of Modifier QW for CLIA-Waived Tests
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Flu or COVID-19 - Which is Worse?

A common misperception that exists is that COVID-19 is no longer a serious virus, and some may even believe that it's less serious than influenza. While the rates of serious illness, hospitalizations, and death from COVID-19 are significantly lower than during the height of the pandemic in early 2020 and 2021, recent data indicates that COVID-19 remains more serious than influenza.

Key highlights:

- Seniors who contract COVID-19 are much more likely to experience serious illness, hospitalizations, or death.
- The rates of hospitalizations for individuals over the age of 65 is nearly 10x greater than those with influenza ([see figure 1](#)).
- Among individuals over 65, they are 3-4x more likely to die from COVID-19 compared to influenza ([see figure 2](#)).

Because the vaccine reduces the risk of serious illness, hospitalization and death, this information can be helpful during discussions with residents and their representatives who have reluctance about getting vaccinated, particularly for those who are hesitant to receive the COVID-19 vaccine but got the influenza vaccine.

You can download and share the latest information to encourage vaccinations, including a reimbursement guide, template letters, and talking points, in AHCA/NCAL's #GetVaccinated toolkit at getvaccinated.us/.

Updates to Weekly COVID-19 Vaccination Healthcare Personnel Summary Reporting for January 2024: NHSN Long-Term Care Component

Beginning the week of January 1-7, 2024, the Weekly COVID-19 Vaccination Healthcare Personnel (HCP) form will no longer collect information on primary series vaccination. These changes include:

- Questions related to COVID-19 primary series vaccination being removed.
- Questions on reasons why an individual has not received vaccine (medical contraindication, declined, or other/unknown vaccination status) will relate to an individual's up-to-date vaccination status.
- The question asking "number of HCP who are up to date" being moved up on the form to Question #2.

- HCP **not** being considered up to date for COVID-19 vaccination unless they received the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine.

NHSN will be hosting a webinar to review these important changes:

- [Updates to Weekly COVID-19 Vaccination Healthcare Personnel Summary Form: Long Term Care Component](#)
 - [Tuesday, January 16, 2024, 12:30-1:30 PM CST](#)
 - [Register](#)

Members should register in advance for all trainings. If you have any questions, please contact the NHSN at nhsn@cdc.gov.

Keep Working On Your Quality Award Applications

Completing a successful Quality Award application takes time to prepare. We encourage you over the next few weeks to keep working on your applications and submit them before the deadline on Thursday, January 25, 2024. If you have not already done so, take advantage of the free resources!

[Bronze Quality Award Workshop](#)

The National Quality Award team is hosting a virtual workshop for members interested in submitting a 2024 Bronze Quality Award on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at 1 pm CST. Join hosts Pamela Truscott, Director of Quality Improvement at NCAL, and Tim Case, Administrator of the Quality Award Program, as they guide you through the nuances of the Bronze application process.

Please click [here](#) to register to secure your spot for this FREE event, which is open to everyone interested in elevating their commitment to quality. Whether you've submitted an intent to apply or not, you can attend the workshop and apply before the deadline on Thursday, January 25.

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

The Center of Excellence for Behavior Health in Nursing Facilities

Beginning September 2023, the Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health in Nursing Facilities (COE-NF) will host six (6) one-hour monthly cohort sessions. **These sessions are FREE to attend!** Join them for the opportunity to learn industry best practices from other nursing facilities and behavioral health subject matter experts. With the support of COE-NF behavioral health specialists, you will be able to implement the learnings in your facility. The last two cohort sessions are:

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

Assisted Living Webinar Series - The New Generation and the Challenges they Face

Assisted Living is going through a period of change. Is your facility ready? This webinar series, led by Speaker Barbara Speedling, will discuss topics including caring for the new generation in assisted living, overcoming social isolation and loneliness, preventing resident-to-resident aggression, and leadership in a transformative culture. AHCA/NCAL members can purchase individual webinars for \$25 each, or bundle and save by purchasing all four webinars now at the discounted rate of \$90.

- **Wednesday, April 17 at 1 pm CST – [Caring for a New Generation in Assisted Living](#)**
- **Wednesday, June 12 at 1 pm CST – [All by Myself: Overcoming Social Isolation and Loneliness in Assisted Living](#)**
- **Wednesday, August 14 at 1 pm CST – [Love Your Neighbor: Preventing Resident-to-Resident Aggression](#)**
- **Wednesday, October 16 at 1 pm CST – [Metamorphosis: Leadership in a Transformative Culture](#)**

New Federal Report on Adoption of Health Information Technology Includes SNF and ALF Settings

On December 18, 2023, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [announced the publication](#) of a report prepared by RTI International that provides an overview of Health Information Technology (HIT) adoption and utilization in long term and post-acute care (LTPAC) settings.

This 47-page report, titled *[“Health Information Technology Adoption and Utilization in Long-Term and Post-Acute Care Settings”](#)*, was based on an environmental scan of the literature as well as providers and subject matter experts (SMEs) and found that LTPAC providers have generally adopted electronic health records (HER) to support clinical and business needs. **Interoperable exchange of health information, however, is not routine or widely used.** LTPAC providers utilize their EHR, but modernization remains slow without focused policy levers. Despite barriers, there are opportunities for emerging policies to support interoperability in LTPAC.

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

U.S. State Department to Process Domestic VISA Renewals in Limited Pilot Program

Last month, the U.S. State Department announced that for the first time in nearly two decades, it will process domestic visa renewals for certain H-1B visa applicants as part of a [pilot program](#). Beginning the week of January 29, 2024, the Department will

launch this voluntary program for approximately 20,000 eligible participants who meet the requirements listed in the [Federal Register](#).

Currently, the program will only service H-1B holders (not their dependents) to limit the scope of applicants during this initial trial period. According to the [announcement](#), in 2004, the Department discontinued domestic renewal of non-diplomatic nonimmigrant visas primarily because of requirements resulting from the passage of the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act, including the requirement for biometric fingerprints. It also noted that “by designing and delivering services with a focus on both national security and user experience, the Department seeks to alleviate the uncertainty often experienced by U.S. companies that employ temporary workers requiring petition-based visas. The pilot program seeks to increase capacity in our more than 200 consular sections around the world to adjudicate other visa categories – specifically first-time travelers for business and tourism who require in-person interviews.”

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

CNA Testing Events

All regional dates are viewable on the online calendar at <https://mo.tmutest.com/calendar>. **IMPORTANT** – these are not the only test sites available. If you need a different testing location, please call Headmaster D&S (1-800-393-8664) and ask for the Missouri Team.

PLEASE NOTE: There have been changes to scheduling tests through TMU and to the paperwork for RN Observers. Please reach out to Headmaster with questions. missouri@hdmaster.com.

Knowledge and Skill testing is available on January 22nd and February 12th at MHCA. Please contact shellie@mohealthcare.com to reserve a time slot.

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