

HHS COVID-19 Update – May 13, 2020

Funding Announcements

\$15 Million in Funding to Expand Workforce for Telehealth Capabilities: HRSA awarded [\\$15 million to 159 organizations across five health workforce programs](#) to increase telehealth capabilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These awards demonstrate the Trump Administration’s continued efforts and commitment to building a national telehealth infrastructure.

Grants for Suicide Prevention: SAMHSA seeks [applications for \\$40 million in emergency COVID-19 grants](#) for suicide prevention. The fiscal year (FY) 2020 COVID-19 Emergency Response for Suicide Prevention (Short Title: COVID-19 ERSP) grant program will award \$40 million to 50 awardees to spend over a 16-month period. The purpose of this program is to support states and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in advancing efforts to prevent suicide and suicide attempts among adults 25 and older in order to reduce the overall suicide rate and number of suicides in the United States. The program also includes a special focus on victims of domestic violence.

Testing

Expanding Injection Device Supply: The Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, announced a [\\$138 million contract with ApiJect Systems America for “Project Jumpstart” and “RAPID USA,”](#) which together will dramatically expand U.S. production capability for domestically manufactured, medical-grade injection devices starting by October 2020. “Jumpstart” will enable the manufacture of more than 100 million prefilled syringes for distribution across the United States by year-end 2020. RAPID’s permanent fill-finish production capability will help significantly decrease the United States’ dependence on offshore supply chains and its reliance on older technologies, including the use of glass vials, which have much longer production lead times.

Updates on Laboratory Testing: CDC updated their [FAQs on Testing by Laboratories](#). The webpage includes information on accessing lab testing, information for test developers, serology tests, ordering laboratory supplies, and ordering clinical supplies.

Price Transparency for COVID-19 Testing: CMS released a new FAQ document on [Price Transparency: Requirements for Providers to Make Public Cash Prices for COVID-19 Diagnostic Testing](#). The document outlines the requirements from the FFRCA and CARES Act related to price transparency.

Testing Updates: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FDA has worked with more than 500 test developers who have said they will be submitting EUA requests to the FDA for tests that

detect the virus. To date, FDA has authorized 93 tests under EUAs, which includes 12 antibody tests and 1 antigen test.

Treatment

Treatment Guidelines: NIH updated their document on [COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines](#). Updates include a new section on [Antithrombotic Therapy in Patients with COVID-19](#), updates on [potential antiviral drugs under evaluation for treatment of COVID-19](#), and updates on [immune-based therapy under evaluation for treatment of COVID-19](#).

Resources for Hospitals and Healthcare Professionals in Preparing for COVID-19: CDC updated their [Preparedness Tools for Healthcare Professionals and Facilities Responding to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). The webpage includes a healthcare provider checklist, steps healthcare facilities can take, healthcare facility guidance, the framework for Non-COVID-19 care, a COVID-19 Surge tool, hospital preparedness tool, nursing home and long-term care facility checklist, getting your clinic ready, mitigating staff shortages, and print resources.

Updated Clinical FAQs for Health Professionals: CDC updated their FAQs on [COVID-19 Clinical Questions](#). The FAQs cover topics including risk, transmission, testing, diagnosis and notification, treatment and management, obstetrical care, drug and investigational therapies, patients with asthma, patients with liver disease, patients with hypertension, waste management and additional resources.

Framework for Providing Non-COVID-19 Care: CDC released a [Framework for Healthcare Systems Providing Non-COVID-19 Clinical Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). This document provides healthcare systems with a framework to deliver non-COVID-19 health care during the COVID-19 pandemic and includes the key considerations that healthy systems should take into account.

Updates for Blood Donation Centers: The FDA posted [updated information for blood establishments](#) regarding COVID-19, which aligns with the agency's [guidance on convalescent plasma](#) to allow donation 14 days after complete resolution of symptoms. The posting also provides updated information blood establishments may wish to consider when evaluating prospective blood donors.

Expanding Remote Communication Options: The FDA issued an [Emergency Use Authorization \(EUA\) for the Ascom teleCARE IP Nurse Call System](#) for use by healthcare providers and patients in healthcare environments, including temporary hospital facilities, to facilitate remote communication between patients and healthcare providers. The remote communication and monitoring capabilities of the teleCARE IP Nurse Call System may reduce the amount of contact by healthcare providers with patients who are in isolation rooms, thereby reducing healthcare provider risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Expanding Cardiovascular Screening Aids: The FDA issued an [EUA for the emergency use of the Eko electrocardiogram \(ECG\) Low Ejection Fraction Tool \("ELEFT"\)](#) to be used by healthcare professionals to provide an assessment of Left Ventricular Ejection Fraction as a

diagnostic aid to screen for potential cardiac complications associated with COVID-19 or underlying cardiac conditions that may affect clinical management of COVID-19, in adult patients having or suspected of having COVID-19. The EUA was issued to Manatt, Phelps & Philips.

Information for Sponsors of Drug Development Therapies: FDA released information on [Drug Development Inquiries for Drugs to Address the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#). CDER is committed to supporting the development of novel drugs, and the potential repurposing of existing therapies, to address the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency. The Office of New Drugs (OND) within CDER is expediting this effort, working with potential drug sponsors to rapidly move products into clinical trials, while assuring that the trials are properly designed and are appropriately safe. The below information is intended to assist sponsors as they develop novel drug therapies.

Information for Long-Term Care Facilities with Memory Care Units: CDC released new information on [Considerations for Memory Care Units in Long-term Care Facilities](#). Memory care services, designed to meet the unique needs of residents with dementia, are often provided in dedicated care units or wings of a facility. The first step in caring for people living with dementia in any setting is to understand that changes in behavior (e.g., increased agitation, confusion, sudden sadness) or worsening symptoms of dementia should be evaluated because they can be an indication of worsening stress and anxiety as well as COVID-19 or other infections.

Information on Decontaminating Food Transport Vehicles: FDA released guidance on [Returning Refrigerated Transport Vehicles and Refrigerated Storage Units to Food Uses After Using Them to Preserve Human Remains During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). FDA has been asked whether refrigerated food transport vehicles and refrigerated food storage units used for the temporary preservation of human remains during the COVID-19 pandemic subsequently can be used to transport and store human and animal food. FDA is issuing this guidance to provide information and resources related to the cleaning and disinfection of such vehicles and storage units to address food safety before they are used again to transport and store food. The recommendations in this guidance are intended to supplement existing food safety regulations and guidance.

Maintaining Availability of Alternate Care Sites: FEMA released a document on [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Alternate Care Site \(ACS\) “Warm Sites.”](#) To address immediate and projected needs from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments may, under certain conditions, be reimbursed through FEMA’s Public Assistance (PA) Program for costs associated with keeping Alternate Care Sites (ACS), including temporary and expanded medical facilities, minimally operational when COVID-19 cases diminish and the facilities are no longer in use.

Warning to Fraudulent Actors: The FDA issued a warning letter to one company that was selling fraudulent COVID-19 products, as part of the agency’s effort to protect consumers. The seller warned, [Fusion Health and Vitality LLC](#), recently offered products, including “CORE” and

“IMMUNE SHOT,” for sale in the U.S. with claims that misleadingly represented the products as safe and/or effective for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. There are currently no FDA-approved products to prevent or treat COVID-19. Consumers concerned about COVID-19 should consult with their health care provider. To date, the FDA has posted [48 COVID-19 related warning letters](#).

Reopening America

Planning for Reopening: FEMA has developed an [Exercise Starter Kit](#) with sample documents your organization can use to conduct your own planning workshop to navigate the complexities of returning to full operations during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Exercise Starter Kit includes a sample facilitator guide and conduct slides that are designed to be adapted and customized for your own needs. Suggested discussion questions for the workshop build upon reconstitution planning principles and relevant White House guidance for employers included in the Guidelines for Opening Up America Again.

Information for Specific Populations

Toolkit for Nursing Homes: CMS released a new [toolkit](#) developed to aid nursing homes, Governors, states, departments of health, and other agencies who provide oversight and assistance to these facilities, with additional resources to aid in the fight against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic within nursing homes. The toolkit builds upon previous actions taken by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which provide a wide range of tools and guidance to states, healthcare providers and others during the public health emergency. The toolkit is comprised of best practices 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.

Summary of Resources for Tribal and Urban Indian Leaders: IHS sent a [letter to Tribal and Urban Indian Leaders](#) that outlines the resources already disseminated to tribes in terms of funding as well as highlighting additional funding opportunities, testing resources and other guidance documents.

Information for Patients on Home Dialysis: CDC released information on [Special Considerations for Patients on Home Dialysis](#). Dialysis is a lifesaving therapy and patients should not miss treatments. Facilities should ensure that home dialysis patients have all the supplies they need to continue their dialysis treatments and should work with suppliers to understand if shortages are anticipated in items such as peritoneal dialysis fluid. Shortages of personal protective equipment are possible. Facilities should develop contingency plans for home dialysis patients to preserve supplies. For example, patients may need to reuse face masks during dialysis access care for several days instead of discarding after each use.

Information for Pregnant Women: CDC updated their information for [Women who are Pregnant, Breastfeeding, or Caring for Young Children](#). The site includes information on how to protect your family, information on cloth face coverings, risk of COVID-19 during pregnancy, risks to pregnancy and the baby, prenatal and postpartum care during COVID-19, vaccines

during pregnancy, delivery locations, breastfeeding if you have COVID-19, COVID-19 and children, face shields for newborns and infants, safe sleep for infants, well visits and routine vaccinations for children during the pandemic, and coping with stress.

Information for Manufacturing Workers: CDC and OSHA updated their guidance for [Manufacturing Workers and Employers](#). The guidance includes information on exposure risk among manufacturing workers and information on creating a COVID-19 assessment and control plan.

Information for Pet Owners: CDC released new information on [What to Do if Your Pet Tests Positive for COVID-19](#). We are still learning about how the virus that causes COVID-19 can affect animals. A small number of pets (cats and dogs) have been confirmed to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with a person with COVID-19. Some pets did not show any signs of illness, but those pets that did get sick all had mild disease that could be taken care of at home. None of the pets have died. Tests for COVID-19 in animals are available for most types of pets, but testing is only recommended for animals with COVID-19 symptoms and that have been exposed to a person with COVID-19.

Information on Cleaning and Disinfection of Households: CDC updated their [Interim Recommendations for U.S. Households with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). The document includes recommendations for general cleaning and specific recommendations for cleaning a household with people isolated in home care.

Research Findings

Findings from a Cluster of Cases at a Choir Practice: CDC released a report in their MMWR on [High SARS-CoV-2 Attack Rate Following Exposure at a Choir Practice — Skagit County, Washington, March 2020](#). The researchers found that following a 2.5-hour choir practice attended by 61 persons, including a symptomatic index patient, 32 confirmed and 20 probable secondary COVID-19 cases occurred (attack rate = 53.3% to 86.7%); three patients were hospitalized, and two died. Transmission was likely facilitated by close proximity (within 6 feet) during practice and augmented by the act of singing. The potential for super spreader events underscores the importance of physical distancing, including avoiding gathering in large groups, to control spread of COVID-19. Enhancing community awareness can encourage symptomatic persons and contacts of ill persons to isolate or self-quarantine to prevent ongoing transmission.

AHRQ COVID-19 Resources: AHRQ released a new [COVID-19 Resources](#) webpage. This online repository provides digital access to a broad range of AHRQ-supported resources – from tools to support practice improvement, to relevant data analyses, to new COVID-19-related research findings from AHRQ grantees. This new COVID-19 Resources webpage will help AHRQ quickly disseminate critical information that public health professionals, clinicians, and policymakers so desperately need to protect the health and well-being of the American people.