



Louisiana Department of Health Informational Bulletin 20-8

Revised April 29, 2020

Due to the COVID-19 emergency declaration, temporary changes in provider policy and managed care practices are reflected herein to respond to the emergency. All other non-COVID-19 related policy remains in effect and shall be followed.

CARES Act Provider Relief Funding

This bulletin is to inform about federal funding directly available to providers through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). This bulletin will be updated as new information is available. Signed into law on March 27, 2020, the CARES Act provides nearly \$2 trillion in emergency relief funding in support of the national response to COVID-19.

The funds from the CARES Act detailed herein do not flow through the Louisiana Department of Health; however, listed below are the various sources of available federal funding and how to access the funding or find additional information from the federal agencies administering the funds. This informational bulletin is intended as a resource to providers of consolidated information that the Department of Health has developed to assist providers in navigating requirements and updates from federal agencies as they become available. As additional information is identified on accessing the various appropriations, updates to this bulletin will be posted.

Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund

As part of the CARES Act, \$100 billion is dedicated to provider relief for hospitals and other healthcare providers on the front lines of the COVID-19 response through the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. These are payments, not loans, to healthcare providers, and will not need to be repaid. Funds will be distributed through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to support healthcare-related expenses or lost revenue attributable to COVID-19 and to ensure uninsured individuals can get testing and treatment for COVID-19.

~~Immediate Delivery of Initial \$30 billion in provider relief funds~~ \$50 Billion General Allocation

\$50 billion of the Provider Relief Fund is allocated for general distribution to Medicare facilities and providers impacted by COVID-19, based on eligible providers' 2018 net patient revenue.

HHS began distribution of the first \$30 billion in relief funding to providers on April 10, 2020, through Automated Clearing House. No application is necessary for these funds. All facilities and providers that received Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) reimbursements in 2019 are eligible for this first distribution, and distributions are **based on their share of total Medicare FFS reimbursements in 2019** (\$484 billion). For Louisiana, that means \$474,891,735 will be distributed to nearly 5,000 providers.

HHS began distribution of the remaining \$20 billion of the general distribution to providers on April 24, 2020, to augment their allocation so that the whole \$50 billion general distribution is allocated proportional to providers' share of 2018 net patient revenue.

Automated payments will be made through a partnership with UnitedHealth Group (UHG) using account information on file with UHG, UnitedHealthcare or Optum Bank, or through reimbursements from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Providers who normally receive paper checks for CMS reimbursements will also receive paper checks for this payment. Those are expected to arrive within the next few weeks. Please note that if providers ceased operation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are still eligible to receive funds.

As a condition to receiving these funds, providers must agree not to seek collection of out-of-pocket payments from a COVID-19 patient that are greater than what the patient would have otherwise been required to pay if the care had been provided by an in-network provider.

Providers who receive payments must also sign an [attestation](#) confirming receipt of the funds and agreeing to the HHS [terms and conditions](#) within 30 days of receiving the payment. ~~The portal for signing the attestation will be open the week of April 13, 2020, and can be found on the [HHS Provider Relief page](#).~~

The CARES Act Provider Relief Fund Payment Attestation Portal is now open and can be accessed from the [HHS Provider Relief page](#).

Targeted Distribution of Remaining CARES Act Funding

The remaining ~~\$50~~ \$70 billion is slated for targeted provider distribution. The focus will be on providers in areas particularly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, rural providers, providers of services with lower shares of reimbursement or those that predominantly serve the Medicaid population, and providers requesting reimbursement for the treatment of uninsured individuals. ~~Additional details will be provided as soon as they are available.~~

\$10 billion will be allocated for a targeted distribution to hospitals in areas that have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. To distribute that money, HHS requested the following information from hospitals:

- Medicaid Tax Identification Numbers (TIN).
- National Provider Identifier (NPI) numbers.
- Total number of Intensive Care Unit beds as of April 10, 2020.
- Total number of admissions with a positive diagnosis for COVID-19 from January 1, 2020 to April 10, 2020.

Submitters were asked to provide this information through an authentication portal established by an HHS vendor, TeleTracking. **This information was due to HHS by 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 25, 2020.**

Hospitals should have received an email from the HHS Office of the Secretary, Intergovernmental and External Affairs regarding “CARES ACT TARGETED DISTRIBUTION PORTAL OPEN.” Please be aware that submitting this data will inform the decision-making on targeted Relief Fund payments and is a prerequisite to payment, but it is not a guarantee of eligibility for any amount.

\$10 billion will be allocated for rural health clinics and hospitals, most of which operate on especially thin margins and are far less likely to be profitable than their urban counterparts. This money will be distributed as early as the week of April 27, 2020 on the basis of operating expenses, using a methodology that distributes payments proportionately to each facility and clinic.

\$400 million will be allocated for Indian Health Service facilities, distributed on the basis of operating expenses. This money will be distributed as early as the week of April 27, 2020 on the basis of operating expenses for facilities.

There are also some providers who will receive further, separate funding, including skilled nursing facilities, dentists, and providers that solely take Medicaid.

~~Additional details will be provided as soon as they are available.~~ Find more information about the CARES Act at hhs.gov/provider-relief.

Federal Reimbursement for Treatment of the Uninsured

A portion of the \$100 billion Provider Relief Fund will be used to reimburse healthcare providers, at Medicare rates, for COVID-related treatment of the uninsured. Every healthcare provider who has provided treatment for uninsured COVID-19 patients on or after February 4, 2020, can request claims reimbursement through the program and will be reimbursed at Medicare rates, subject to available funding.

Steps to receive reimbursement will involve: enrolling as a provider participant, checking patient eligibility and benefits, submitting patient information, submitting claims, and receiving payment via direct deposit. Providers can register for the program starting on April 27, 2020, and begin submitting claims in early May 2020. For more information, visit <https://www.hrsa.gov/coviduninsuredclaim>.

As a condition, providers are obligated to abstain from “balance billing” any patient for COVID-19-related treatment.

CARES Supplemental Funding for Health Centers

As part of the CARES Act, \$1.3 billion is being provided through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to Health Center Program recipients. This supplemental funding provides one-time support to health centers for the detection of coronavirus and/or the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of COVID-19, including maintaining or increasing health center capacity and staffing levels during a coronavirus-related public health emergency in FY 2020.

This funding is for health centers who are funded by HRSA. To expedite distribution of this critical funding, HRSA has made funds immediately available but will collect budget and activities/costs to be supported by the funding after receipt of the funds. Recipients will receive a CARES notice of award, which includes a reporting requirement to submit information regarding CARES funding activities and budget. All replies to this CARES Reporting Requirement must be submitted through the [HRSA Electronic Handbooks \(EHBs\)](#) by 10:59 p.m. on May 8, 2020.

More information on Supplemental Funding for Health Centers is available [here](#).

Other Funding Opportunities Available

The CARES Act has reauthorized the following HRSA grant programs through FY 2025 and appropriated additional money to these programs:

- Telehealth and Telemedicine Grant Program (\$29 million per fiscal year).
- Rural Health Quality Improvement Grant Program (\$79.5 million per fiscal year).

To see all grant funding opportunities from HRSA and to apply, visit <https://www.hrsa.gov/grants/find-funding>.

Expansion of the Accelerated and Advance Payments Program

As part of the CARES Act, CMS expanded its current Accelerated and Advance Payment Program to increase cash flow to a broader group of Medicare Part A providers and Part B suppliers. On April 26, 2020, CMS announced plans to reevaluate the amounts paid under the program as well as the intent to suspend the AAP program to Part B suppliers and cease accepting new applications to the program.

An accelerated/advance payment is a payment intended to provide necessary funds when there is a disruption in claims submission and/or claims processing. The planned reevaluation of all pending and new applications for accelerated payments comes in light of historical direct payments made available through the Department of Health & Human Services' (HHS) Provider Relief Fund.

CMS has extended the repayment of these accelerated/advance payments to begin 120 days after the date of issuance of the payment.

Please note that CMS announced on April 26, 2020, that it is reevaluating amount paid under the program and suspending its Advance Payment Program to Part B suppliers effective immediately. This decision was made in light of released payments under the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund and an additional \$175 billion appropriation in provider relief payments.

Refer to the [CMS fact sheet](#) for full details on eligibility and the request process.

Paycheck Protection Program and Healthcare Enhancement Act

Last week, an additional \$75 billion in provider relief funding was allocated through the Paycheck Protection Program and Healthcare Enhancement Act. This is in addition to the \$100 billion already designated in the Provider Relief Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).