



News Flash - Flu Season Is Upon Us! Begin now to take advantage of each office visit as an opportunity to encourage your patients to get a flu shot. It's still their best defense against combating the flu this season. *(Medicare provides coverage of the flu vaccine without any out-of-pocket costs to the Medicare patient. No deductible or copayment/coinsurance applies.)* And don't forget, health care personnel can spread the highly contagious flu virus to patients. **Protect yourself. Don't Get the Flu. Don't Give the Flu. Get Your Flu Shot. Remember** - Influenza vaccine plus its administration are covered Part B benefits. Note that influenza vaccine is NOT a Part D covered drug. For information about Medicare's coverage of the influenza virus vaccine and its administration as well as related educational resources for health care professionals, please go to http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/Downloads/flu_products.pdf on the CMS website.

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Influenza Pandemic Emergency -- The Medicare Program Prepares

Note: This article was revised on December 8, 2008, to include a Web link to CR6209, which was recently issued by CMS. All other information remains the same.

Provider Types Affected

In the event of a pandemic flu, all physicians and providers who submit claims to Medicare Part C or Part D plans or to Medicare contractors (Medicare Administrative Contractors (A/B MACs), fiscal intermediaries (FIs), Durable Medical Equipment Medicare Administrative Contractors (DME MACs), carriers or Regional Home Health Intermediaries (RHHIs)) for services provided to Medicare beneficiaries

Impact on Providers

This article is informational only and is alerting providers that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has begun preparing emergency policies and procedures that may be implemented in the event of a pandemic or national emergency.

Disclaimer

This article was prepared as a service to the public and is not intended to grant rights or impose obligations. This article may contain references or links to statutes, regulations, or other policy materials. The information provided is only intended to be a general summary. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. We encourage readers to review the specific statutes, regulations and other interpretive materials for a full and accurate statement of their contents.

Background

As part of its preparedness efforts for influenza pandemic, CMS has begun developing certain emergency policies and procedures that **may** be implemented for the Medicare program in the event of a pandemic or other emergency.

Decision to implement would occur if:

1. The President declares an emergency or disaster under the National Emergencies Act or the Stafford Act; **and**
2. The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services declares – under § 319 of the Public Health Service Act – that a public health emergency exists; **and**
3. The Secretary elects to waive one or more requirements of Title XVIII of the Social Security Act (Act) pursuant to § 1135 of such Act.

In the event of a pandemic or other national emergency, CMS will issue communications to Medicare providers to specify which policies and procedures will be implemented and other relevant information.

This article includes links to policy documents that have been released by CMS. As additional policy becomes available, CMS will revise this article to include links to all available influenza pandemic policy documents.

Dedicated CMS Web Page Now Available

Providers should be aware that all relevant materials will be posted on a CMS dedicated “Pandemic Flu” web page at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Emergency/10_PandemicFlu.asp on the CMS website. That page will contain all important information providers need to know in the event of an influenza pandemic, including the policy documents discussed above.

Additional Information

Additional CMS influenza pandemic policy documents include:

- CR 6146, which can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Transmittals/downloads/R404OTN.pdf> on the CMS website;
- CR 6164, which can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Transmittals/downloads/R402OTN.pdf> on the CMS website;
- CR 6174, which can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Transmittals/downloads/R403OTN.pdf> on the CMS website; and

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- CR 6209, which is available at <http://cms.hhs.gov/Transmittals/downloads/R4110TN.pdf> on the CMS website.

If you have questions, please contact your Medicare FI, A/B MAC, DME MAC, carrier or RHHI at their toll-free number, which may be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/CallCenterTollNumDirectory.zip> on the CMS website.

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