Dear Colleagues:

The Administration continues to place its full weight and resources behind the response to COVID-19. FEMA now leads federal operations on behalf of the White House Coronavirus Task Force which oversees the whole-of-government response to the pandemic. As part of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, HHS will continue to provide their subject matter expertise as the nation's pre-eminent public health responders.

Because there are so many updates coming out daily from across the divisions at HHS --FDA, CDC, CMS, ASPR, and others – I want to help you and your teams track what's issued. While my emails will not be a comprehensive list, it will certainly include important items for you to review relative to your industry.

Today's information and guidance includes:

Clear Recommendations: Who Should Get Tested?
Today, HHS provided recommendations for prioritizing COVID-19 testing for individuals. Given that we are still ramping of testing availability in the private sector, this uniform guidance is particularly important for states and private labs.

There are three categories for States and clinical laboratories to utilize as they develop strategies to prioritize COVID-19 testing in their communities:
Priority 1 Testing for COVID-19

- Hospitalized patients
- Healthcare facility workers with symptoms

Priority 2 Testing for COVID-19

- Patients in long-term care facilities with symptoms
- Patients over age 65 years with symptoms
- Patients with underlying conditions with symptoms
- First responders with symptoms

Priority 3 Testing for COVID-19

- Critical infrastructure workers with symptoms
- Individuals who do not meet any of the above categories with symptoms
- Healthcare facility workers and first responders
- Individuals with mild symptoms in communities experiencing high numbers of COVID-19 hospitalizations

Non-Priority

- Individuals without symptoms

Attached is a graphic with some additional details about the three categories and why we must prioritize these populations.

No Hoarding, Price Gouging, or Peddling of Fraudulent Products President Trump signed an Executive Order to prevent the hoarding and price gouging of critical supplies needed to combat the coronavirus. This action will help ensure that hospitals, first-responders, and doctors receive sufficient supplies of critical medical equipment and the Department of Justice will prosecute entities that violate this order.

What Types of Ventilators Can be Used to Expand Supply? The FDA issued guidance to expand the availability of ventilators as well as other respiratory devices and their accessories during this pandemic. Wherever possible, health care facilities should use FDA-cleared conventional/standard full featured ventilators when necessary to support patients with respiratory failure. However, to expand availability, FDA will not object to limited modifications to the *indications, claims, functionality, or to the hardware, software, or materials of FDA-cleared devices used* to support patients with respiratory failure or respiratory insufficiency. This policy applies only during the public health emergency.

How to Avoid Rumors and Fraudulent Products?: FEMA has released a website, FEMA Rumor Control, that lists common rumors and accurate information, while FDA also issued a notice warning consumers that there is not presently an approved home test kit.

How Can States Apply for COVID-19 Medicaid Waivers? The agency has made it easier for states to receive federal waivers and implement flexibilities in their Medicaid program by creating four checklists that together will make up a comprehensive Medicaid COVID-19 federal authority checklist. The tools include information on how to apply for an 1115 Waiver Opportunity and Application Checklist, 1135 Waiver Checklist, 1915(c) Appendix K Template, Medicaid Disaster State Plan Template.

How to Report COVID-19 Cases? CDC released information for state health departments on how to report COVID-19 cases to better track the impact of the outbreak and public health response.

Flexibility for Deadlines and Exceptions for Medicare Quality Reporting Requirements CMS announced it is providing relief for clinicians, providers, hospitals and facilities by granting exceptions from reporting requirements and extensions for clinicians and providers participating in Medicare quality reporting programs with respect to upcoming measure reporting and data submission for those programs. The new deadlines and exceptions for reporting can be found here.

How has Nursing Home Inspection Guidance Changed? CMS released the findings from their inspection of Kirkland Nursing Home in Washington. As a result, nursing home guidance has changed and CMS has a new inspection process that will focus only on complaint inspections, targeted infection control inspections, and self-assessments.

What is the Latest Information for Individuals, Especially Those At-Risk and Older Individuals? CDC released a self-checker that helps users make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care. This system is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of COVID-19 or other diseases but can advise on next steps. CDC has updated their webpage that identifies the high risk populations including adults older than 65, residents of nursing homes or long-term care facilities, individuals with high risk conditions (asthma, heart disease or immunocompromised individuals), and monitoring for people who are pregnant. CDC has also released additional information for older adults as well. Additional guidance was released for local and state health departments, homelessness service systems, housing authorities,

healthcare facilities and others on responding to COVID-19 among people [experiencing unsheltered homelessness](#).

What is the Latest Information for Seniors' Facilities? CDC updated their guidance and information for [retirement communities and independent living facilities](#) to plan, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19 as well as [how to prevent the spread](#) of COVID-19 in facilities. This webpage provides information on how to [disinfect your facility](#) if someone is sick. This webpage provides guidance to personnel at [blood and plasma collection facilities](#), a key support entity in the healthcare delivery system.

A Call for Hospitals to Delay Non-Essential Procedures: The Surgeon General published an [op-ed](#) in USA Today to encourage hospitals to cancel or delay non-essential planned medical and dental procedures to conserve resources for COVID-19 response.

What Is the Latest Information for Healthcare Professionals? CDC updated their frequently asked questions for [healthcare professionals](#) to include more information for pregnant healthcare workers. New information was released for clinicians on [therapeutic options](#) for COVID-19 patients that provides information on the current drugs being studied to treat the virus.

What is the Latest Information for Laboratories: CDC has updated their information for [laboratories](#) webpage with additional guidance, resources and FAQs.

Don't hesitate to call or email if you have questions. Gary Beck is our Director of External Affairs (gary.beck@hhs.gov) and our team is here to serve.

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