



SPECIAL EDITION: An Informational Bulletin Brought To You By Polaris Group

CMS Issues SNF Waivers for COVID-19 Outbreak

On March 14, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued waivers to assist Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) in addressing the National outbreak of COVID-19. **CMS is waiving both the 3-Day Stay and Spell of Illness requirements.**

The Secretary of the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency (PHE) in the entire United States on January 31, 2020. On March 13, 2020 the Secretary authorized waivers and modifications under Section 1135 of the Social Security Act (the Act), **retroactive to March 1, 2020.**

CMS is issuing blanket waivers consistent with those issued for past public health emergency (PHE) declarations.

Per the CMS Medicare Learning Network (MLN) published on March 16, 2020, you do not need to apply for the following approved SNF blanket waivers:

- This waiver of the requirement for a 3-day prior hospitalization for coverage of a SNF stay provides temporary emergency coverage of SNF services without a qualifying hospital stay, for those people who are evacuated, transferred, or otherwise dislocated as a result of the effect of disaster or emergency.
- In addition, for certain beneficiaries who recently exhausted their SNF benefits, it authorizes renewed SNF coverage without first having to start a new benefit period (Blanket waiver for all impacted facilities).
- This waiver provides relief to SNFs on the timeframe requirements for Minimum Data Set (MDS) assessments and transmission (Blanket waiver for all impacted facilities).

SNF Key points for the 1135 Waiver:

- It is a blanket waiver, meaning it covers the entire United States.
- It is effective retroactively to March 1, 2020.
- Note that it relates to “affected areas” and does not necessarily mean that it is a blanket *for all new admissions*.
- What is being waived includes:
 - The 3-day Qualifying Stay in the Acute Care Hospital.
 - The 60 day “Well Period” for a new benefit Period.

- All other Medicare requirements for coverage have not changed and must still be met including medical necessity and a documented daily skilled service, Physician Certification and Re-Certification, Physicians Orders, Physician Approved Plan of Care, etc.
- If you have a potential admission that meets the waiver requirements, please consider the following:
 - Include physician and discharge planner’s documentation in the clinical record, which outlines and supports the need for applying the waiver of the qualifying stay for this admission.
 - Use Condition Code “DR” for “Disaster Relief” on the Medicare Part A Claim.
 - The **1135 Waiver guidance** (attached) also suggests that providers notify your State Survey Agency and CMS Regional Office if you are operating under these waivers/modifications to ensure proper payments.
- In addition, Attached is the CMS MLN, which discusses the waiver, and proper billing codes, dated March 16, 2020.

To read the CMS MLN and COVID-19 Emergency Declaration: https://www.polaris-group.com/news_releases.asp

ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have provided official diagnosis coding guidance for health care encounters and deaths related to the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The ICD-10-CM codes provided in the CDC document are intended to provide information on the coding of encounters related to coronavirus. Other codes for conditions unrelated to coronavirus may be required to fully code these scenarios in accordance with the *ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting*. A hyphen is used at the end of a code to indicate that additional characters are required.

To read the CDC ICD-10 document: https://www.polaris-group.com/news_releases.asp



CMS Guidance

March 4th - CMS Quality, Safety and Oversight (QSO) Memos issued

- Suspension of Survey Activities
- Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in nursing homes.
- Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): FAQ and Consideration for Patient Triage, Placement and Hospital Discharge

March 10th - CMS QSO Memo

- Guidance for use of Certain Industrial Respirators by Health Care Personnel

March 12th - CMS FAQ

- FAQs on Essential Health Benefit Coverage and the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 13th - President Trump declares a National Emergency

March 13th - CMS QSO REVISED

- Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in nursing homes. REVISED

March 13th - The Secretary of the Department of Health authorized waivers under the Social Security Act

- Waiver for 3-day hospital stay
- Waiver for spell of illness

March 13th - CMS Memo

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Survey Suspension

March 16th - CMS MLN

- Medicare Fee-for-Service Response to Public Health Emergency on the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

To read the CMS documents related to COVID-19: https://www.polaris-group.com/news_releases.asp

Additional CDC COVID-19

Resources Preparing for COVID-19: Long-term Care Facilities, Nursing Homes

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>

Symptoms and Testing for COVID-19

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/index.html>

2020 WEBINAR TRAININGS

Polaris Group is pleased to offer the following CEU approved live Webinars

Prime Webinars

1 Annual Fee = Unlimited Live Webinar Access

Purchase our Prime Webinar Program for unlimited access to our live webinars which offer multiple topics every month.

<https://store.polaris-group.com/PrimeWebunlimitedlive.aspx>

MDS Coding Accuracy for PDPM Training

MDS Coding Accuracy for PDPM

4/1

Interrupted Stay Training

Interrupted Stay Policy - Deep Dive

4/6

SNF No Pay & Benefits Exhaust Training

SNF No Pay & Benefits Exhaust

4/7

UB-04 Review Training

UB-04 Review

4/8

Phase 3 Rules Training

Phase 3 Rules De-Mystified

4/9

Diagnosis Coding Training

Diagnosis Coding & Mapping - In Depth Review

4/15

NTA Qualifiers Training *New Hot Topic

NTA Qualifiers - Deep Dive

4/29

Please join us!

For further information, please contact the Webinar

Department at: 800-275-6252 ext. 250

or register online at: www.polaris-group.com



2020 LTC Dates

Comprehensive 3-day training workshops to implement a compliant and successful Medicare program

PDPM Skill Building

Jul 21-23 St. Louis, MO

Oct 20-22 Los Angeles, CA

Comprehensive Billing & Compliance

May 19-21 Las Vegas, NV

Aug 18-20 Atlanta, GA

Nov 17-19 Tampa, FL



Recruiting Services for Long Term Care

Our recruiting team can assist you in filling your open leadership positions.

We offer recruiting services for:

- MDS Coordinators
- Directors of Nursing
- Nursing Home Administrators
- Assisted Living Administrators
- Business Office Managers/Billers
- Regional Nurse Consultant
- Regional Quality Assurance R.N.s
- Regional Directors of Operations

No risk pricing. If we don't fill your position, there are no fees.

Interim Staffing services also available. 800-275-6252 x. 330

www.polaris-group.com/recruitment.asp

Contributors:

Debora Glatfelter, RN, RAC-CT
Victor Kintz, MBA, CHC, LNHA, RAC-CT, CCA
Marty Pachciarz, RN, RAC-CT
Cynthia Wilkins, RN, MSN, LNHA
Wendy Erickson, BSN, RN, RAC-CT, CCA

Editor:

Chuck Cave, BS, CHC

Production Manager:

Mica Meadows

POLARIS PULSE is an informational newsletter distributed to POLARIS GROUP clients. For further information regarding services or information contained in this publication, please contact POLARIS GROUP corporate headquarters at 800-275-6252.