

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Physician Notes: Feds Mandate COVID Vaccines for Medicare-Certified Facilities

In an effort to curtail the Delta variant and reduce COVID spread, the feds have introduced a new comprehensive vaccination plan - and healthcare workers are among those impacted by the mandates. Read on for the specifics.

First: In August, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a staff vaccination requirement for more than 15,000 Medicare and Medicaid-participating nursing homes, citing statistics that showed higher staff vaccination rates correlate to fewer residents contracting the virus.

Now: On Sept. 9, the White House announced another round of COVID-19 vaccination mandates in its "Path Out of the Pandemic" action plan. "The **Biden-Harris** Administration will require COVID-19 vaccination of staff within all Medicare and Medicaid-certified facilities to protect both them and patients from the virus and its more contagious Delta variant," CMS says in the release. "Facilities across the country should make efforts now to get health care staff vaccinated to make sure they are in compliance when the rule takes effect."



Under this latest decree, CMS is expanding its emergency regulations to include "hospitals, dialysis facilities, ambulatory surgical settings, and home health agencies, among others," and making the vaccination requirement "a condition for participating in the Medicare and Medicaid programs," an agency release says.

"As the Delta variant continues to spread, we know the best defense against it lies with the COVID-19 vaccine," says CMS Administrator **Chiquita Brooks-LaSure** in a release. "Data show that the higher the level of vaccination rates among providers and staff, the lower the infection rate is among patients who are dependent upon them for care."

Heads up: As of press time, CMS had yet to offer an implementation timeline or insight on how providers should deal with the costs associated with employee mandates. The agency also hasn't mentioned how it intends to enforce the requirement in regard to Medicare CoPs, but according to the release, an interim final rule is expected sometime in October to explain the logistics.

See the White House plan at www.whitehouse.gov/covidplan and review the CMS release at www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/biden-harris-administration-expand-vaccination-requirements-health-care-settings.