



*Celebrating our caregivers' excellence... Thank you for all you do!*

Visit our COVID-19 Page  
Here

**Dear Member:**

### Summary of Today's CDC Medical Director/Clinician Call

#### COVID-19 by the Numbers

- Deaths: 519
- Total cases: 34,262
- Confirmed cases: 26,034
- Probable cases: 6,228
- Cumulative positivity rate: 2.91%
- 14-day positivity rate: 5.6%
- Currently hospitalized: 191
- Patients in intensive care: 68
- Patients on ventilators: 27

#### Variant Strain

- The variant strain of COVID-19 has not yet been identified in Maine, however, the state continues to have samples tested by Jackson Labs. Maine CDC suggests that if you have concern about whether your facility is experiencing a variant infection while in an outbreak, please talk with your assigned field epidemiologist.

#### Vaccination

- Vaccination in long term care through the national partnership program is ongoing. Most Maine nursing homes will have their first clinic completed by next week, with some already having had their second. Uptake rates among residents continue to be high at 90-95%, while staff rates are around 60%.
- Maine CDC has not heard of any 2<sup>nd</sup> dose shortages.
- It is recommended that the brand of both vaccine doses be the same. If your first vaccine was Pfizer, the second one should be Pfizer; the same goes for Moderna.
- If someone receives the first dose and then gets COVID-19, the second dose can be delivered once the isolation period is over and symptoms resolved. There is no need to start the entire process over.
- The US CDC will be coming out with new post-vaccination guidance soon but for now, CDC guidelines around exposure, quarantine and return to work remain the same.
- At this time, residents of independent living communities, whether HUD subsidized or CCRC, will need to access vaccine through public clinics. This is still in discussion at the State and may change as things develop. Visit the state's website on COVID vaccines for a list of vaccination sites offering appts: <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines>.
- Important reminder to be accurate on vaccine orders in LTC so as to not waste. OADS suggests placing order with CVS or Walgreens based on the number of consents received.
- There is a process for any facility that is in need of a pharmacy partner. To inquire about the availability of local partners as alternative to CVS/Walgreens, please email OADS directly - [OADS@maine.gov](mailto:OADS@maine.gov). There does seem to be an increase in private pharmacy partners each week.
- State hopes to have information on what vaccination options may be available for new admissions and staff once the LTC Pharmacy Partnership program is over.

#### Testing

- OADS reports that it is working on updating testing guidance in the next week or so. This is a follow up to Licensing's email that directed nursing homes to follow federal CMS testing frequency requirements unless unable to do so based on supplies, turnaround time, etc. Providers should be sure to document barriers to meeting the CMS guidelines.

#### HHS Opens PRF Reporting Portal for Registration

The Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) launched the [Provider Relief Fund \(PRF\) Reporting Portal](#). The portal is only open for providers to set up user accounts and register to submit reports. In the updated PRF Reporting requirements, HHS indicates reporting is delayed

until further notice. No date is provided in the [PRF Reporting FAQs](#). Highlights from the Reporting FAQs include:

- Nursing Home Infection Control Reporting – While reporting guidance has not yet been released, providers who received these allocations must register;
- Providers may not use their Optum account information, such as Optum ID, to register;
- HHS has not set a deadline to register;
- Providers submitting multiple reports for multiple subsidiaries must set up unique reporting registrations for each. Conversely, if a provider with multiple subsidiaries is submitting a single report, only one registration is needed;
- Parent companies reporting on multiple TINs must include all TINs when registering to report; and
- Any updates to registration information only can be made when the reporting web portal goes live.

You may view the PRF Reporting and Audit webpage with reporting guidance [here](#).

AHCA/NCAL has provided a summary of changes to the Post-Payment Notice of PRF Reporting Requirements [here](#). To access AHCA/NCAL's webinar on reporting requirements and general information, click [here](#). Please note that this webinar does not reflect the 1/15 reporting updates.

### **Share Your Vaccination Tips and Success Stories with MHCA**

If you have had a successful vaccination clinic and would like to share your positive experience or tips, please email [aellis@mehca.org](mailto:aellis@mehca.org). MHCA will collect your ideas and thoughts to share with members in future briefings and on social media as appropriate. Thank you!

### **MaineMDA Offers Telemedicine Support During COVID-19 Outbreaks**

Given the increasing number of nursing homes and assisted living facilities experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks, the Maine Medical Directors Association is offering telemedicine support to providers. Recognizing the strain on medical services and coverage during an outbreak, MaineMDA is offering this service specifically to facilities in outbreak status. The physician consultation will be provided on a volunteer basis, however, the facility component would be a nurse liaison to update on cases and take orders and facilitate implementation of care plans. It is anticipated that insurance can be billed for telemedicine visits for the facility portion. If you are in an outbreak situation and would like more information on this service, please contact Dr. Jabbar Fazeli at [jfazeli@mainegeriatrics.com](mailto:jfazeli@mainegeriatrics.com). MaineMDA will recruit medical volunteers based on the level of need identified.

### **Updated CDC Guidance on Antigen Testing in Long Term Care Facilities**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated its guidance on [antigen testing in long term care facilities](#). Importantly, the CDC modified the [algorithm on interpreting antigen tests](#) to include:

When to perform confirmatory PCR tests:

- Asymptomatic people who test antigen positive should have a confirmatory test performed.
- Symptomatic people who test antigen negative should have a confirmatory test performed.
- What to do with discordant results.
- Added new variables to the decision-making process (outbreak, close contact or no outbreak).
- Provided additional guidance on infection control measures to take in response to test results.

Members should adhere to this new algorithm when using antigen tests.

Sincerely,

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