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Dear Member:

Congress Passes \$900 Billion Stimulus Package

Congress passed a [\\$900 billion stimulus package](#) that is a mixed bag for the long term care sector. There is one disappointment, but there are some favorable provisions that will help as we enter 2021.

The disappointment is that the bill added only \$3 billion to the Provider Relief Fund. The rationale appears to be that there is still \$20 billion left in it from prior stimulus bills and that the new Congress will look at adding additional dollars in early 2021.

On the positive side, the bill does the following:

- It extends the sequester relief for three more months. This keeps our Medicare rates 2% higher until the end of March of 2021.
- It provides a much broader definition of revenue and expenses for purposes of attesting for Provider Relief Funds. This is a major relief for many operators.
- It prevents some Part B Medicare cuts that otherwise would have taken place.
- It allows providers to deduct the expenses that PPP loans paid for, even if the SBA forgives the PPP loan. This is a major tax advantage.
- It allows HUD to offer some more favorable conditions on existing HUD loans.

A longer summary of the bill is available [here](#).

Summary of Today's CDC Medical Director/Clinician Call

- Maine CDC is seeing a continued increase in outbreaks in LTC and group homes.
- This has been affecting many of our homes and congregate living settings.
- There was an increase of 459 cases today.
- Case Investigations by CDC are being prioritized for those individuals under 18 or over 60. The investigations for all positives are still being conducted; however, the individuals within those ages are prioritized.
- There are 185 current hospitalizations.
- The Maine positivity rate is currently 4.25% with the national average at 10-11%.
- The DHHS/CDC guidance regarding the use of BinaxNOW antibody testing has changed to remove the recommendation for PCR testing confirm a positive BinaxNOW Antigen test in a symptomatic individual.

Vaccination Clinics for Multilevel homes:

- There were mixed responses regarding whether or not the clinics through the pharmacy partners would include the assisted living residents/staff during the initial clinic. The representatives on the call will follow up with CDC Immunizations to determine but the belief was that if they are 'under the same roof' they will be included.

Visitation Guidance:

- According to Bill Montejo, Maine DHHS Licensing, visitation guidance will not change even once a facility has completed both doses of vaccine. DHHS does anticipate additional guidance from CMS but until then the guidance stays the same.

Is a doctor's order needed for COVID-19 vaccination?

- No, the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act (PREP Act) authorizes State-licensed pharmacists to order and administer, and State-licensed

or registered pharmacy interns acting under the supervision of the qualified pharmacist to administer, COVID-19 vaccinations that have been authorized or licensed by the FDA.

Maine CDC Releases Exposure Investigation Tutorial

Maine CDC has recently created a tutorial on how to use the MeCDC “COVID-19 Exposure Investigation Checklist”. Both the checklist and the tutorial can be found [here](#). Note: this checklist is applicable to both Hospitals and Long-Term care (even though it is posted on a long-term care site).

CDC Releases Holiday Tips for Safe Celebrations

According to the federal CDC, the safest way to celebrate winter holidays is at home with the people who live with you. Travel and gatherings with family and friends who do not live with you can increase your chances of getting or spreading COVID-19 or the flu. They have released [FAQs and Fact Sheets](#) that can be shared with residents, families and staff members in your facilities to reduce the potential risk of spread during these time. Happy Holidays from all of us at MHCA.

State Holds Twice Weekly Vaccine Information Calls

This is a reminder that the State is offering a series of short (30min) “COVID-19 Vaccine Info Sessions” **twice/week** for the next several months at the following times:

- **Tuesdays at 7:30 - 8AM**
- **Fridays at 12N – 12:30PM**

The sessions will offer brief didactic sessions on the vaccine development & approval process, followed by time for questions & discussions. Clinicians are welcome to attend one or multiple sessions. The content of the calls will be basically the same both days of the week, however, the Q&A will change, which will drive further unique discussion each day. The sessions will be held via Zoom using the following log-in and/or call-in info for all sessions:

Zoom/web: <https://zoom.us/j/6218434986>
Meeting ID: 621 843 4986
Passcode: 338847

AHCA Offers Free COVID-19 Educational Video for Families

AHCA has created a free resource for facilities to share with their residents’ families who are struggling to understand the challenges of Coping with COVID. The YouTube video is about 25 minutes long and covers a gamut of information that is directly aimed at the families and how they can support their loved ones, their community, and the facility. Facilities can share this YouTube video with families so that they can understand the grief and trauma that is associated with COVID and the challenges of keeping the virus from spreading. More information can be found on our website which is located here: <https://educate.ahcancal.org/CopingWithCovid>.

ICYMI: CDC COVID-19 Preparedness Call Recording Now Available

Last week’s CDC COVID-19 preparedness call recording is now available on the CDC’s website:

[COVID-19 Preparedness Briefing for Congregate Living Facilities \(12/14/2020\)](#)

Ed Note:

We will not produce an *MHCA COVID-19 Briefing* on Christmas Eve. The next *Briefing* will be sent on Tuesday, December 29th. As always, MHCA will email members if anything urgent arises in between issues.

Thank you for all you do to care for your residents and staff.

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