



CMS announces actions to address the spread of COVID-19

March 5, 2020

On March 4, 2020, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced several actions aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus). In short, CMS:

- [Suspended non-emergency inspections](#). State Survey Agencies and Accrediting Organizations will focus on only the most serious health and safety threats such as infectious disease and serious safety events such as allegations of abuse. This means that health care facilities awaiting routine surveys, such as those for initial certification, may see significant delay. On March 10, 2020, CMS issued [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) to clarify its guidance.
- [Provided hospitals with guidance related to COVID-19 screening and optimizing patient placement](#). CMS provided guidance for screening visitors and patients for COVID-19 and for monitoring health care facility staff. CMS noted that its guidance identifies infection control as an example of when restrictions may be placed on visitation rights, but hospitals should make sure written policies and procedures set forth those limitations. Additionally, CMS recommended infection prevention and control practices and indicated that some COVID-19 patients may not require hospitalization and can be managed at home if they are able to comply with monitoring requests.
- [Provided screening and transfer guidance to nursing homes](#). CMS provided guidelines for screening visitors and health care staff for COVID-19 as well as direction for nursing homes transferring or accepting a resident with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Nursing homes with residents suspected of having COVID-19 infection should contact their local health department. CMS noted that nursing homes can accept a patient diagnosed with COVID-19 as long as the nursing home can follow CDC guidance for transmission-based precautions.

Bricker & Eckler's health care attorneys will continue to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak and publish resources for our clients navigating its impact on their operations.

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