

CMS ENCOURAGES PHYSICIANS TO REVIEW MIPS ADVANCING CARE INFORMATION RESOURCES

The deadline to submit 2017 data for Medicare's Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) is extended to 2pm PDT, April 3. As you prepare to submit your 2017 MIPS data, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) encourages you to review its 2017 Advancing Care Information resources.

The Advancing Care Information performance category promotes patient engagement and electronic exchange of information using certified electronic health record (EHR) technology. This performance category replaces the Medicare EHR Incentive Program for eligible professionals, also known as meaningful use.

Calendar year 2018 is the last year you can receive a downward payment adjustment under the Medicare EHR Incentive Program for EPs. Your 2017 participation in MIPS will determine if you earn a positive, negative, or neutral adjustment to your Medicare Part B payments in 2019.

ACI portion of MIPS counts for 30% of total score and must be reported by each individual practice (not your ACO). For step-by-step instructions on how to submit MIPS data, check out CMA's video and fact sheet, or go to cms.gov

\$1.3 TRILLION FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL LOADED WITH NEW HEALTH CARE SPENDING

Last Friday, President Trump signed a massive \$1.3 trillion federal spending bill—the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. It is loaded with new spending for health care programs that were supported by the California Medical Association (CMA). Unfortunately, it did not include two bills that CMA was strongly promoting – the Affordable Care Act (ACA) market stabilization bill and a permanent solution for the nearly 700,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program recipients.

A brief summary of the federal spending bill is below.

Bipartisan ACA Market

Stabilization: CMA, the American Medical Association (AMA) and other physician groups strongly advocated to include the bipartisan ACA market stabilization bill in the omnibus spending package. Unfortunately, lawmakers could not reach a compromise. It would have funded for two-years the cost-sharing assistance that helps low-income families afford copayments and deductibles that President Trump eliminated in 2017. It would have also provided state waiver flexibility and reinsurance funding to cover high-cost, catastrophic cases. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill would have reduced premiums by 20 percent in 2020. A compromise could not be reached because the Freedom Caucus insisted on placing abortion restrictions on the ACA plans in exchange for the two-year ACA stabilization bill.

Opioids: The bill includes nearly \$4 billion in new funding for prevention, treatment and law enforcement to address the opioid crisis. With the \$6 billion in the Budget Act enacted by Congress in February, new 2018-2019 opioid funding totals \$10 billion. The breakdown is as follows:

- \$500 million for National Institutes of Health research on opioid addiction, development of opioid alternatives, pain management and addiction treatment.
- \$27 million for Mental and Behavioral Health Education Training to recruit and train professionals in psychiatry, psychology, social work, marriage and family therapy, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and other areas.
- \$105 million for the National Health Service Corps to expand access to opioid and substance use disorder treatment in rural and underserved areas.

- \$100 million for a new Rural Communities Opioids Response Program to support prevention and treatment of substance use disorder in 220 counties and other rural communities identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as being at high risk.
- \$350 million (for a total of \$475 million) to support CDC's Opioid Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention activities. \$10 million must be used to conduct a nationwide opioid education campaign to increase understanding of the epidemic and to increase prevention activities. Also requires CDC to promote the use of prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP) and expand efforts to enhance the utility of state PDMPs to make them more interconnected, in real-time, and usable for public health surveillance and clinical decision making. CMA aggressively advocated for this provision to ensure that the federal government work with electronic health record (EHR) vendors to link EHRs to state PDMPs.
- \$1 billion in new funding for State Opioid Response Grants
- \$94 million for law enforcement and grants to combat opioid, heroin and other drug trafficking.
- \$94 million to strengthen Food and Drug Administration (FDA) presence at international mail facilities and to fund equipment and technology to increase FDA capacity to inspect more incoming packages to detect illicit fentanyl.

Gun Violence: The bill included \$2.3 billion in funding associated with the STOP School Violence Act of 2018 to cover mental health services, security training and school safety programs to prevent gun violence. It also fully funds the FBI National Instant Criminal Background Check System. While CDC research promoting gun control is still prohibited, the Omnibus spending bill included a general clarification that there are no restrictions on general

research related to gun violence. However, there was no funding appropriated for such research. Finally, it increased funding for the National Violent Death Reporting System to all 50 states to assist researchers and lawmakers.

CMA continues to support California Senator Dianne Feinstein's legislation that would ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, as well as efforts to require more extensive background checks and waiting periods.

Mental Health Programs: Provides more than \$2.3 billion in new funding for various mental health programs.

Drug-Related Provisions: Physicians will continue to receive enhanced payments for the first few years a drug/biological is on the market to assist in the costs of adopting new drugs and technology.

Graduate Medical Education: The Children's Hospitals graduate medical education program received a \$15 million funding increase, for a total of \$315 million. Congress also provided an additional \$15 million for the Rural Residency Program to expand the number of rural residency training programs with a focus on developing programs that can be self-sustainable.

Other Notable Health Care

Spending Increases: The National Institutes of Health received significant increase in funding to support research into Alzheimer's disease, the Brain Initiative, the universal flu vaccine and antibiotic-resistance efforts. The CDC also received additional funding for diabetes programs.

HEALTH NET ANNOUNCES SIGNIFICANT POLICY CHANGES TO MEDICARE ADVANTAGE AND MEDICAL MANAGED CARE PRODUCT LINES

Health Net recently announced several new payment policies for its Medicare and Medi-Cal lines of business, effective May 16, 2018. The California Medical Association (CMA) is very concerned with the adverse impact these policies would have on physician practices. The new policies would:

- Reduce reimbursement of evaluation and management (E&M) services when billed with modifier

25 under the following circumstances:

- When a minor surgical procedure code is reported on the same day as an E/M code by the same physician, payment for the E/M code will be reduced by 50 percent.
- When a preventative/wellness exam and a problem-oriented E/M are billed during the same encounter, payment for the problem-oriented E/M code will be reduced by 50 percent.
- Reduce reimbursement for level 4 (CPT 99284) and level 5 (CPT 99285) emergency room services that are billed with what Health Net deems a non-emergent diagnosis to a level 3 (CPT 99283) contracted rate.
- No longer honor or reimburse for consultation codes (99241-99255), however consultation codes billed will be crosswalked to the appropriate E&M level code for reimbursement.

Health Net's proposed policy change on modifier -25 follows Anthem Blue Cross' attempt to implement a similar policy, however, due to overwhelming opposition from organized medicine, Anthem rescinded the policy before it was implemented.

The Health Net Update states the policy changes "...follow the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) National Correct Coding Initiative guidelines and will impact providers who are coding outside of fair and appropriate use." However, only one of the four changes actually aligns with CMS guidelines.

CMA has raised concerns with Health Net about these new policies and the payor has committed to engage with CMA on these issues prior to the implementation date in May. Physicians are urged to thoroughly review and assess the impact any proposed modifications to their contract would have on their individual practices. To assist physicians in analyzing the modifier -25 change, CMA has developed a simple worksheet that will help calculate the net financial impact to their practice resulting from this change. The Modifier -25 financial impact worksheet is available free to CMA members.

PHYSICIANS ENCOURAGED TO WARN PATIENTS OF NEW MEDICARE SCAM

Seniors in California are being targeted by a new Medicare card phone scam. Medicare beneficiaries are getting calls from scammers telling them their new Medicare card will arrive between April and June 2018, which is true.

However, they go on to state beneficiaries must first buy a temporary card for \$5.00 to \$50.00 and provide personal information before they receive their new Medicare card. THIS IS NOT TRUE.

It is true that Medicare is issuing a newly designed Medicare card, which will contain the unique, randomly assigned Medicare Beneficiary Identification (MBI) number replacing the current Social Security-based number.

These new cards are free, and Medicare will not call patients about their new card. Cards will be mailed to the mailing addresses on file with Social Security. Patients who need to update their mailing address should go to www.ssa.gov/myaccount.

Physicians are encouraged to warn their Medicare patients of this scam. California Health Advocates has prepared tips on how seniors can protect themselves and where to report such scams. Tip sheets are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian and Farsi.

EXTENSION OF ORDER FOR INFLUENZA VACCINATION OF HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL OR MASKING DURING THE INFLUENZA SEASON.

The duration of the face mask requirement for unvaccinated healthcare personnel may be extended if Ventura County Public Health surveillance data indicate. Given the likelihood that influenza activity will remain elevated beyond March 31, 2018, the Ventura County Health Officer is extending the Order and the requirement for unvaccinated healthcare personnel to wear a mask until April 15, 2018.

Ventura County Public Health will continue to review influenza surveillance data each week and inform the Health Officer on the need for additional extensions of the Order. Updates

regarding additional extensions of the Order will be reevaluated on a weekly basis until the Health Officer declares the end of the current influenza season. Please contact Ventura County Public Health for any questions regarding this Order. (805) 981-5101

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

VCMA HIPAA Security Training

Webinar for staff and physicians. Pre-registration required.

April 11: 6-7pm

April 16: 12-1pm

Contact VCMA office to request GoToMeeting pre-registration info. Compliments of partnership with PrivaPlan.

April 17-18: CMA Legislative Day in Sacramento

meet one-on-one with our legislators. Contact marycarr@venturamedical.org to attend

April 20-22: Start Ups Ventura County, Camarillo Library

Do you have an idea to help the practice or process of medicine? VCMA will once again sponsor the 3rd Annual "Startups Ventura County". For more information visit StartupsVenturaCounty.com

CLASSIFIEDS

Free listings for VCMA members. Submit ad info to: julie@venturamedical.org

PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Simi Valley- Urgent Care opening, Full-time MD, DO or PA needed ASAP. Outpatient Urgent Care Facility. There is an opening as well to assist with coverage on an ongoing basis. The clinic is open Mon-Friday 8am-8pm and Sat/Sun 9am-5pm. There are two additional Urgent Care locations; Thousand Oaks and Newbury Park, CA. No call schedule is required. Provider will see approximately 20-35 patients per shift. This would include standard urgent care procedures (suturing), Occupational Medicine and primary care as well. We have x-ray on site. The Simi Valley location has a high volume of Occupational Medicine. This Center is looking for a Full-time MD, DO or PA as soon as possible. www.medcentersimi.com

Please contact Denise @ 805-583-5555 ex 26 or email admin@medcenterofsimivalley.com

Thousand Oaks area - seeking candidates from either academic or private practice backgrounds to consider.

- Part-time or full-time; Flexible schedule
- 100% Outpatient, Privately owned
- New 6,300 square foot office facility
- Traditional Family Medicine with an Integrative Medicine approach
- Competitive financial package
- Opportunity to become vested in the profitability of the practice

drwilkes@summithealth360.com Please reply with your specialty and location of interest, and the best number to reach you along with a few dates and times you are available to speak.

Ventura - Full Time MD or DO needed for M-F 8:00 AM to 5:00 pm at WVMC. WVMC is a designated Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), affiliated with the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC). If interested please contact Kristina Navarro @ 805-641-5611 or Kristina.navarro@ventura.org

California Correctional Health Care Services is seeking 2-3 IM/FP Primary Care Physicians. Up to \$327,540 annually plus \$50-\$60K w/On-Call - can be \$380-\$390K! Benefits include: 4-day workweek; 10 patients per day; generous paid time off; State of CA Pension that vests in 5 years; plus 401(K) and 457 retirement options – tax defer up to \$48K; and much more! Contact Danny Richardson, Hiring Analyst, at (916) 691-3155 or danny.richardson@cdcr.ca.gov. EOE.

Oncology Practice Administrator

A multi-site medical group in West Ventura County is seeking an experienced practice administrator.

The ideal candidate has excellent work ethic, is a proven effective leader, very strong in information technology, revenue cycle, efficient operations, patient-centric processes, interpersonal relations and overall business management.

Candidate must have a bachelor's degree in business, health administration or related field.

Qualified candidates may send resume to employment@venturaoncology.com.

OFFICE SPACE AVAILABLE

Camarillo - Office with two to three exam rooms to share. Part time or full

time. Affordable and flexible. Please contact (805)383-2929.

Oxnard –Ground level in professional building. Reception area, 4 exam rooms with exam tables, 1 large private office, 1 in-suite restroom and break area. New floor coverings, new furniture, computers, internet equipped and fresh paint. 1,516 sq ft, daily Sublease (1 or 2 days per week per month), \$950.00/mo. (one day per week). Contact Herb Welch at (805) 682-7801, ext. 127

Oxnard –Palms Medical Plaza. 1640 sq ft, fully furnished, networked, with 2 large 'procedure rooms', 2 story medical building, multiple work areas, in-suite restroom. All utilities and cleaning included in \$4,750 mo. Call (805)479-7680

Thousand Oaks - Sublease up to 4 days per week; 7 exam rooms in prof. bldg. Please call Lynn at (805)482-8989

Thousand Oaks - 1200 SF medical office space available immediately for sublease. Located on the campus of TOSH. Soothing reception area and two examination rooms. Patient exam rooms with fantastic mountain views. Also kitchen and physician office spaces. Call 805/379-3368 for more information and appointment to see.

Thousand Oaks - 2700 SF office with large procedure room and recovery area, and 4 exam rooms. Available Mondays and Tuesdays 8 AM to 12 noon; Wednesdays 2 to 6 PM. More info, visit www.AGImedical.com

Ventura – For Lease: 500 sq.ft. Beautiful medical office on Brent St. (805)258-2059 ext.2447 for info.

Westlake Village - Space Offered: 1-5 operatories in well maintained medical building in Westlake Village. Photos on our website at www.smilesbyaps.com. Please call (805) 279-7021

Westlake Village – Remodeled, medical office for sublease. Available up to four days a week. 818-438-5997 Brisbeee@aol.com

CMA MEMBER SERVICE HOT LINE

Unable to find a document on www.cmanet.org, have a legal or reimbursement issue?
Call 800-786-4

