



As you may have heard in the news over the weekend, the Trump administration announced on Friday that it plans to reimburse providers at Medicare rates if they treat uninsured patients for COVID-19. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said during the White House Coronavirus Task Force briefing that the funds would be pulled from the **\$100 billion allocated to hospitals** as part of the economic stimulus package.

The official announcement from the administration states “providers”; however, no further details have come out specifically indicating whether this applies to independent physician group reimbursement. Gottlieb has spoken with EDPMA as well as a Federal Health Coverage & Payment Policy expert, and they have confirmed that what while it is believed this may apply to physicians, they can’t say for certain yet. The reference regarding uninsured patients is to “providers,” so we are hopeful that it is beyond hospitals and will be extended to physicians. The \$100 billion in funds that have been allocated to hospitals can be used beyond hospitals.

Secretary Azar has stated *“The CARES Act, signed by the President, includes another \$100 billion for healthcare providers. Under the President’s direction, we will use a portion of that funding to cover providers’ costs of delivering COVID-19 care for the uninsured, sending the money to providers through the same mechanism used for testing.*

As a condition of receiving funds under this program, providers will be forbidden from balance billing the uninsured for the cost of their care. Providers will be reimbursed at Medicare rates.

We will soon have more specifics on how the rest of the \$100 billion will go to providers. We’re working to ensure that this funding is distributed in a way that is fast, fair, simple, and transparent.”

The current mechanism for paying providers/hospitals for COVID-19 testing is two-fold: For States that opt to do so, individuals are enrolled in Medicaid with a 100% FMAP. For States that do not do so, reimbursement is through the National Disaster Medical System. This may require your hospital partner to register the patients in a way that will indicate how these claims are to be billed.

In anticipation of an announcement confirming that this will pertain to physicians, Gottlieb encourages you to begin discussions with your hospital administration and registration teams to determine how they will mark these patients at the time of ED registration.

We will keep you updated on this very important news as we learn more.