

CMS Provides Financial Relief for Physician Practices

Radiation oncology practices have experienced major financial disruptions due to delays in treatment, staff reductions, and revenue cycle fluctuation, which have become a stark reality for many practices as they continue to provide patients with continuity of care as they address COVID-19. With the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Trump Administration has developed several financial tools to assist practices as they continue to deliver care to patients during the COVID-19 public health emergency. These tools are designed to provide practices with temporary cash flow during the pandemic, as well as make practices whole once a full assessment of the COVID-19 economic damage can be completed.

Accelerated and Advanced Payment Program

Accelerated and advanced Medicare [payments](#) provide emergency funding to practices based on historical payments when there is a disruption in claims submission and/or claims processing. The emergency funding is based on historical payments and is designed to provide practices with immediate assistance. The payments may be requested by all Medicare Part A and Part B providers, including physicians.

Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) will be processing the requests for accelerated or advanced payments. To qualify for accelerated or advance payments, the physician must have billed Medicare for claims within 180 days immediately prior to the date of the signature on the request form; not be in bankruptcy; not be under active medical review or program integrity investigation, and not have any outstanding delinquent Medicare overpayments. Practices are encouraged to access their [MACs website](#) to download the request form. Requests will be processed immediately, and CMS anticipates that payments will be issued within seven days of the request.

Qualified providers will be asked to request a specific amount, most will be able to request up to 100 percent of the Medicare payment amount for a 120-day (three-month) period. [PPS Exempt Cancer Hospitals](#) are eligible to request up to 100 percent of the Medicare payment amount for a six-month period.

After the issuance of the accelerated or advanced payment, practices can continue to submit and receive payment for claims. Recoupment of the accelerated or advanced payment will not take place until 120 days after the date that the accelerated or advanced payments are issued. After the end of the 120-day period, every claim submitted by the provider will be offset automatically to repay the accelerated or advanced payment. All Part A and Part B providers have 210 days from the date of the accelerated or advanced payment to repay the balance. PPS Exempt Cancer Hospitals have up to one year from the date of the accelerated payment to repay the balance.

The Accelerated and Advanced Payment Program [fact sheet](#) includes more information about the program, including contact information for each MAC.

Other CARES Act Financial Assistance Tools

In addition to the Accelerated and Advanced Payment Program, the CARES Act includes several additional tools to assist practices financially impacted by COVID-19. These tools include:

- The Public Health and Social Services Emergency fund provides \$100 billion in financial support to health care providers to support the cost of treating COVID -19 patients, as well as address lost revenue due to reductions in other services as a result of the pandemic. The eligibility criteria and the application process associated with this fund are pending.
- Small Business Administration loans, including Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), have been issued to cover payroll and overhead costs, with expanded loan-forgiveness criteria for businesses that maintain staff and achieve other criteria. These loans are available for physician practices with fewer than 500 employees.
- Sequestration payment cuts of 2% have been suspended temporarily to provide some additional financial flexibility during the outbreak.

More information about these programs can be found in [What's Happening in Washington](#).