

Weekly Federal COVID-19 Updates

The Federal government continues to take actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, working to ensure the health and wellbeing of citizens across the country. This week, numerous federal agencies have implemented new initiatives to support communities hit hard by the virus.

Department of Health and Human Services announces \$5 Million for COVID-19 Research

In an effort to monitor and improve the healthcare response to COVID-19, the Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has announced a \$5 million opportunity to fund studies focused on evaluating health care system responses to the pandemic. The opportunity can be used to fund studies focused on a wide range of health care settings as well as health care systems at local, state, and national levels.

For more information on the HHS funding opportunity, see the [AHRQ official press release](#).

For more information and resources from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, visit their website at ahrq.gov.

USDA Issues 3 Nationwide Waivers to Support Summer Meal Programs

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services has issued three nationwide waivers for the Summer Food Service Program aimed at non-congregate feeding, parent meal pickup, and allowable mealtimes. The waivers significantly increase flexibilities for summer meal sites and allow communities to more effectively feed kids while maintaining social distancing.

To learn more about these waivers, as well as the overall FNS response to COVID-19, visit their website at fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Issues Toolkit for Nursing Home Best Practices

As part of their effort to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and protect vulnerable residents of nursing homes, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services have released a new toolkit with best practices for nursing home facilities. The toolkit includes information, tips, and resources for nursing homes, Governors, states, departments of health, and other agencies that work with these facilities.

To access the full toolkit, [click here](#).

To learn more about how CMS has responded to COVID-19, [visit their website](#).

USDA Continues to Fund Rural Access to High-Speed Broadband

As telehealth, remote learning, and telecommuting become the new normal across the country, the USDA has continued to expand investments into high-speed broadband in rural areas. This week, the USDA invested over \$500,000 in Iowa and \$22.5 million in Michigan, in the latest round of investments through the ReConnect Loan and Grant program, which has disbursed over \$744 million since October 2019.

For more information on the ReConnect Loan and Grant Program, visit the program website at usda.gov/reconnect.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Approve Waivers for States and Release Toolkit for Waiver Applications

The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services have approved numerous requests from states for increased flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have now released a toolkit to assist state agencies as they apply for future waivers. The waivers cover issues including Medicaid plan flexibilities and programs for vulnerable populations, and have been crucial for state and local responses to the pandemic.

For more information on the waiver application toolkit, see the [official CMS press release](#).

To learn more about how CMS has responded to COVID-19, [visit their website](#).