

Action Checklist:

Improving the Pandemic Response to Better Support
the Home Health Aide Workforce and the People They Serve

What can the Federal Government do?

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Recognize that home health care and the home health aide workforce are an essential part of the health care system. Home health aides allow people with long-term needs to remain safely in their homes; they enable safe transitions to home health care for people recovering after a hospital stay; they relieve the burden on hospitals, nursing homes, and family – of particular importance during a pandemic

Ensure that the home health aide workforce is well-supported, financially secure, respected, and prepared so that aides can fulfill their critical role of caring for patients in their homes and home health care organizations can more easily retain this vital workforce

Communicate clearly, through well-defined communication channels, and work closely with state and local governments to coordinate information, guidelines, regulations, and funding opportunities targeted to home health care and the home health aide workforce

Engage home health care and workforce leaders alongside hospital and nursing home stakeholders to inform the national pandemic response

MAJOR ACTION ITEMS



Improve Access to and Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- ☐ Provide clear and timely guidance to state and local government and home health care organizations on preemptive stockpiling of PPE, including type, amount, and maintenance practices (e.g., monitoring expiration, restocking)
- ☐ Institute a purchasing, ordering, and distribution process that earmarks adequate PPE supplies to home health care organizations
- ☐ Reimburse or allocate resources to fund PPE procurement, distribution, and other added or unexpected costs accrued during a pandemic
- ☐ Provide clear and ongoing communication on best PPE safety practices, including the type and proper use of PPE



Promote Additional Patient and Worker Safety Practices

- ☐ Coordinate with state and local entities to codify safety protocols and establish industry standards for patients, family, and other caregivers when home health aides are in the home to better enable organizations to protect aides' safety; make adherence to safety protocols a requirement for receiving services
- ☐ Budget for the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and other federal granting organizations to invest in prevention activities and research initiatives to address infectious disease hazards to home health aides



Improve Access to Vaccination and Testing and Adherence to Guidelines

- ☐ Coordinate with state and local government to establish industry standards and mandates (i.e., uniform expectations regarding testing and vaccination requirements across the health care system, including home health care organizations, nursing homes, and hospices)
- ☐ Provide funding for vaccination and testing initiatives
- ☐ Develop and disseminate clear, consistent, and culturally sensitive information about the benefits of vaccines, testing and other preventive measures to encourage public compliance and comfort with vaccination and testing guidelines
- ☐ Expedite dissemination of such information to state and local government via clear, consistent channels of communication
- ☐ Identify and deploy authoritative, effective communicators at the federal level who can reach multiple audiences (e.g., social media, television, and radio) to promote vaccination, testing and other preventive measures



Address Financial Instability & Access to Work Issues

- ☐ Reform safety net programs and establish targeted subsidies (e.g., compensatory income, sick pay, transportation alternatives, quality childcare for essential workers, access to health care insurance) so that home health aides can continue to care for people during pandemic conditions without losing access to needed benefits
- ☐ Maintain a comprehensive, up to date inventory of emergency funding opportunities that can be easily disseminated by industry associations and readily accessed by home health care organizations of varying sizes and ensure that funds can be quickly deployed



Improve Communication & Emotional Support

- ☐ Provide funding opportunities for software developers to modify existing applications or develop new applications targeted for use by home health care organizations to facilitate electronic communication between aides, employers, and patients. Expedite funding to develop additional applications as necessary to address pandemic-related needs
- ☐ Provide funding opportunities for home health care organizations to acquire communication devices, provide workforce training and deploy technical support to improve the use of communication technology during normal and pandemic conditions
- ☐ Provide funding opportunities to conduct and disseminate rigorous, culturally sensitive research targeted to home health aides and designed to relieve mental distress exacerbated during pandemic conditions



Support Training, Recruitment & Retention of Workforce

- ☐ Allocate Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) funds more directly to home health care organizations that deliver care in underserved communities and to Medicaid recipients
- ☐ Reinstatement of the increase in FMAP funds enacted during the COVID-19 emergency and direct part of the funds to education, training, and increased pay for home health aides