

# CMS to doctors: Focus on COVID-19 fight, not data reporting burden

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**What's the news:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is pushing back data submission deadlines for the Quality Payment Program (QPP) to let physicians and other clinicians focus on fighting the COVID-19 pandemic..

"CMS' decision to offer relief from the submission demands in the QPP will be felt immediately," said AMA President Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA. "Doctors don't have much time to breathe a sigh of relief, but if they did, they would take a moment to thank CMS for this wise decision."

CMS released a chart showing the new deadlines and other QPP adjustments.

The March 31 deadline to submit 2019 performance data for the QPP Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS), for example, has been extended to April 30. MIPS-eligible physicians and other clinicians who do not submit data by April 30 will qualify for the "automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances" policy and will automatically avoid a MIPS-related penalty and, instead, receive a neutral payment adjustment for the 2021 MIPS payment year, according to the chart.

The new deadline and policy also apply to practices participating in Medicare Shared Savings Program accountable care organizations (ACOs).

Deadlines are also being adjusted for hospital-based programs, as well as separate adjustments are being made for post-acute care programs.well.

**Why it's important:** Easing the Medicare QPP reporting requirements will allow physicians to focus on patients during the public health emergency rather than being preoccupied with administrative burdens.

“In the best of times, physician practices struggle to meet all the bureaucratic demands in the Medicare program,” Dr. Harris said. “These are not the best of times.”

CMS is making data submission optional for programs with April and May 2020 data submission deadlines in order to reduce the data collection burden for those responding to the pandemic.

**What’s next:** For physician practices and ACOs, CMS said it is “evaluating options for providing relief around participation and data submission for 2020.” The agency will also continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and assess opportunities to “bring additional relief to clinicians, facilities, and their staff so they can focus on caring for patients.”

The AMA will continue to advocate on urgent administrative and legislative needs to ensure that physician practices, hospitals and health systems are viable and directly supported for preparedness and response.

Other AMA efforts include:

- | Publishing an AMA COVID-19 online resource center, Physicians Guide to COVID-19, and a COVID-19 FAQ to help physicians prepare their practices, address patient concerns, and answer physicians’ top questions.
- | Providing an overview of the coronavirus by the JAMA Network™—including epidemiology, infection control and prevention recommendations—available for free on its JN Learning website.
- | Mobilizing rapid growth in the nation’s telemedicine capacity through advocacy and publication of the Quick Guide to Telemedicine in Practice, a new resource to help physicians implement remote care.