What’s the news: The AMA has pushed the U.S. Health and Human Services Department (HHS) to provide swift assistance to physicians who have not received any money from the Provider Relief Fund.

It appears the agency has listened.

HHS announced plans to distribute about $15 billion to eligible physicians and other organizations—such as children’s hospitals—that participate in state Medicaid and CHIP programs but have not received a payment from the Provider Relief Fund General Allocation.

Eligible physicians and organizations can use a newly launched HHS portal to report their annual patient revenue data and other necessary information to receive a payment equal to at least 2% of reported gross revenues from patient care.

Why it’s important: The Health Care Provider Relief Fund, created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, has helped bolster the nation’s’ health care infrastructure by assisting physician practices and health care facilities facing severe expenses and revenue losses caused by the public health emergency.

The AMA has repeatedly called for additional funds with a wider distribution because initial distribution supported Medicare-enrolled physicians and facilities but pediatric and OB-GYN practices and others with no Medicare patients also need help.

Initial distribution of payments covered about 62% of health care providers who participate in state Medicaid and CHIP programs, HHS reported. This distribution will target the remaining 38% of Medicaid and CHIP providers—many of whom are safety net providers operating on thin margins, according to HHS.
Who is eligible: To be included in this targeted distribution, physicians must not have previously received money from the Provider Relief Fund.

Also, they must have either directly billed their state Medicaid or CHIP programs or a Medicaid managed care plan between Jan. 1, 2018, and May 31, 2020.

Learn more about eligibility and the application process at the HHS CARES Act Provider Relief Fund general information webpage. In addition to advocating for HHS to assist these physicians, the AMA has lobbied Congress to do the same.

Stay up to speed on the AMA’s COVID-19 advocacy efforts and track the pandemic with the AMA’s COVID-19 resource center, which offers a library of resources from JAMA Network™, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization.