



CMMI Announces Payment Model Flexibilities in Response to COVID-19

Oncology Care Model extended through June 2022, new risk arrangement options available

On June 3, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) announced adjustments to several CMMI models in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The model adjustments pertain to financial methodologies, quality reporting, and model timelines. In a *Health Affairs* [blog post](#) announcing the changes, CMS Administrator Seema Verma noted that CMS is adjusting model implementation dates to give providers additional time to transition to value-based care, delaying reporting requirements so providers can focus on patients over paperwork, and adjusting payment methodologies so providers are not at risk for costs solely due to this unprecedented pandemic.

Importantly, the announcement includes the following key changes to the Oncology Care Model (OCM):

- Extending the model for 1 year through June 2022
- Creating an option for OCM practices to forgo upside and downside risk for performance periods affected by the public health epidemic (PHE)
- Giving OCM practices that remain in one- or two-sided risk for the performance periods affected by the PHE the ability to remove COVID-19 episodes from reconciliation for those performance periods
- Allowing aggregate-level reporting of quality measures and beneficiary-level reporting of clinical and staging data to be optional for the affected periods
- Removing the requirement for cost and resource utilization reporting and practice transformation plan reporting in July/ August 2020

The US Oncology Network is pleased CMMI recognized the concerns raised by The Network in its March [letter](#) to Secretary Azar. The letter asked CMMI to extend the OCM for an additional period of time rather than move forward with the new Oncology Care First model and to either suspend two-sided risk options or allow participating providers the option to convert to one-sided risk for the entirety of all performance periods that overlap with the PHE.

CMS also noted that additional information regarding the implementation of these changes will be provided to model participants by CMS, and there is a possibility that the implementation of new models may be further delayed, based on the future evolution of the COVID-19 PHE. The announcement did not include changes to the proposed Radiation Oncology Model.

CMMI will be hosting a call on Friday, June 5, from 2:00—3:00pm ET to provide an overview of the OCM adjustments and to answer questions. To register, [CLICK HERE](#).

To read Administrator Verma's blog post in *Health Affairs*, [CLICK HERE](#).

To view the CMS Model Flexibilities Table listing the changes, [CLICK HERE](#).

To read The Network's letter to Secretary Azar, [CLICK HERE](#).

To stay up to date on other policy changes during COVID-19, visit www.legislink.com/coronavirus.