



For Immediate Release
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**Victory for Elderly & Vulnerable Patients:
ERs Now Able to Serve Medicare, Medicaid-Insured**
Freestanding ERs gain CMS recognition after a decade of requests

Austin, TX – In response to notification by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) that freestanding ERs are now officially recognized healthcare providers eligible for reimbursement for treating Medicare and Medicaid patients, the National Association of Freestanding Emergency Centers (NAFEC) issued the following statement:

“Today’s announcement by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid means the elderly, vulnerable and underserved in our nation will now have a host of high-quality options when it comes to emergency medical care, an improvement that is especially critical during our current healthcare crisis,” said Brad Shields, Executive Director of NAFEC. “The freestanding ER community has advocated to be able to serve Medicare and Medicaid patients for more than a decade and we’re thrilled to finally be able to provide them with timely access to emergency medicine. We are grateful to Rep. Jodey Arrington, Sen. Ted Cruz and the many members of the Texas delegation who [support freestanding ERs’ efforts](#) to obtain CMS recognition and serve the communities we call home.”

Obtaining recognition by CMS means that freestanding emergency centers (FECs) will be able to increase capacity into the overall healthcare system and treat elderly Medicare-insured patients. FECs have shorter wait times and smaller facilities than traditional hospital ERs, are fully licensed, staffed with emergency medical personnel 24/7, and are fully equipped with ventilators and other critical equipment. While this recent action by CMS is limited to the public health emergency, NAFEC will continue to advocate for a long term solution. Permanent CMS recognition equips FECs with a greater ability to expand into rural and underserved communities where healthcare infrastructure can be scarce and patients may have few options.

About NAFEC

MISSION: To advocate for fair regulation and to raise statewide awareness of freestanding emergency centers as a high-quality, accessible emergency medical care option. **VISION:** The National Association of Freestanding Emergency Centers (NAFEC) will be the expert association safeguarding, supporting, strengthening, and serving as the voice for the freestanding emergency center industry.

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CMS NEWS

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CMS Issues Guidance Allowing Independent Freestanding Emergency Departments to Provide Care to Medicare and Medicaid Beneficiaries during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

New guidance provides flexibility to hospitals to ensure they have the ability to expand capacity and treat patients during this public health emergency

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued critical guidance allowing licensed, independent freestanding emergency departments (IFEDs) in Colorado, Delaware, Rhode Island, and Texas to temporarily provide care to Medicare and Medicaid patients to address any surge. This action by the Trump Administration increases hospital capacity to ensure these states can quickly and effectively care for their most vulnerable citizens.

“Under President Trump’s leadership, CMS is taking historic steps to leverage new resources in the ongoing war against COVID-19,” said CMS Administrator Seema Verma. “Expanding the number of providers available to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries eases some of the burden shouldered by traditional hospitals and allows the healthcare system to treat more patients at a time when capacity is often limited. We must leave no stone unturned as we seek to bolster the healthcare system during this unprecedented crisis.”

IFEDs generally offer a range of services including basic imaging services, computed tomography (CT) scans, ultrasound, and basic on-site laboratory services. Current law does not recognize IFEDs as a certified Medicare provider, meaning they cannot bill Medicare and Medicaid for services. However, during this public health emergency these entities can be temporarily certified as a hospital to increase healthcare system capacity as part of each state’s pandemic plan.

These new flexibilities are possible thanks to aggressive actions made by the Trump Administration that help healthcare providers contain the spread of COVID-19 through Emergency Declaration Blanket Waivers for Health Care Providers. As a result, CMS is waiving certain Conditions of Participation for hospital operations to maximize the ability to focus on

patient care during this public health emergency. IFEDs may participate in Medicare and Medicaid in one of three ways:

- Becoming affiliated with a Medicare/Medicaid-certified hospital under the temporary expansion 1135 emergency waiver;
- Participating in Medicaid under the clinic benefit if permitted by the state; or
- Enrolling temporarily as a Medicare/Medicaid-certified hospital to provide hospital services.

These actions, and earlier CMS actions in response to COVID-19, are part of the ongoing White House Coronavirus Task Force efforts. To keep up with the important work the Task Force is doing in response to COVID-19 click here www.coronavirus.gov. For information specific to CMS, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).

To view the COVID 19 Emergency Declaration Blanket Waivers for Health Care providers, visit: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/summary-covid-19-emergency-declaration-waivers.pdf>

To view CMS's guidance for Independent Freestanding Emergency Departments, visit: <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurvey/certificationgeninfo/policy-and-memos-states-and/guidance-licensed-independent-freestanding-emergency-departments-eds-participate-medicare-and>

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