



*COVID-19 State and Federal Update*  
Friday, April 10, 2020

## *Nebraska State and Legislative Actions:*

### **Nebraska Medicaid Expansion Update**

On Friday morning, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services issued a press release in regard to the status of Medicaid expansion in Nebraska. The launch date is still set for October 1, 2020 and people can apply beginning August 1. However, there will be some changes. From the press release:

“DHHS plans to utilize a demonstration waiver of Section 1115 of the Social Security Act to allow beneficiaries the opportunity to earn enhanced Prime benefits by participating in wellness, personal responsibility, and community engagement activities. Prime benefits will be available to all participating Nebraskans. Newly eligible Nebraskans who are 19 or 20 years old, pregnant, or medically frail will be eligible for an exception to the wellness, personal responsibility, and community engagement activities. Our approach better achieves the purpose of the Medicaid program by incentivizing positive activities that will improve health outcomes and encourage life successes for participants. This 1115 waiver must be approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CMS has focused considerable time and attention towards addressing this unprecedented public health emergency. As a result, CMS has notified DHHS that approval of Nebraska’s 1115 expansion demonstration waiver will not be finished in time for Nebraska’s planned expansion effective date of October 1.

DHHS is moving forward with expansion with the planned tiered benefits to allow the state to meet our current timeline to accept applications on August 1, 2020 and begin benefits on October 1, 2020. Participating Nebraskans will be able to earn additional, Prime benefits after the 1115 waiver is approved and the additional components of the 1115 waiver are implemented.”

To view what will be included in the basic benefits package please see the [rest of the press release](#).

### **Governor’s Update**

Gov. Ricketts began his final press conference of the week by reminding Nebraskans of the [6 rules](#) for staying healthy. He then addressed the issue of corrections, and why he won’t call for inmates to be released early amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Gov. Ricketts said that a majority of Nebraskans do not

want inmates to be released early, and that it's better to care for inmates in prison so that they can continue to receive the programming and support they need.

### Corrections

Director for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services Scott Frakes joined Gov. Ricketts to discuss what NDCS is doing to protect inmates and staff during the pandemic. Frakes said NDCS was already prepared for a bad flu season and had a pandemic plan in place in December, so it was easy to shift precautionary efforts toward fighting coronavirus.

Parts of that plan include screenings for visitors and staff, quarantine for all intake centers, separating vulnerable populations, and screening all new inmates for 14 days upon admittance. Frakes said all inmates and staff have masks, and sanitation efforts have been increased. Because there are no visitations allowed, NDCS has also begun allowing more phone calls for inmates. Frakes said that health care is readily available inside NDCS facilities, employing 200 health care staff, as well as 130 mental health care staff. Finally, Frakes was glad to report that there are no confirmed cases among inmates, and currently no inmates that are symptomatic. "This speaks to the precautions we took early on and the focus of the agency to take every step possible to flatten spread of COVID-19," Frakes said. NDCS has only reported one case of coronavirus, which was that of a staff member who has been isolated at home for the past 15 days.

### *Federal:*

#### **Stimulus Payments**

Earlier today, the IRS announced that a portion of the stimulus payments for individuals will be going out at the beginning of next week. The first people to see their funds will be those who have filed tax returns in 2018 or 2019 and have permitted use of direct deposit to receive their tax refund. These payments will be made automatically to qualifying taxpayers. The IRS said that those receiving social security benefits will also see their payments in the near future. To read more on what to expect in regards to stimulus payments, please click [here](#).