

Emergency Medicine Update:

Inpatient Hospital COVID Incentive Requirements Change as of September 1, 2020

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As of September 1, 2020, CMS will require documented proof of a positive COVID-19 test for inpatient reimbursement (COVID Incentive).

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act [Section 3710](#) requires that Medicare increase by 20% the weighting factor of the hospital's DRG reimbursement for individuals discharged with COVID-19 (COVID Incentive) during the public health emergency (PHE), (the current PHE declaration expires on Oct. 23, 2020 but is likely to be renewed again by the Secretary of DHHS).

Required Documentation:

Due to program integrity concerns, CMS has announced that effective for patients admitted on or after Sept. 1, 2020 that the medical record must reflect a positive COVID-19 lab test. The test may be during or performed within 14 days of the hospital admission.

- If the testing is performed outside of the hospital, then the patient's record should be updated with the testing results.
- If the testing is outside of the 14-day period, the Medicare MAC may consider adding the COVID Incentive on a case by case basis.

The MACs may conduct medical review of hospital record claims to verify that a positive test was documented and if no such record evidence exists then recoup the COVID Incentive.

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