



June 10, 2021 05:30 AM | 3 HOURS AGO

CMS increases Medicare payment rates for at-home vaccination

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on Wednesday announced it will be increasing the payment amount for administering Covid-19 vaccines to Medicare beneficiaries in a home setting.

The increase pertains to vaccinations for the elderly on Medicare who are unable to leave their homes to receive a shot. To incentivize providers to reach this group, their rates have been elevated to approximately \$75 per dose, up from \$40. CMS had adjusted the rate to \$40 from \$28 in March.

CMS is committed to removing barriers to vaccine access, said administrator Chiquita Brooks-Lasure in a statement. There are approximately 1.6 million adults age 65 and older in the nation who might have difficulty leaving their home to get a vaccine, according to data from the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

Being homebound also disproportionately affects people of color, with nearly 15% of Hispanic older adults meeting that criteria, compared with Blacks (7%); Asian, Pacific Islander or American Indian (5%); and whites (3%), HHS data showed.

Providers participating in at-home vaccination programs welcomed the move. William Dombi, president of the National Association for Home Care & Hospice, thanked CMS and the White House for recent discussions on homebound vaccination efforts that lead to this development. Although the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, which works with the city's homebound vaccination program for Queens, does not receive Medicare payment, Maya Seidel, co-director of VNSNY's in-home vaccination program, noted there is a huge need for this service in the city. There are approximately 23,000 seniors who might be homebound, according to news reports.

VNSNY, as designated vaccine provider for Queens, vaccinated more than 1,700 homebound individuals from April to June. —S.S.