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End-Stage Renal Disease Network of New England
1952 Whitney Avenue, 2nd Floor
Hamden, CT 06517
phone: (203) 387-9332
fax: (203) 389-9902
esrd.ipro.org

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Dear End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Dialysis Facility Leadership,

In 2015, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released the quality oversight contracts for ESRD Networks that would last a period of five years ending 11/30/20. In the past, when contracts are set to be re-evaluated, a process begins 4 months before the contract ends to coordinate contractors for the next period of contract work. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CMS was unable to undertake that process this past June and in November opted to extend the ESRD Network contracts until 2/28/21. **In January, CMS notified the ESRD Networks that an additional extension was needed until 4/30/2021 to finalize contract awards.**

This two-month extension has added some new work, as well as applied additional changes to the work with a focus on keeping ESRD facility burden low while still targeting important health and quality of life outcomes for ESRD patients. **This two-month extension will also mean that the current Facility Agreement of Participation previously signed with the ESRD Network will remain valid until 4/30/21.** Please save this letter with your current executed copy of the Network/Facility Agreement of Participation to document the revised end date.

New work to support the community during the two-month contract extension:

1. Educate patients and staff about the various COVID vaccines available, dosing, and the administration schedule
2. Create educational resources to promote COVID vaccination for staff and patients.
3. Provide technical assistance to facilities that are experiencing difficulties in vaccinating the patient population for COVID
4. Communicate with the state agency responsible for the distribution of the COVID vaccine
5. Collect data and report patients and staff that have received the first and second dose of any Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approved COVID vaccination
6. Report patient and staff vaccinations to CMS
7. Report on activities executed by the state to distribute vaccine, and executed by the Network to advocate for prioritization of patients to receive the vaccine.

Work that will continue with some changes:

1. Direct technical assistance for facilities experiencing growth in COVID + cases defined by CMS as COVID hotspots or outliers
2. Education and support on the use of telemedicine, especially as it relates to home care
3. Emphasize education and provision of home modalities for ESRD patients residing in nursing homes
4. Utilize the ESRD National Coordinating Center (NCC) "Change Package" (key change ideas for dialysis facilities to drive local action) to promote home modality initiations and increase the number of patients on the transplant waitlist
 - a. No direct performance goal is being measured at this time, but current rate of initiation will be monitored



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5. Long Term Catheter (LTC) Reduction
 - a. Continued emphasis on reduction of catheters in use greater than 90 days by providing support for essential vascular access procedures during the pandemic
6. Reducing Bloodstream Infections (BSI)
 - a. Continued emphasis on safe practices to prevent BSIs
 - b. Increased auditing and surveillance at the facility level of infection control techniques (i.e., hand hygiene-washing/use of sanitizers, and surface disinfection) to prevent disease transmission
 - c. Additional education on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations to prevent transmission of COVID-19
7. Support of Virtual Patient and Family Engagement (PFE) Techniques
 - a. Release guides and resources to continue to grow PFE in a virtual setting
 - b. Utilize distance communication strategies to link and engage patients
 - c. Support patients with effectively utilizing telehealth/medicine to remain connected to their healthcare team

Responding to the evolving public health recommendations to assure everyone is safe within the ESRD community has been an overwhelming task. We commend the patients, healthcare professionals and all the other support personnel and caregivers who have come together in these difficult times. IPRO ESRD Network of New England understands the burden this has put on everyone involved and has been working to support the community with education and resources in this rapidly changing environment.

Please remember the Network continually updates our COVID-19 resource website pages with credible information for patients and providers, and releases CDC and CMS guidance as soon as it is received to keep stakeholders connected throughout the pandemic. We look forward to working together to assure the ESRD community is safe, and those living with kidney disease have access to the very best care.

Please feel free to reach out to Network staff with any support questions or needs.

Be Well. Stay Safe.

IPRO ESRD Network of New England