

News Release
April 30, 2020



NAACOS Welcomes CMS's Interim Final Rule Addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic
Attributed to Clif Gaus, Sc.D., President and CEO of the National Association of ACOs

NAACOS thanks CMS Administrator Seema Verma and her staff for their hard work to address the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on ACOs and for listening to our concerns. CMS addressed many of the issues [NAACOS raised](#) in March when this pandemic first hit hard, and the rule is a fair way to handle ACO performance during a global public health pandemic. We are appreciative of the thoughtful ways CMS will modify the Shared Savings Program during the public health emergency, especially by removing spending associated with COVID-19 patients from performance calculations. NAACOS and others [asked for this change](#) last month. CMS's extending its mitigation of shared losses back to January 2020 and providing flexibility for ACOs to stay in their same risk track next year will help sustain participation in the program for 2020. Greater ACO participation leads to Medicare savings and high-quality care, so today's changes are very much welcomed.

While today's [interim final rule](#), on balance, is a win for Medicare Shared Savings Program ACOs, we were disappointed to see there will be no application period in 2021 for new ACOs and hope CMS will be open to a partial 2021 performance year as the healthcare industry stabilizes. NAACOS remains concerned about the uncertainty of the length of the public health emergency and believes COVID-related costs should be removed from the entire performance year. We hope CMS will continue to work with ACOs to address other issues that are arising, such as making adjustments to standard quality assessments to account for the impact of COVID-19. We also continue to request that the Shared Savings Program's dropout deadline, effectively the end May, be extended to much later in the year when there is more certainty about the pandemic. We also look forward to CMS's Innovation Center making similarly fair adjustments to the Next Generation ACO Model, while hopefully extending that program by at least another year.

Today's rule will help ease the concerns of many ACOs, who earlier this month said they [might leave the program](#) in droves because of the catastrophic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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About NAACOS. The National Association of ACOs (NAACOS) represents more than 12 million beneficiary lives through hundreds of organizations participating in population health-focused payment and delivery models in Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial insurance. Models include the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP), Next Generation ACOs, and alternative payment models supported by a myriad of commercial health plans and Medicare Advantage. NAACOS is a member-led and member-owned nonprofit organization that works to improve quality of care, outcomes, and healthcare cost efficiency.