
June 15, 2021

Mr. Thomas Nickels
800 10th Street, NW
Two City Center, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Nickels:

We appreciate your inquiry regarding hospital recertification survey suspensions that may become necessary due to new Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases surges. The last national hospital survey suspension expired on March 23, 2021. Since that time, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has been actively monitoring hospital and county level COVID-19 surge data. While we have determined a national reprioritization suspending recertification surveys is no longer necessary, we recognize that there may be some hospitals experiencing a community-level COVID-19 surge that could adversely impact their operations and ability to accommodate an onsite compliance survey.

While each case is unique, CMS will evaluate hospitals that are experiencing a COVID-19 surge for temporary suspension of survey activities based on the following considerations:

- Notification/request for assistance from the appropriate State Public Health agency. The first priority for the hospital should be ensuring they have the resources available to manage the surge and coordinating with the appropriate State Public Health authorities for awareness and assistance;
- The proportion of hospital staff and resources dedicated to management of COVID-19 patients; and
- Activation of the hospital's emergency preparedness plan.

Hospitals in these circumstances should notify their State Survey Agency as soon possible, who will then coordinate with their CMS Location to consider a short-term, hospital-specific survey suspension. This communication should be prior to any survey activity. Once surveyors are onsite at a hospital, they will not be recalled.

It is important to note that complaint surveys alleging immediate threat to patient health and safety will continue regardless of a hospital's current status, as they have throughout any previous survey reprioritization.

This guidance will be transmitted to CMS-approved Accrediting Organizations for consideration as they perform their hospital recertification and complaint surveys.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lee A. Fleisher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "F".

Lee A. Fleisher, MD
Chief Medical Officer and Director
Center for Clinical Standards and Quality
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services