



## Top doctors plead for change in behavior as state sees record COVID-19 cases



A week before the end of Alabama's current "Safer at Home" order, the least restrictive of the public health mandates first rolled out in March, the state on Thursday saw the most troubling numbers yet in its battle against the coronavirus.

New cases topped 1,100 on Thursday, the Alabama Department of Public Health reported. That's a new one-day high.

Alabama Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris attributes the increases to widespread community transmission, not particular events or locations. About 30% of the state's total 32,753 confirmed cases COVID-19 have come in the last two weeks.

[Read the full story at Alabama Daily News](#)

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## AMA COVID-19 Update



This week [CMS announced that physicians will have the option to opt-out completely or partially from the 2020 MIPS program](#) by completing a hardship exemption application and indicating it is due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). Individual clinicians and group practices have until December 31, 2020 to complete the [hardship application](#). CMS plans on providing physicians with a couple of options on the hardship exemption

application. For example, a practice may submit a hardship application and indicate that they do not want to be scored on Cost and Quality and have their score calculated based on just Promoting Interoperability and Improvement Activities. Alternatively, practices may submit a hardship application and opt-out of all four performance categories and be held harmless from a 2022 payment adjustment. Submitting any MIPS data to CMS will override the hardship exception application and physicians will be scored on their submission.

The AMA signed onto [this letter](#) with a wide-ranging coalition of nearly 20 health care provider organizations that represent doctors, nurses, hospitals, dentists and more, calling on congressional leaders to fix a taxation penalty embedded in the CARES Act.

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## Medical Association Recognizes Racism as a Threat to Public Health

# RACISM IS A THREAT TO PUBLIC HEALTH

At the most recent Board of Censors meeting, the Medical Association of the State of Alabama pledged to recognize and confront racism and racial inequalities within our society and the healthcare system. The Medical Association further recognizes the need to end systemic racism in our country and to work towards a better, fairer, and more just society.

[Read the Full Statement Here](#)

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## We Need Physician-Led Healthcare Teams Now More Than Ever

This week we continued our efforts in stressing the importance of physician supervision in healthcare settings. Following our outreach to CMS Administrator Seema Verma last week, we, along with other medical associations from around the country, wrote to Dr. Richard Stone, MD of the Veterans Health Administration to urge the VA to amend a directive allowing non-physician healthcare professionals to practice without physician oversight during the national health emergency.

As stated in the letter to Dr. Stone, this directive is unnecessary and threatens the health and safety of patients within the VA system. Now more than ever, we need healthcare professionals working together as part of physician-led teams.

You can read the letter to Dr. Stone by [clicking here](#).

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## New Telehealth Guidance & Extension

**Medicaid:** All previously published expiration dates related to the Coronavirus emergency are once again extended by the Alabama Medicaid Agency. The new expiration date is the earlier of July 31, 2020, the conclusion of the COVID-19 National emergency, or any expiration date noticed by Alabama Medicaid through a subsequent ALERT.



**BCBS:** The expanded Telehealth Coverage Guidelines (effective March 1, 2020) are now extended until July 31, 2020. At this time, only codes in the Billing Guide should be submitted.



### **Need PPE?**

More PPE is now available through the Medical Association, including new items like face shields and isolation gowns. And, ordering in bulk means N95 masks are up to 20% off.

[Click here for info.](#)



### **Sanistrap**

SaniStrap contains wristband, two refillable bottles, and one travel size refill bottle. Sanitizer is NOT included in order - liquid gel sanitizer is recommended.

[Click here for info.](#)

# COVID-19 QUESTIONS? GET ANSWERS & EARN CME.



As providers, physicians and members of the health care team want to do whatever they can to ensure the health and well-being of their patients. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the practice of medicine is facing challenges in delivering the best care amid government mandates and ever-changing public perceptions of the situation. At the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, we want to help by offering online COVID-19 CME courses (free for members).

Courses include:

- **PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS IN THE COVID-19 ERA**
- **PPE FOR PHYSICIANS: NEW, USED AND REFRESHED**
- **AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE DOCTOR'S SYMPTOMS OF COVID AND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PANDEMIC**

#### Credits

The Medical Foundation of Alabama designates this enduring material for a maximum of .25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits<sup>®</sup>. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama through the joint providership of the Medical Foundation of Alabama and the Medical Association of the State of Alabama. The Medical Foundation of Alabama is accredited by the Medical Association of the State of Alabama to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

**[HTTPS://WWW.ALAMEDICAL.ORG/COVID19](https://www.alamedical.org/covid19)**



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