



BULLETIN

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As the world scrambles to understand and manage all of the issues and repercussions associated with the COVID-19 virus, efforts are underway to implement standards for tracking and reporting the disease, including the development of several new codes that are about to take effect, if they haven't already.

ICD-10 codes maintained by the World Health Organization (WHO) are used by doctors, insurers, and public health agencies worldwide to precisely identify diseases for treatment records, billing & reimbursement, and data collection. There are currently more than 70,000 ICD-10 codes, and the WHO updates the list annually. In the U.S., the ICD-10 codes are overseen by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Each October they update the ICD-10 list used in this country to add the new codes created by the WHO. However, following the rapid spread of the previously unknown Coronavirus that began last December in China, the WHO convened an emergency meeting on January 31, 2020 which led to the creation of a new ICD-10 emergency code and the adoption of a temporary name for the virus (U07.1, 2019-nCoV acute respiratory disease).

On February 11, the WHO officially renamed the virus COVID-19. The virus continued to spread exponentially over the following month, and on March 11, the WHO declared a pandemic, followed two days later by the U.S. government's declaration that the outbreak in this country is a national emergency. Given the now critical need to identify and monitor COVID-19 claims in the U.S., last week the CDC made an unprecedented move, announcing that the effective date for clinicians to begin using ICD-10 code U07.1 to report a diagnosis of COVID-19 has been moved up from October 1, 2020 to April 1, 2020 – this Wednesday.

Efforts to track and report COVID-19 are also underway in workers' compensation. On March 24, the Workers' Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau (WCIRB) announced that the Workers' Compensation Insurance Organizations (WCIO) had established a Catastrophe Number and added a Nature of Injury Code and a Cause of Injury Code for COVID-19 claims with accident dates on or after December 1, 2019 (see https://www.wcirb.com/sites/default/files/bulletins/2020-09_covid-19_claim_reporting_reqs.pdf). Insurers reporting unit stat data for California COVID-19 claims to the WCIRB should use the following codes:

- Catastrophe Number – 12
- Nature of Injury Code – 83 (COVID-19)
- Cause of Injury Code – 83 (Pandemic)

The WCIRB is reviewing amendments that, subject to a special Regulatory Filing and approval by Insurance Commissioner Lara, would add these reporting requirements to the Unit Stat Plan and add COVID-19 claims to the Experience Rating Plan. In the meantime, the WCIRB has advised insurers to check with staff members who submit their unit stat reports to make sure they are aware of these codes.

On March 26, DWC announced that it too has adopted the WCIO Cause of Injury Code 83 (Pandemic) and the Nature of Injury Code 83 (COVID-19) for claims organizations to report COVID-19 cases in First Reports of Injury and Subsequent Reports of Injury (FROI/SROI). The DWC notes that its Workers' Compensation Information System (WCIS) has already been modified to accept these new codes. That announcement was issued in WCIS eNews No. 127 (see <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dwc/WCISenews/WCISen147.htm>).

The latest COVID-19 coding advisory came last Friday (March 27), when the DWC issued a Newsline announcing that the update to the Pathology & Laboratory section of the Official Medical Fee Schedule (OMFS), effective for services on or after April 1, 2020, will include COVID-19 testing codes (HCPCS Level two codes U0001 and U0002), as well as other recent Medicare changes. In California workers' compensation, the maximum reasonable fees for medical services are 120 percent of the rates adopted by Medicare, so for code U0001 the maximum for workers' compensation payors will be \$43.09, while for code U0002 worker's compensation payors should reimburse up to \$61.57. The order adopting these updates to the Pathology & Laboratory section of the OMFS is [here](#).

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