



October 28, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Despite our necessary attention on COVID-19, another deadly disease is impacting millions of people worldwide and taking the lives of a growing number of people – liver cancer. October is Liver Cancer Awareness month. There are many causes of liver cancer, including hepatitis B.

Fortunately, hepatitis B has a vaccine and effective treatments, yet it continues to be a condition linked to stigma. Concerns about potential discrimination are heightened by the increased rate of acute hepatitis B cases from [2014 to 2018](#) in the United States. After decades of declines in new cases, progress on hepatitis B prevention has stalled in the United States as a whole, and in states impacted by the [opioid crisis, hepatitis B infections have increased](#).

A recently published [article](#) reports concerns among applicants to health-related schools who have hepatitis B. These same concerns led the Department of Health and Human Services to join the Department of Justice and the Department of Education in a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) to health-related schools to apprise them of [recommendations](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding the participation of students with hepatitis B in medical, dental, nursing and other health-related schools. The letter emphasized the importance of the CDC recommendations, especially as they relate to nondiscrimination obligations under the [Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act](#). These laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability against individuals with disabilities, including people living with hepatitis B. In recognition of Liver Cancer Awareness month, we are bringing this letter to your attention.

We urge schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and other health profession schools to give renewed attention to their policies and practices including those related to admissions and clinical placements respecting applicants to and students in their education programs who are living with hepatitis B to ensure that they are in compliance with federal civil rights laws. Our staff are always available to provide technical assistance to help you understand your obligations under these laws and ways that you can comply, and we encourage you to contact us with any questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roger Severino".

Roger Severino  
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett P. Giroir".

Admiral Brett P. Giroir, M.D.  
Assistant Secretary for Health