

ForwardHealth UPDATE

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PRIOR AUTHORIZATION PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS: OVERVIEW

Over the next year, ForwardHealth will begin implementing improvements that will result in a faster, more efficient flow to the prior authorization (PA) process.

Effective January 1, 2026, ForwardHealth will:

- [Offer providers a method to identify all urgent and non-urgent PAs.](#)
- [Clarify responses for denied PA requests.](#)
- [Implement a new PA status.](#)
- [Introduce the revised Prior Authorization Fax Cover Sheet, F-01176 \(12/2025\).](#)

Effective January 1, 2027, ForwardHealth will:

- [Process all urgent PA requests within 72 hours.](#)
- [Process all non-urgent PA requests within seven days.](#)

These improvements are required by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Interoperability and Prior Authorization

AFFECTED PROGRAMS

BadgerCare Plus, Medicaid

TO

Adult Mental Health Day Treatment Providers, Advanced Practice Nurse Prescribers With Psychiatric Specialty, Audiologists, Behavioral Treatment Providers, Chiropractors, Dentists, Intensive In-Home Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Services for Children Providers, Intensive Outpatient Program Providers, Master's-Level Psychotherapists, Medical Equipment Vendors, Outpatient Mental Health Clinics, Outpatient Substance Abuse Clinics, Oral Surgeons, Personal Care Agencies, Physician Clinics, Physicians, Psychologists, Qualified Treatment Trainees, Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment Providers, Substance Abuse Counselors, Substance Abuse Day Treatment Providers, Supportive Housing Agencies, Therapy Groups, HMOs and Other Managed Care Programs

Final Rule ([CMS-0057-F](#)) and will impact health care providers, payers, and members.

This is the first in a series of ForwardHealth Updates about the new PA process. More information on PA process revisions will be released in future Updates.

Current policy information can be found in the service-specific Prior Authorization sections of the [ForwardHealth Online Handbook](#).

PA Process Improvements

Identifying All Urgent PAs

Beginning January 1, 2026, providers must check the Urgent checkbox to identify an urgent PA on the ForwardHealth Portal (the Portal) and attest in the form description box that a delay in services would either:

- Put the member's life, health, or ability to regain maximum function at serious risk.
- Cause the member severe pain that cannot be managed without the requested care or treatment.

Clarifying Messages for All PA Requests

ForwardHealth will provide clear messaging for PA request denials and resubmissions. This will help providers address issues more efficiently.

Providers may contact [Provider Services](#) to find out why a PA request was denied.

New PA Status

Effective January 1, 2026, ForwardHealth will create the new "inactive – PA void" PA status for the following situations:

- A PA request is submitted but not required.
- A provider requests to rescind the PA request.
- A PA is submitted in error. For example, a PA was submitted instead of a claim.

QUICK LINKS

- [ForwardHealth Online Handbook](#)
- [Forms](#) page

DID YOU KNOW?

Providers can submit PA requests on the Portal.

The information provided in this ForwardHealth Update is published in accordance with CMS Interoperability and Prior Authorization Final Rule (CMS-0057-F).

Revised Prior Authorization Fax Cover Sheet

Effective January 1, 2026, providers who submit PA requests via fax must use the revised Prior Authorization Fax Cover Sheet (dated 12/2025). All PA requests using the old form after that date will be returned.

Providers must submit PA paperwork via fax in the following order:

1. Prior Authorization Fax Cover Sheet
2. All service-specific forms
3. Necessary clinical documentation

Providers can find all current forms on the [Forms](#) page of the Portal.

Processing Time for All Urgent and Non-Urgent PAs

Beginning January 1, 2027, ForwardHealth will respond to all urgent PA requests within 72 hours and to all non-urgent requests within seven calendar days from the time they are received. No PA is required for [urgent situations](#).

Until then, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) will respond to urgent requests appropriately while working toward becoming compliant with the upcoming shift to the 72-hour time frame.

Documentation Retention

Providers are reminded that they must follow the documentation retention requirements per Wis. Admin. Code § [DHS 106.02\(9\)](#). Providers are required to produce or submit documentation, or both, to DHS upon request. Per Wis. Stat. § [49.45\(3\)\(f\)](#), providers of services shall maintain records as required by DHS for verification of provider claims for reimbursement. DHS may audit such records to verify the actual provision of services and the appropriateness and accuracy of claims. DHS may deny or recoup payment for services that fail to meet these requirements. Refusal to produce documentation may result in denial of submitted claims, recoupment of paid claims, application of intermediate sanctions, or termination from the Medicaid program. Per Wis. Admin. Code §§ DHS [107.02\(3\)\(i\)1](#) and [2](#), providers will be held accountable to the truthfulness and accuracy of their PA submissions.

REVISED PA FORM

Prior Authorization Fax Cover Sheet, F-01176 (12/2025)

Information Regarding Managed Care Organizations

This Update applies to the PA request process that providers submit for fee-for-service Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, Medicaid SSI, and other managed care programs. For information about managed care implementation of the updated policy, contact the appropriate managed care organization.

The information provided in this ForwardHealth Update is published in accordance with CMS Interoperability and Prior Authorization Final Rule (CMS-0057-F).

This Update was issued on 12/17/2025 and information contained in this Update was incorporated into the Online Handbook on 01/02/2026.

The ForwardHealth Update is the first source of program policy and billing information for providers.

Wisconsin Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, SeniorCare, and Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program are administered by the Division of Medicaid Services within the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). The Wisconsin HIV Drug Assistance Program and the Wisconsin Well Woman Program are administered by the Division of Public Health within DHS.

For questions, call Provider Services at 800-947-9627 or visit our website at www.forwardhealth.wi.gov/.