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Date: April 1, 2020

To: MCO Leadership

From: Betsy Genz, Director
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Kiva Graves, Director
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RE: Best Practice Minimum Contact Standards During COVID-19 Emergency

Purpose & Summary

This memo describes and outlines best practice for minimum contact standards by care teams necessitated by the COVID-19 emergency.

Best Practice

To ensure health and safety needs of members are adequately addressed during this emergency, the Department of Health Services (DHS) Bureau of Adult Quality and Oversight (BAQO) and Bureau of Adult Programs and Policy (BAPP) is recommending new minimum contact standards for care teams.

To assure managed care organizations (MCOs) are fully supporting members and providing them with needed levels of support and service coordination, DHS is recommending MCOs carry out the following activities:

- 1. Make an initial contact** with each member immediately to address immediate care needs, health and safety, vulnerable high risk status, back-up plans, adequate household and medical supplies, and other similar needs.

Even though face-to-face contacts are not required, care teams are the key link to members, their families and caregivers during this emergency. It is critical to maintain contact with members focusing on high-risk situations and the most vulnerable members. You can provide basic COVID-19 resources, links to the DHS website, and community resources.

2. **Develop a member specific plan** to follow during the emergency, taking into account capacity of the member, their family and caregivers.

In addition assess the following:

- Member health and safety is the first priority. MCOs should adhere to the fundamentals of the “Safer at Home” order.
- Member’s mental health and strain related to this emergency. Provide supports as needed including accessing telehealth options and offering the Division of Public Health crisis line and 211.
- Caregiver strain and develop a caregiver support plan.
- That member’s basic needs are being met including having enough food in the home and the ability to get groceries and medications.
- Availability of community resources and any new resources that have been developed during this COVID-19 emergency.

Per the DHS-MCO Family Care contract Article V.H.1; IDT staff shall establish a schedule of contacts based upon the complexity of the member’s needs and the risk in the member’s life including an assessment of the member’s potential vulnerability/high risk per Article V.J.1. and the plan for member’s contacts should be discussed with the member, follow MCO policy, and be documented in the member’s record.

3. **Establish a rigorous plan** for carrying out more **frequent (at least weekly) and in-depth contacts with vulnerable/high-risk** members. Talk with members about their health and safety needs, identify prevention strategies, and report any incidents that occur. MCOs must reassess members regularly and categorize them as VHRM as appropriate. This plan should be documented in the member’s record.

As defined in the DHS-MCO contract a Vulnerable/High Risk Member (VHRM) is a member who is dependent on a single caregiver, or two or more caregivers all of whom are related, to provide or arrange for the provision of nutrition, fluids or medical treatment that is necessary to sustain life and to whom at least one of the following applies:

- a) Is nonverbal and unable to communicate feelings or preferences; or
- b) Is unable to make decisions independently; or
- c) Is clinically complex, requiring a variety of skilled services or high utilization of medical equipment; or
- d) Is medically frail.

Background: COVID-19 and Wisconsin’s “Safer at Home” Order

In December 2019, a novel strain of the corona virus (COVID-19) was detected, which has spread worldwide, including to every state in the United States of America. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. On March 12, 2020, Governor Tony Evers declared a public health

emergency to direct all resources needed to respond to and contain COVID-19 in Wisconsin. Governor Evers designated the Department of Health Services as the lead agency to respond to the emergency and directed the Department to take all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent and respond to incidents of COVID-19 in Wisconsin.

On March 23, 2020, citing Wis. Stat. § 252.02(3) and (6) and Executive Order #72, Andrea Palm, Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services issued Wisconsin's "Safer at Home Order." Among other things, it put in place requirements that Wisconsinites "Stay at Home" except for critical tasks and abide by "Social Distancing Requirements" – "the practice of keeping at least six feet apart from others and avoiding direct physical contact" as a primary tool in the effort to slow the rate of infection.

Questions on this Memo

Please direct questions regarding this memo to your DHS contract coordinator.

Information on COVID-19

Since this is a rapidly evolving situation, we encourage MCOs to frequently monitor the [DHS website](#) for updates and to follow @DHSWI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) or dhs.wi on [Instagram](#). Additional information can be found on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

For non-Medicaid questions related to COVID-19, individuals can:

- Text COVID19 to 211-211
- Visit www.211Wisconsin.org
- Call 2-1-1