

March 18, 2020

To: ForwardHealth Providers
From: Jim Jones, State Medicaid Director
Subject: Wisconsin Medicaid Response to COVID-19 Outbreak

The Division of Medicaid Services (DMS), Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WI DHS), is providing this bulletin to enrolled providers serving Medicaid and BadgerCare members in response to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak occurring in the United States and worldwide. DMS encourages its providers that provide Medicaid services to be proactive in reviewing emergency policies and procedures, promoting practices that facilitate safe access to care during the outbreak, and sharing information with members that informs them of what they can do to stay healthy and prevent infection.

As a reminder, there are no copays for any BadgerCare or Medicaid members until June 30, 2020.

This bulletin focuses on what can be done under existing circumstances and authorities. DMS is currently reviewing what flexibilities could be put in place moving forward as federal guidance is provided and federal legislation passed. .

Preparedness. Providers should review their internal processes and operations to ensure that they are able to address COVID-19 cases in Wisconsin, including providing members with information and timely access to all medically necessary covered health care services.

The Division of Public Health (DPH) has been conducting webinars to provide information to providers in recent weeks and will continue to hold them as needed, each Friday morning at 7 am. You can attend those webinars at <https://livestream.com/dhswebcast/events/9016549>. Recordings of past webinars are also available at that same link, to the right of the page.

Information Access. Providing the public with access to accurate information and dispelling rumors is the best path to positive health outcomes. Providers should amplify messaging from CDC and WI DHS by providing members with information available on the DHS page regarding COVID-19 at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm> to the CDC's "What You Should Know" page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>.

Providers that have nurse hotlines should remind members of their availability and use them to supply factual information and provide guidance on what to do if someone is experiencing the primary symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath). These hotlines should reinforce prevention messages, encouraging members to wash their hands frequently, cover their coughs, avoid touching their faces, and stay home when they feel ill. They should also clearly identify when individuals need to be seen by a health care professional and when they should remain at home.

Testing for COVID-19. As of March 9, clinicians in Wisconsin are able to test patients for COVID-19 without first acquiring the approval of DPH. On March 17, 2019, DPH issued a memo providing guidance on prioritization of testing that can be found at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dph/memos/communicable-diseases/2020-09.pdf>.

ForwardHealth, including managed care organizations, will accept the new procedure codes recently developed by CMS to test patients for SARS-CoV-2 specific to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. Providers and laboratories will be able to bill for services that occurred after February 4, 2020. DMS reimbursement will be 100% of the Medicare rate.

These procedure codes will allow the labs conducting the tests to bill for the specific test instead of using an unspecified code. This will allow Wisconsin to track this aspect of the public health response during this outbreak.

Telehealth Delivery of Services. Given that COVID-19 is a communicable disease, telehealth services, if offered by providers, may be preferred to limit travel and exposure of members requiring health care. Current Wisconsin Medicaid telehealth policy ([ForwardHealth #510](#)) permits reimbursement for select synchronous telehealth services.

DHS is also developing policy to expand services that could be provided via telehealth. For currently covered telehealth services, DHS will expand originating site to allow services to be provided regardless of the member location. DHS will not make changes to originating site fee policy at this time. In addition, DHS will allow coverage of e-visits, certain phone visits, and certain Medicare-allowable telehealth services. Policy details and guidance will be provided in a forthcoming ForwardHealth provider update. We will continue to explore other opportunities for expanding this important service delivery method.

While there is variation in electronic prescribing (e-prescribing) capabilities and use, the majority of Wisconsin Medicaid hospitals, providers, and pharmacies have the technology to support e-prescribing.

Utilization Management. Forward Health is extending authorization dates to June 30, 2020 on all approved FFS prior authorization requests for private duty nursing, home health aides, and personal care workers due to expire after April 1, 2020.

Access to Prescription Drugs. As a reminder, the pharmacy benefit is carved out of HMOs and covered by Medicaid fee for service. Providers are encouraged to visit the [Pharmacy Resources section](#) of the ForwardHealth Portal for up-to-date pharmacy drug coverage information.

As of March 20, 2020, providers will be allowed to override the overuse precaution (early refill or ER) prospective drug utilization review (DUR) alert for all drugs, except for controlled substances that are currently listed on the [Drug Authorization and Policy Override Center Early Refill Drugs list](#).

Additionally, providers are encouraged to review the [Three-Month Supply Drugs table](#), which is a list of drugs that are either allowed or required to be dispensed in a three-month supply. Providers are encouraged to dispense drugs in a three-month supply when possible.

In emergency situations, pharmacy providers are able to dispense a 14-day emergency supply of a drug when a member receives a prescription for a covered drug with prior authorization restrictions. Drugs dispensed in emergency situations do not require prior authorization. Providers should review the [Expedited Emergency Supply Request Drugs table](#) for additional information.

Providers and members are also encouraged to consider mail delivery services for prescription drugs. Wisconsin Medicaid-enrolled pharmacies are permitted to dispense and deliver prescription or over-the-counter medication to members via the mail when program requirements for coverage are met.

ForwardHealth Updates coming soon.

In the upcoming weeks, ForwardHealth will be publishing ForwardHealth provider updates with specific guidance on service coverage, including billing and rates information. Please monitor the ForwardHealth Portal, Updates, and Alerts to receive the most current information.