

ForwardHealth **UPDATE**

Wisconsin serving you

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THE END OF THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

During the federal COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), the federal government allowed the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to implement temporary changes to some policies to facilitate the protection of member health. The federal government has announced that the COVID-19 PHE will end on May 11, 2023.

Unwinding Process

With the coming end of the COVID-19 PHE, DHS will be announcing any changes resulting from Unwinding the temporary policies.

“Unwinding” is the term used by the federal government to describe the actions states will take to resume routine operations following the end of the COVID-19 PHE.

In some cases, Unwinding may involve a return to policies from before the PHE; in other cases, temporary changes may turn into permanent policies that will become part of routine operations. Upcoming

AFFECTED PROGRAMS

BadgerCare Plus, Medicaid

TO

All Providers, HMOs and Other Managed Care Programs

QUICK LINKS

- [COVID-19: ForwardHealth News and Resources page](#)
- [COVID-19 Unwinding Resources for Providers page](#)

The information provided in this ForwardHealth Update is published in accordance with Section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. § 247d) and the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.

Unwinding communications will describe what policies will be used and on what timeline.

Resources for Providers

Information regarding policies affected by the COVID-19 Unwinding will be shared with providers through a variety of methods. Providers are encouraged to monitor the following sources for up-to-date information.

COVID-19 ForwardHealth News and Resources Portal Page

The [COVID-19: ForwardHealth News and Resources](#) page of the ForwardHealth Portal will include new ForwardHealth Unwinding Alerts and Updates that address the original COVID-19 communications. Providers are encouraged to check this page often for up-to-date information.

Provider Messaging

Secure Portal Messages

Providers who have established a secure ForwardHealth Provider Portal account will automatically receive messages from ForwardHealth in their secure Portal messages inbox. Providers also have the option of signing up to receive Portal text messages or email alerts when a new secure Portal message is available. To sign up for these notification options, providers can go to the Message Center on their secure Provider Portal account and click Notification Preferences. Refer to Section 12.4 of the [ForwardHealth Provider Portal Account User Guide](#) for detailed instructions.

Email Subscription Messages

Providers and other interested parties may register to receive email subscription messages. Stay current by [signing up](#) for ForwardHealth's email subscription service. Select from a list of service areas to receive policy, training, and benefit information specific to those areas.

Assisting Members During Unwinding

During routine operations, DHS asks members to provide updated information about themselves once a year and renew their participation in Medicaid if

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they still qualify. During the COVID-19 PHE, temporary policy was enacted so states would keep people enrolled unless they died, moved out of state, or asked to be removed from their program. The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, passed in December 2022, ended that policy.

In April 2023, Wisconsin began a year-long process of updating information from each member and determining if they meet the rules for their current program or if they will need to transition to another kind of coverage. This is called a renewal. Members received a letter in March or April telling them when their renewal is due in the next 14 months. Then, 45 days before their due date, they will get a renewal packet with further instructions.

To assist DHS in preparing members for renewal, providers are asked to:

- Encourage members to stay healthy by accessing their health care benefits while they have coverage.
- Remind members of BadgerCare Plus or other Wisconsin Medicaid programs to keep their contact information up to date with their program so they can be reached before the changes begin.
- Alert members to watch for communications from DHS about renewing their coverage, read those messages, and act when the time is right.

Note: Members should not renew until they receive their renewal packet.

Under federal guidelines, DHS must keep members covered until their next renewal. Renewing early could result in members losing coverage earlier than their assigned renewal date.

The [COVID-19 Unwinding Resources for Providers](#) Portal page includes resources for providers to share with members during the renewal process:

- Informational materials available for download/display
- Information regarding upcoming monthly fee-for-service member renewal date reports (more information coming soon) available for use by patient-facing staff
- Contact information for additional assistance

Providers are encouraged to check this page often for up-to-date information regarding the member renewal process.

Documentation Retention

Providers are reminded that they must follow the documentation retention requirements per Wis. Admin. Code § [DHS 106.02\(9\)](#). Providers are required

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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.

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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 AIDS 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/.