

Managed Care Operations Memorandum
General Operations
MCOPS Memo # 03/2020-005

Date: March 25, 2020

Subject: Requirements Related to COVID-19

To: All Physical Health (PH) HealthChoices Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) – Statewide

From: Laurie Rock, Director, Bureau of Managed Care Operations

Purpose:

The Office of Medical Assistance Programs (OMAP) is issuing this Operations Memorandum to provide direction to Physical-Health HealthChoices Managed Care Organizations (PH-MCOs) regarding requirements related to policies for some services related to COVID-19.

Background:

On March 6, 2020, Governor Wolf issued an emergency [disaster declaration](#) in response to the presence of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in Pennsylvania. Because of this emerging situation, we want to ensure there are no barriers to care for your members.

Additionally, on March 11, 2020, Governor Wolf issued a press release announcing that Medical Assistance (MA) will cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for recipients and is lifting some prior authorization requirements to ease access to necessary testing and treatment.

Early Refills for Prescriptions

The PH-MCOs were notified that effective March 17, 2020, in response to COVID-19, the PH-MCOs must allow members to obtain early refills of all prescriptions at the pharmacy point-of-sale. This includes early refills for opioids for pain management and medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorder. The prior authorization requirement based on day supply for short-acting opioids remains in effect. The MCOs should be flexible with issuing prior authorizations for longer durations when medically necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to the Department of Health's interim clinical guidance regarding pandemic standards of care.

Computerized Tomography (CT) Chest Imaging for COVID-19

The Office of Medical Assistance Programs recognizes that patients who have been diagnosed with or are being tested for COVID-19 may need a CT scan of the chest. The PH-MCOs were notified that effective March 17, 2020 PH-MCOs may not require a prior authorization for a CT scan of the chest when the patient has or is being tested for COVID-19.

Centers of Excellence

Consistent with the updates to the telemedicine policies, and in order to facilitate the practice of social distancing, for purposes of compliance with the requirements in Appendix G of the HealthChoices Agreement, Opioid Use Disorder Centers of Excellence (OUD-COE) care management services **do not** need to be provided in person face-to-face as long as the Governor's emergency disaster declaration remains in effect. COEs **may** provide case management services to COE clients through telemedicine or telephonic contact and these will qualify for the per-member per-month payment, effective with the March 2020 PMPM, as if the encounter had taken place in person. It is also critical to ensure that COEs have sufficient office and clinic hours to meet the needs of new patients and established patients who either do not choose or cannot use telemedicine or receive services in their homes. As such, there should be a balance of service delivery modalities based on safety and the needs of individuals receiving services, staff providing services and overall community needs.

Next Steps:

PH-MCOs should bring their operations into alignment with the guidance described in this Operations Memo.

Obsolete:

This MC OPS Memo will remain in effect for 90 days or while a valid disaster declaration authorized by the Governor related to the COVID-19 virus remains in effect, whichever is earlier. OMAP may re-issue this Ops Memo as appropriate.