

Bulletin Number: MSA 20-18

Distribution: All Providers

Issued: March 27, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Response: Relaxing of Hospital Transfer and Related Transportation Policy

Effective: Immediately

Programs Affected: Medicaid, Healthy Michigan Plan, Maternity Outpatient Medical Services (MOMS), Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS), MI Health Link

In response to the State of Michigan's strategy to respond to the needs of hospitals severely impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency and the establishment of the COVID-19 Statewide Load Balancing Plan, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is relaxing the Medicaid hospital-to-hospital transfer policy and the policy for associated transportation needs of transferred beneficiaries.

This policy applies to both Fee-for-Service (FFS) and managed care providers.

HOSPITAL TRANSFERS

Current Medicaid policy states hospital transfers can only occur when medically necessary and the care or treatment is not available at the transferring hospital. To support the state's objective to implement strategies regarding hospital load balancing during the COVID-19 crisis, MDHHS is relaxing current Medicaid policy to allow the transfer of beneficiaries to lower acuity facilities in an effort to free hospital resources for incoming COVID-19 cases. Hospitals wishing to initiate a transfer to another facility must continue to obtain a Prior Authorization Certification Evaluation Review (PACER) through the state's designated Admissions and Certification Review Contractor (ACRC), and maintain documentation of medical justification for the transfer. Current reimbursement policy for transfers remains in effect and can be referenced in the Hospital Reimbursement Appendix in the Hospital Chapter of the MDHHS Medicaid Provider Manual.

The ACRC will prioritize review of related transfer requests during this time.

NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE TRANSPORTS

Interfacility hospital transfers to lower acuity facilities via ambulance transports will be allowed in an effort to free hospital resources for incoming COVID-19 cases. The hospital and ambulance provider must maintain documentation that clearly describes the reason(s) for the transfer.

A claim may be made to MDHHS for a scheduled or unscheduled, medically necessary non-emergency ambulance transport without an attending physician written order (e.g., physician certification statement) certifying the medical necessity of the transport. Ambulance providers must maintain documentation of the medical necessity and appropriateness of service in the beneficiary's file. A claim may be made to MDHHS for a medically unnecessary non-emergency ambulance transport if a beneficiary is unable to obtain non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) after hospital discharge. The hospital or beneficiary must confirm the beneficiary's NEMT authorizing party is unable to arrange transportation on the date of discharge, and the hospital and ambulance provider must maintain documentation of this information. An ambulance provider can then proceed to provide non-emergency ambulance transportation to the beneficiary's place of residence.

Hospital transfers and transport from a hospital to another hospital for the convenience or preference of the ordering provider, beneficiary or beneficiary's family is not a covered benefit.

All other program criteria must be met for payment to be made.

This policy will be in effect through the month of April 2020 or until the first of the month following the termination of the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency Order (2020-04, COVID-19), whichever is later.

Public Comment

The public comment portion of the policy promulgation process is being conducted concurrently with the implementation of the change noted in this bulletin. Any interested party wishing to comment on the change may do so by submitting comments to Margo Sharp, Policy Specialist, via e-mail at:

E-mail: SharpM1@michigan.gov

Please include "COVID-19 Response: Relaxing of Hospital Transfer and Related Transportation Policy" in the subject line.

Comments received will be considered for revisions to the change implemented by this bulletin.

Manual Maintenance

Information is time-limited and will not be incorporated into any policy or procedure manuals.

Questions

Any questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to Provider Inquiry, Department of Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 30731, Lansing, Michigan 48909-8231, or e-mailed to ProviderSupport@michigan.gov. When you submit an e-mail, be sure to include your name, affiliation, NPI number, and phone number so you may be contacted if necessary. Providers may phone toll-free 1-800-292-2550.

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Massey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kate Massey, Director
Medical Services Administration