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DATE: April 22, 2020 (supersedes March 14, 2020 guidance)

SUBJECT: Information about Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) for Medi-Cal
Transportation Providers

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) continues to closely monitor the emerging 2019 COVID-19 situation, and is providing information to all nonemergency medical transportation (NEMT) and nonmedical transportation (NMT) providers as a reminder of federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH)-recommended safety procedures and protocols to help prevent spread of COVID-19.

General COVID-19 Information

The CDC currently estimate that the incubation period for COVID-19 ranges from 2-14 days. Symptoms may include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, although some people may not have any symptoms. Seniors and people with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes are at a higher risk of developing severe complications.

The CDC has also issued interim guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) systems, including EMS transport and cleaning EMS vehicles after transporting a person suspected of having COVID-19. Please see the CDC webpage for [Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services \(EMS\) Systems and 911 Public Safety Answering Points \(PSAPs\) for COVID-19 in the United States](#).

Please note that COVID-19, like the majority of human coronaviruses, are most commonly spread from an infected person to others via droplets in the air through:

- Uncovered coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands
- Rarely, fecal contamination with coronavirus present

Mode of Transportation

DHCS has extended flexibilities related to the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), including flexibility for eligible beneficiaries to utilize the safest available transportation service, NMT or NEMT. During this PHE, DHCS is waiving the

requirement for a prescription, from a provider, for eligible beneficiaries to utilize NEMT transportation. While the prescription requirement is waived, a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) is still required for NEMT and providers are instructed to incorporate the statement, "Patient impacted by COVID-19" within the Miscellaneous Information field. These flexibilities will remain in effect through the end of the COVID-19 PHE.

Ambulance Alternative Transport

Additionally, CMS has issued guidance to include a temporary expansion of allowable destinations for ambulance transports. Ambulance transports may include any destination that is able to provide treatment to the patient in a manner consistent with state and local EMS protocols in use where the services are being furnished. These destinations may include, but are not limited to, any location that is an alternative site determined to be part of a hospital, critical access hospital, skilled nursing facility, community mental health center, federally qualified health center, physician's office, urgent care facility, ambulatory surgery center, other location furnishing dialysis services outside of the end state renal disease facility, and the beneficiary's home. DHCS is acknowledging this flexibility and require Medi-Cal ambulance transports to be billed at the standard ambulance transport rate, but when or if a TAR is required, ambulance providers should follow the prior authorization and TAR flexibility requirements in the [April 2, 2020 DHCS notice](#). These flexibilities will remain in effect through the end of the COVID-19 PHE.

Preparedness Strategies

Medi-Cal NEMT and NMT providers are encouraged to share current COVID-19 information and discuss preparedness strategies with their staff. To enhance the health and safety of your organization, as well as help protect yourself, your clients, and others, DHCS recommends all NEMT and NMT providers adhere to the [CDC's](#) and [CDPH's](#) recommendations. Please take note of the simple steps below, which may help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at home and at work:

- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects, including door handles and seat belts, before transporting another client. Wear disposable gloves during cleaning and dispose after each use.
- Have facemasks available for patients to wear if a client is sick or is caring for someone who is sick.
- Vehicle ventilation in both compartments should be on non-recirculating mode to maximize air changes that reduce potentially infectious particles in the vehicle.
- Open outside air vents in the driver area when transporting clients.
- Wear a single pair of disposable patient examination gloves and change gloves if they become torn or contaminated and change between rides.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use alcohol-based sanitizers (at least 60 percent alcohol) when you cannot wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough and/or sneeze and dispose of the tissue right away.

- Get plenty of rest, drink fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress.

Please note that if you suspect a possible COVID-19 case, DHCS asks that you please report it immediately to your [local health jurisdiction](#).

Additional Resources

For additional COVID-19 information and resources, we encourage you to review the following resources:

- [Latest news from California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) about COVID-19 | En Español](#)
- [CDPH COVID-19 guidance](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) COVID-19 response | En Español | 中文](#)
- [Follow CDPH Twitter for the latest COVID-19 information](#)