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## Information for Indian Health Care Providers regarding the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

*Updated April 29, 2020 (Supersedes Previous Guidance)*

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) continues to closely monitor the emerging COVID-19 situation, and encourages Medi-Cal Indian Health Care providers to stay updated on COVID-19 developments. As the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in California rises, it is critical that providers assess their respective policies and follow recommended general healthcare facility safety procedures and protocols from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to help prevent spread of the virus. Generally, Indian Health Care Providers are encouraged to adhere to CDC's [recommendations](#), including but not limited to the following steps, to prevent the spread of illness:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Please note that in light of both the federal Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary's January 31, 2020 public health emergency declaration, as well as the President's March 13, 2020 national emergency declaration, DHCS has requested flexibilities to the California State Plan from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

The following Federal demonstration requests made by DHCS have been approved by CMS:

- **First Wave of California 1135 Waiver Flexibilities Related to COVID-19:**
  - Temporarily Suspend Medicaid Fee-For-Service Prior Authorization Requirements: DHCS is authorized to waive or modify the state plan prior authorization requirements and processes for benefits administered through the fee-for-service delivery system.

- Extending Pre-Existing Prior Authorizations: DHCS is authorized to extend pre-existing authorizations for which a beneficiary has previously received prior authorization through the end of the public health emergency.
- State Fair Hearing Requests and Appeal Timelines: DHCS is authorized to temporarily delay scheduling of Medicaid fair hearings and issuing fair hearings decisions during the emergency period.
- Provider Enrollment: DHCS is authorized to temporarily enroll certain providers and to reimburse out-of-state providers not enrolled in California Medicaid program for the duration of the public health emergency.
- Provisions of Services in Alternative Settings: Certain facilities are allowed to be fully reimbursed for services rendered to an unlicensed facility (during an emergency evacuation or due to other need to relocate residents where the placing facility continues to render services).

For additional details please see the [California 1135 Waiver approval letter](#).

In addition, the following demonstrations and State Plan Amendment (SPA) requested by DHCS are currently under review by CMS:

- [Section 1115 Waiver Request For Additional COVID-19 Related Flexibilities](#)
  - Please see the [tribal and designees of Indian health programs notice for the DHCS Section 1115 Waiver Request](#) for a summary of this request
- [Section 1135 Waiver Request For Additional COVID-19 Related Flexibilities](#)
- [SPA 20-0024 Request for COVID-19 Related State Plan Amendments](#)
  - Flexibilities related to eligibility, enrollment, premiums and cost sharing, benefits, telehealth, and payment.
  - Please see [the tribal and designees of Indian health programs notice for SPA 20-0024](#) for a summary of this request.

### ***Preparedness Strategies***

Indian Health Care providers should share current COVID-19 information and discuss preparedness strategies with their staff. To enhance the health and safety of Indian Health Care provider offices, DHCS encourages Indian Health Care providers to adhere to the [CDC's](#) and [CDPH's](#) recommendations to prepare for COVID-19. Some helpful preparedness strategies include but are not limited to the following:

- **Screen patients and visitors for symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing) before entering your healthcare facility.** Providers can refer to the following resources on the CDC's [Guidelines for patient screening](#) and [Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations](#) and CDPH [Outpatient Healthcare Facility Infection Control Recommendations](#) for more information.
  - If you suspect a possible COVID-19 case, DHCS asks that you please report it immediately to your [local health department](#) to determine if testing for COVID-19 is indicated and for support in submitting specimens if testing will be performed. For more information on testing and specimen collection please visit see the CDCs [Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens from Persons for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

- **Ensure proper use of personal protection equipment (PPE)**  
Healthcare personnel who come in close contact with confirmed or possible patients with COVID-19 [should wear](#) the appropriate [personal protective equipment](#).
- **Encourage sick employees to stay home**  
Personnel who develop respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) should be instructed not to report to work. Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.

Indian Health Care providers can also find helpful resources to download, print, and display in their clinics and offices to educate their patients on preventive best-practices and to enhance awareness of COVID-19. These resources are available in select threshold languages on the [Communications Resources](#) page of the CDC website.

### ***Indian Health Care Provider Operational Reminders***

Indian Health Care Providers should be aware of the following Medi-Cal related information that may be of assistance in the provision of care for Medi-Cal patients potentially impacted by COVID-19:

- **Out-of-Network Services:** American Indian/Alaskan Natives enrolled in a Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan are eligible to receive services from out-of-network Indian Health Care Providers. Indian Health Care providers have the right to receive their applicable encounter rate, for the provision of covered services to American Indian/Alaskan Native enrollees, regardless of whether they participate in the network of a Managed Care Plan entity or not.
- **Telehealth:** Indian Health Care providers may utilize DHCS telehealth as an alternative modality for delivering covered services when medically appropriate, as a means to limit patients' exposure to others who may be infected with COVID-19, and to increase provider capacity. Please refer to DHCS' existing policies relative to telehealth, which are outlined in the following sections of the Medi-Cal Provider Manual: "[Medicine: Telehealth](#)," [Federally Qualified Health Centers/Rural Health Clinics](#), and [Indian Health Services Memorandum of Agreement 638 Clinics](#). Please also refer to DHCS' telehealth [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document on the public website.
- **Services Provided Outside the Four Walls of the Facility:** Please note that CMS has clarified that if tribal health programs bill for services provided outside the four walls of the clinic at the all-inclusive rate during the COVID-19 public health emergency, CMS will not recover payments.
- **Billing Inquiries:** For questions regarding Medi-Cal billing, please contact Telephone Service Center (TSC): 1-800-541-5555

### ***Additional Resources***

For additional COVID-19 information and resources, DHCS encourages you to review the following federal and state resources:

#### **Federal**

- [Federal Indian Health Services COVID-19 Updates and Resources](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) COVID-19 response](#)
- [CMS Coronavirus Waivers & Flexibilities](#)
- [U.S. Government Response to Coronavirus, COVID-19](#)

#### **State**

- [Medi-Cal Bulletins and Newsflash Articles](#)
  - Please check back often for updates
  - To sign up to receive the Medi-Cal Subscription Service (MCSS) for up-to-date Medi-Cal news please visit the [MCSS webpage](#)
- [DHCS COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Dental Provider Bulletin – Information on the Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [CDPH COVID-19 guidance](#)