




MassHealth
Adult Foster Care Bulletin 19
May 2021

TO: Adult Foster Care and Group Adult Foster Care Providers Participating in MassHealth

FROM: Daniel Tsai, Assistant Secretary for MassHealth 

RE: **COVID-19-related Administrative Flexibilities for Adult Foster Care and Group Adult Foster Care Providers**

Overview

In light of the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19, MassHealth authorized certain COVID-19-related administrative flexibilities to long-term services and supports (LTSS) providers. These flexibilities were communicated in a guidance document titled [MassHealth LTSS Provider Information: Updates Related to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) (hereinafter referred to as the 'MassHealth COVID-19 LTSS Flexibilities document').

The purpose of this bulletin is to update MassHealth's COVID-19 related flexibilities for providers of MassHealth-covered adult foster care and group adult foster care services, and with the goal of helping to ensure members retain access to appropriate adult foster care/group adult foster care services, promote social distancing, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The guidance in this bulletin replaces all previously issued guidance for MassHealth adult foster care/group adult foster care providers described in the MassHealth COVID-19 LTSS Flexibilities document.

This bulletin applies to members receiving adult foster care/group adult foster care services on a fee-for-service basis, including members enrolled in the Primary Care Clinician (PCC) plan who are receiving MassHealth-covered adult foster care/group adult foster care services.

This bulletin describes COVID-19 related flexibilities for MassHealth providers of adult foster care/group adult foster care services with the following effective periods.

- a. Flexibilities effective until the end of the federal Public Health Emergency (PHE).
- b. Flexibilities with no end date.

Flexibilities Effective Until the End of the Federal PHE

PCP Physical Examination Requirements

If a member is unable to secure a physical examination within 12 months to meet adult foster care or group adult foster care program requirements for either initial evaluations or reassessments, MassHealth will accept record of a telehealth visit from the PCP in lieu of an in-person physical

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examination. Telehealth checkup and well-visit notes may be accepted as substitutes for in-person physicals when those notes include diagnoses, medication, and symptom review. Alternatively, if a member has not had a primary care provider (PCP) visit within 12 months to meet adult foster care program requirements or group adult foster care program requirements for either initial evaluations or reassessments, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) will also accept documentation of a PCP visit and physical examinations within the last 24 months, provided the date of the physical examination is clearly documented in the member record.

Waiver of Caregiver and Employee Physical Examinations and Tuberculosis Screenings Prior to the Start of Services or Employment

Adult foster care providers must clearly document if a caregiver or employee is unable to secure a physical examination or tuberculosis screening prior to the start of employment (or start of service for caregivers) due to COVID-19. Group adult foster care providers must clearly document if an employee is unable to secure a physical examination prior to the start of employment due to COVID-19.

Waiver of PCP and Member Signatures

Required signatures on Physician Summary Forms and PCP Order forms are waived. Providers are still responsible for completing these forms and submitting them for prior authorization purposes. Member signature requirements are waived as long as the provider documents the date, time, and verbal attestation from the member, and includes the note “COVID-19” on required documents for record-keeping purposes.

Flexibilities with No End Date

Permitted Relationships of Group Adult Foster Care Direct Care Aides and Members

A group adult foster care provider may employ a person who is related to a member as that member’s direct care aide, provided the related person meets all direct care aide qualifications and is not within the definition of “family member” below.

Family Member: a spouse, parent of a minor child including foster parent and adoptive parent, and other legally responsible relatives inclusive of legal guardians who are related to the member. Note: Pursuant to federal regulations at 42 CFR 440.167, family members who are legally responsible relatives are not permitted to be paid-caregivers of personal care services, which includes group adult foster care.

Group adult foster care providers must clearly document in the member record if a direct care aide is related to the member receiving group adult foster care services as well as the direct care aide’s relationship to the member.

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Setting Requirements for Provision of Group Adult Foster Care Services

To maintain access to group adult foster care services for members eligible to receive group adult foster care, and to ensure continuity of care, providers may provide group adult foster care in settings not anticipated by the group adult foster care guidelines, provided those alternative settings are not those listed below. Providers must document in the member record if services are being provided in such alternative settings, including a description of the setting.

Settings in which group adult foster care will not be covered by MassHealth

MassHealth will not cover group adult foster care services provided to a member who is a resident or inpatient of a hospital, nursing facility, ICF/IID, or provider-operated residential facility subject to state licensure such as group homes licensed by DDS or DMH.

Additional Information

For the latest Massachusetts-specific information, visit www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19.

The latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for healthcare professionals is available at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html.

MassHealth Website

This bulletin is available on the [MassHealth Provider Bulletins](#) web page.

To sign up to receive email alerts when MassHealth issues new bulletins and transmittal letters, send a blank email to join-masshealth-provider-pubs@listserv.state.ma.us. No text in the body or subject line is needed.

Questions

If you have questions about the information in this bulletin, please contact the LTSS Provider Service Center.

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