

**Office of Medicaid
BOARD OF HEARINGS**

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision:	Denied	Appeal Number:	2514368
Decision Date:	11/24/2025	Hearing Date:	10/30/2025
Hearing Officer:	Alexandra Shube		

Appearance for Appellant:

Via telephone:



Appearances for CCA:

Via telephone:

Cassandra Horne, Operations Mgr. for Appeals & Grievances
Jeremiah Mancuso, RN, Clinical Mgr. for Appeal & Grievances
Ryan Hall, RN (Observing)



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Office of Medicaid
Board of Hearings
100 Hancock Street, Quincy, Massachusetts 02171*

APPEAL DECISION

Appeal Decision:	Denied	Issue:	ICO; Denial of Internal Appeal
Decision Date:	11/24/2025	Hearing Date:	10/30/2025
CCA's Reps.:	Cassandra Horne; Jeremiah Mancuso; Ryan Hall	Appellant's Rep.:	Pro se
Hearing Location:	Quincy Harbor South, Remote	Aid Pending:	No

Authority

This hearing was conducted pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 118E, Chapter 30A, and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

Jurisdiction

Through a notice dated September 24, 2025, Commonwealth Care Alliance (CCA), a MassHealth-contracted Integrated Care Organization (ICO), notified the appellant that it denied her Level 1 appeal regarding prior authorization request for non-medical, non-emergency transportation (social appointments) because there is no evidence that she does not have access to alternative modes of transportation and she does not meet guidelines for the requested service (Exhibit 1). The appellant filed this external appeal of a final decision of an ICO in a timely manner on October 10, 2025 (130 CMR 610.018; Exhibit 2). An ICO's decision to deny authorization of a requested service is grounds for appeal. 130 CMR 610.032(B).

Action Taken by Commonwealth Care Alliance

The MassHealth-contracted ICO, CCA, denied the appellant's prior authorization request for non-medical, non-emergency transportation (social appointments).

Issue

The appeal issue is whether CCA was correct in denying the appellant's prior authorization request for non-medical, non-emergency transportation (social appointments).

Summary of Evidence

All parties appeared at hearing via telephones. The CCA representatives testified as follows: the appellant, who is a MassHealth member under the age of 65, has been enrolled in CCA's OneCare program since March 1, 2022. On September 9, 2025, the appellant submitted a request for an additional eighteen one-way, non-emergency, non-medical transportation trips to/from her home to/from various unknown locations during dates of service of September 10, 2025 to December 10, 2025. This request was reviewed and denied on September 9, 2025 and a Level 1 appeal was received on September 11, 2025. The Level 1 appeal was reviewed and denied on September 22, 2025 and a notice went out informing the appellant on September 24, 2025. This is the notice under appeal.

The request for eighteen one-way non-emergency, non-medical trips is a benefit exception request. It is in addition to the ten one-way non-medical trips per month that is covered by CCA OneCare benefits for 2025.¹ CCA provides unlimited rides to medical appointments within 50 miles of her home. CCA has no evidence that she does not have access to other modes of transportation and, therefore, she does not meet the criteria for additional non-emergency, non-medical trips pursuant to CCA's Non-Emergent Transportation (Supplemental Benefit) Medical Necessity Guideline (hereinafter, the Guideline or Medical Necessity Guideline). The Guidelines state the following regarding coverage of additional non-medical, non-emergency transportation:

3. CCA may cover additional **nonmedical non-emergent** trips beyond the allowed benefit, for One Care members only, when CCA reviews and determines additional trip(s) to covered locations is required and all of the following criteria are met:
 - a. Documentation supports how additional trip(s) is required to promote self-management of documented chronic medical and behavioral condition(s) to maintain independent living, in alignment with member's ICP; and
 - b. Member does not have access to alternate modes of transportation (family, friends, local public transportation, e.g. bus, train etc.)

CCA testified that the appellant's apartment complex is within easy walking distance to multiple MBTA bus stations. Those buses can take her a short distance down the main road to the MBTA

¹ CCA advised that these are the 2025 transportation benefits which are in effect from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025. Benefits could change in 2026.

station that has MBTA Red Line and Commuter Rail access.² CCA also testified that the appellant reported in her Level 1 appeal that her father normally takes her where she needs to go, but he is traveling abroad at the moment. The appellant has depression and anxiety and stated she needs the extra rides to get out of the house to help with the depression and to go food shopping.

The appellant testified that public transportation isn't easy because it is a fifteen-minute walk to the train station and the buses are not reliable. Sometimes the train will just stop and that increases her anxiety. Other times, there is construction or other repair work going on and she has to take shuttle buses instead of the train. Sometimes, she has issue with the ticketing machines and that also causes her anxiety. Public transportation is difficult with her anxiety. Sometimes, she will get to a place and have a panic attack. She testified that her dad is home from his travels now, but he is older [REDACTED] doesn't have that much energy to drive her, and doesn't want to take her places. She only uses her dad for rides in an emergency and she doesn't have anyone else from whom to get rides. The ten one-way non-medical trips per month that are covered are not enough to do grocery shopping, see friends, and other activities. It is really stressful to only have those five round trip rides per month.

In a letter provided by the appellant's therapist, the therapist states that the appellant has been diagnosed with depression and generalized anxiety disorder, as well as "a history of a past diagnosis of [REDACTED] in which she did not leave her house caused by severe depression and anxiety. This diagnosis and symptoms have been steadily declining thanks to continuous therapy, exposure to social events in the community and social contact with people... limiting the amount of rides she receives a month also limits the progress in her mental health process which she has been steadily improving." A letter from her family nurse practitioner states the appellant "has a history of bilateral osteoarthritis and [REDACTED] which limit the patient's ability to leave her residence. Additionally, the patient has difficulty using public transportation and is limited by the transit schedules. The patient's overall wellbeing would benefit from additional rides per month and positively impact her health."

CCA responded that even if her father is not an option for rides, she still has access to public transportation. CCA explained that to meet the benefit exception, a member has to meet both 3(a) AND 3(b) in the Medical Necessity Guideline. Here, even if she partially meets 3(a), she does not meet 3(b) because she has access to public transportation. While public transportation costs money and might be less efficient at times, it does not negate having access to public transportation.

² According to Google Maps, the appellant is .3 miles (about a six-minute walk) to one bus station and .2 miles (about a four-minute walk) to another. She is .6 miles (about a fourteen-minute walk) to the MBTA station where she can access the Red Line and Commuter Rail.

Findings of Fact

Based on a preponderance of the evidence, I find the following:

1. The appellant, who is a MassHealth member under the age of 65, has been enrolled in CCA's One Care program since March 1, 2022 (Testimony and Exhibits 4 and 5).
2. On September 9, 2025, the appellant submitted a request for an additional eighteen one-way non-emergency, non-medical transportation trips to/from her home to/from various unknown locations during dates of service of September 10, 2025 to December 10, 2025 (Testimony and Exhibit 5).
3. CCA denied the request on the same date and received a Level 1 appeal on September 11, 2025 (Testimony and Exhibit 5).
4. The Level 1 appeal was reviewed and denied on September 22, 2025 and a notice went out informing the appellant of the denial on September 24, 2025 (Testimony and Exhibits 1 and 5).
5. On October 2, 2025, the appellant timely appealed the denial notice (Testimony and Exhibit 2).
6. The request is in addition to the ten one-way non-medical trips per month that are covered by CCA OneCare benefits for 2025 (Testimony and Exhibit 5).
7. The appellant's home is easily accessible to public transportation (Testimony and Exhibit 5).
8. According to Google Maps, the appellant is .3 miles (about a six-minute walk) to one bus station and .2 miles (about a four-minute walk) to another. She is .6 miles (about a fourteen-minute walk) to the MBTA station where she can access the Red Line and Commuter Rail. (Exhibit 6).
9. The appellant has diagnoses of anxiety and depression and a past history of [REDACTED] (Testimony and Exhibits 2 and 5).

Analysis and Conclusions of Law

As a MassHealth ICO, CCA

will authorize, arrange, integrate, and coordinate the provision of all covered services for the member. Upon enrollment, the ICO is

required to provide evidence of its coverage, the range of available covered services, what to do for emergency conditions and urgent care needs, and how to obtain access to specialty, behavioral health, and long-term services and supports.

(130 CMR 508.007(C)).

CCA is “responsible for providing enrolled members with the full continuum of Medicare- and MassHealth covered services.” (130 CMR 450.105(A)(7); 130 CMR 450.105(E)(6)). Whenever an ICO makes a coverage decision, it must provide notice to the affected member. 130 CMR 508.011. An ICO has 30 days to resolve any internal appeals, and the member then has 120 days to request a fair hearing from the Board of Hearings. See 130 CMR 508.012; 130 CMR 610.015(B)(7).

As an ICO, CCA can provide more to members than MassHealth allows, but not less. MassHealth only provides transportation to obtain medical services; however, CCA provides 10 one-way non-medical trips per month. Pursuant to CCA’s Non-Emergent Transportation (Supplemental Benefit) Medical Necessity Guideline:

3. CCA may cover additional non-emergent trip(s) beyond the allowed benefit, for OneCare members only, when CCA reviews and determines additional trip(s) to covered locations is required **and all of the following criteria are met:**
 - a. Documentation supports how additional trip(s) is required to promote self-management of documented chronic medical and behavioral condition(s) to maintain independent living, in alignment with member’s ICP; **and**
 - b. Member does not have access to alternate modes of transportation (family, friends, local public transportation, e.g. bus, train etc.)**

(Emphasis added).

MassHealth regulation 130 CMR 407.411(E) states the following regarding non-emergency community-based transportation:

- (1) Members should use public or personal transportation resources, including family or friends, whenever possible.**
- (2) Subject to meeting the requirements of 130 CMR 407.000, the MassHealth agency pays transportation brokers or fee-for-service transportation providers to furnish transportation services to eligible MassHealth members only when public transportation is not available as determined in accordance with 130 CMR 407.411(E)(3).
- (3) Public transportation is considered available if all of the following criteria are met.**

- (a) Public transportation is accessible and suitable to the member's medical condition and circumstances as determined by the MassHealth agency.
- (b) Public transportation is operated in the member's locality on a regularly scheduled basis. A wait of up to one hour for a regularly scheduled ride and up to two transfers in transit is considered reasonable.
- (c) The public transportation stop (i.e., bus or trolley stop, subway, or commuter rail station) is
 - 1. within 0.75 mile from the member's residence or other authorized point of origin; and
 - 2. within 0.75 mile from the destination address.
- (4) Public transportation information may be obtained by contacting the local public transit authority in the member's community.

(Emphasis added).

While the appellant's testimony is credible, the burden is on the appellant to show that MassHealth erred in its action and the appellant has not done so here. MassHealth regulations do not authorize coverage of non-medical transportation services. As an added benefit, CCA, pursuant to its 2025 OneCare benefits, authorizes ten one-way non-medical, trips per month. CCA's Non-Emergent Transportation (Supplemental Benefit) Medical Necessity Guideline clearly outlines the criteria for qualifying for additional non-medical, non-emergent trips beyond the allowed benefit.

The appellant does not meet those criteria. While she might meet 3(a) of the Medical Necessity Guideline, she does not meet 3(b) because she has access to other modes of transportation. The criteria in both 3(a) and 3(b) must be met to qualify for the benefit exception. Additionally, MassHealth regulations also require a member to use public or personal transportation whenever possible. The appellant's father is available (at the least, on an emergency basis) and public transportation is easily accessible from the appellant's home. There are multiple bus stops and a train station within .75 miles of the appellant's home (she has not provided any destination addresses). While the appellant's depression and anxiety may make public transportation more challenging, MassHealth, through CCA, has deemed it accessible and suitable. There is insufficient information and documentation to support that public transportation is not available pursuant to 130 CMR 407.411(E).

Accordingly, CCA's denial was consistent with its guidelines and MassHealth regulations. For these reasons, the decision made by CCA was correct and the appeal is denied.

Order for MassHealth

None.

Notification of Your Right to Appeal to Court

If you disagree with this decision, you have the right to appeal to Court in accordance with Chapter 30A of the Massachusetts General Laws. To appeal, you must file a complaint with the Superior Court for the county where you reside, or Suffolk County Superior Court, within 30 days of your receipt of this decision.

Alexandra Shube
Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

MassHealth Representative: Commonwealth Care Alliance SCO, Attn: Nayelis Guerrero, 30 Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108