



**Eligibility Operations Memo 19-11**  
**August 1, 2019**

TO: MassHealth Eligibility Operations Staff

FROM: Heather Rossi, Deputy Policy Director for Eligibility *Heather Rossi*

RE: Updated Incarcerated Inpatient Hospital and Pre-Release Coverage Process

### **Introduction**

In 2015, MassHealth implemented a process for providing medical coverage to individuals incarcerated at Department of Correction (DOC) and House of Correction (HOC) facilities who otherwise qualify for MassHealth. The process applied only to individuals incarcerated at a DOC or HOC who are in

- inpatient hospital status: The incarcerated individual is admitted as an inpatient into a hospital setting for a stay of at least 24 consecutive hours and will return to the prison facility upon hospital discharge; or
- pre-release status: The incarcerated individual will be released into the community within 30 days.

While on inpatient hospital status, claims for inpatient hospital services for MassHealth-eligible incarcerated individuals are covered by MassHealth, instead of DOC/HOC resources.

The pre-release process ensures that incarcerated individuals will have access to health services upon release into the community, if they qualify under regular MassHealth rules. Charlestown MassHealth Enrollment Center (MEC) staff are responsible for processing applications for these individuals.

### **Updated Process**

Effective immediately, DOC and HOC will send a weekly or bi-weekly file to the Charlestown MEC listing the individuals in their custody who have been incarcerated and are verified to be receiving MassHealth benefits through the Eligibility Verification System (EVS). DOC and HOC will send an additional file to the Charlestown MEC listing individuals in their custody who are about to be released into the community. The HOC and DOC will be required to enter into Data Sharing Agreements with MassHealth and set up secure file transmittal channels. This will reduce the need for DOC and HOC to submit paper applications or documentation for these populations as they have in the past, and will enable the Charlestown MEC to take the appropriate actions based on the information on the file.

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By applying one of the restricted benefit aid categories—C1, C2, or C3, which provide coverage when applicable—the Charlestown MEC will also be able to accurately re-categorize into “suspended” status most, if not all, MassHealth members who become incarcerated.

In addition, we will be able to change pre-release incarcerated individuals from the restricted aid categories to full MassHealth benefits upon release, if they qualify under regular MassHealth rules.

A paper application will still be required for those who become incarcerated and have no existing relationship with MassHealth, and for those pre-release incarcerated individuals who have not completed a MassHealth application within the last year. The Charlestown MEC will notify DOC and HOC of those individuals in the file who require a paper application to complete processing.

Incarcerated individuals who are under the age of 65, or not in need of long-term care, or are over the age of 65 but are parents or caretaker relatives of a child under the age of 19, should complete the *Massachusetts Application for Health and Dental Coverage and Help Paying Costs* (ACA-3).

Incarcerated individuals who are over the age of 65 or in need of long-term care should complete the *Application for Health Coverage for Seniors and People Needing Long-term Care Services* (SACA-2).

## **Questions**

If you have any questions about this memo, please have your manager contact the Policy Hotline.