



Eligibility Operations Memo 21-09
June 15, 2021

TO: MassHealth Eligibility Operations Staff

FROM: Heather Rossi, Deputy Policy Director for Eligibility

RE: **MassHealth Response to Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)**

Introduction

MassHealth implemented protocols effective March 18, 2020, to support the public health efforts to expedite medical care and maintain care for both new MassHealth applicants and existing members. This memo supersedes Eligibility Operations Memo 20-09, published on April 7, 2020.

Flexibilities Implemented March 18, 2020 that will Remain in Effect through the End of the COVID-19 Federal Public Health Emergency

Maintaining MassHealth Coverage

MassHealth will maintain coverage for all individuals who have Medicaid coverage as of March 18, 2020, and for all individuals newly approved for Medicaid during the COVID-19 Federal Public Health Emergency (PHE), through the end of the month in which the Federal PHE ends. **These individuals will not lose coverage except for limited circumstances:**

- For example, coverage will end if an individual:
 - requests termination of eligibility;
 - is no longer a resident of Massachusetts; or
 - is deceased.
- **To continue to receive the best coverage**, applicants and members should provide their most current information and report any changes to MassHealth.

Access to Hospital-Determined Presumptive Eligibility (HPE)

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) allows qualified hospitals to make presumptive eligibility determinations for immediate, time-limited Medicaid coverage using self-attested information from certain individuals who appear to be eligible for Medicaid coverage, but are unable to complete a full Medicaid application at that time. In addition to individuals 65 years of age or younger, Hospital-Determined Presumptive Eligibility (HPE) will be available to individuals age 65 and older during the Federal Public Health Emergency

Generally, HPE coverage starts on the day that the qualified hospital makes the presumptive eligibility determination and ends on the last day of the month following the month that HPE was approved if a full application has not been submitted by that day; or, if a full application has been submitted by that date, the HPE coverage ends on the date a determination is made based on the full application.

Fair Hearings

Individuals will have up to 120 days, instead of the standard 30 days, to request a fair hearing for member eligibility–related concerns.

One-time Deductible Hardship Waiver

Individuals who have been assessed a one-time deductible to establish eligibility for MassHealth CommonHealth may request a temporary waiver of the deductible due to financial hardship during the COVID-19 Federal PHE.

Retroactive Eligibility for Individuals Younger than Age 65

Upon request, any individuals younger than age 65 who applied for MassHealth on or after March 1, 2020, will receive retroactive coverage if they would have been eligible, as early as the first day of the third calendar month before the month of application, but no earlier than March 1, 2020.

Premium Hardship Waiver

Effective July 1, 2021, the Premium Hardship Waiver has been enhanced to include longer timeframes, consideration of previous and prospective bills, and expansion of the waiver to CommonHealth members. All details related to the Premium Hardship Waiver can be viewed under MassHealth regulation 130 CMR 506.011.

Flexibilities that are Expiring

Self-attestation for Eligibility Factors

As of **September 15, 2021**, MassHealth will no longer accept self-attestation for certain eligibility factors that were temporarily allowed during the public health emergency, such as:

- Residency
- Disability
- Income
- Assets

For MassHealth Applicants

If applicants live in the community and are younger than 65 years old, or are the caretaker for a child younger than 19 years old, they can apply

- Online at www.mahealthconnector.org;
- Over the telephone at (800) 841-2900; TTY: (800) 497-4648; or
- Using a paper application, available at www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-application-for-health-and-dental-coverage-and-help-paying-costs-o/download.

If applicants live in the community and are 65 years of age or older, or are in need of Long-Term-Care services, they can apply

- Using a paper application, available at www.mass.gov/doc/application-for-health-coverage-for-seniors-and-people-needing-long-term-care-services-0/download; or
- by calling (800) 841-2900 TTY: (800) 497-4648.

For Existing MassHealth Members

At the start of the COVID-19 Federal PHE, MassHealth temporarily suspended most ongoing maintenance processes (e.g., renewals, Requests for Information). MassHealth has restarted many of these the processes previously suspended. Medicaid coverage will still be maintained for members, consistent with federal guidelines, even if they do not respond or would otherwise be found ineligible for the duration of the Federal PHE and through the month in which it ends.

- If additional information is required, a Request for Information notice will be sent.
- **To continue to receive the best coverage**, applicants and members are encouraged to return all requested documentation, provide their most current information, and report any changes to MassHealth in the appropriate timeframes.

Additional Information

For up-to-date information on COVID-19:

- Visit www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19;
- Visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html; or
- Text COVIDMA to 888-777 for the AlertsMA COVID-19 text notification system.

Questions

If you have questions about this memo, please have your MEC designee contact the Policy Hotline.