




Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Office of Medicaid
www.mass.gov/masshealth

MassHealth
Managed Care Entity Bulletin 45
October 2020

TO: MassHealth Accountable Care Partnership Plans, Managed Care Organizations, One Care Plans, Senior Care Organizations, and Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly Organizations

FROM: Daniel Tsai, Assistant Secretary for MassHealth 

RE: **Temporary COVID-19 Flexibilities for the Dispensing of Hearing Aids for Members Age 18 and Older**

Applicable to the Following Managed Care Entities and PACE Organizations:

- Accountable Care Partnership Plans (ACPPs)
- Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)
- MassHealth's behavioral health vendor
- One Care Plans
- Senior Care Organizations (SCOs)
- Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Organizations

Background

This bulletin contains guidance on COVID-related flexibilities for evaluating the need for and providing hearing aids to MassHealth members.

In light of the 2019 novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, MassHealth is making policy adjustments to support members and health care providers impacted by and responding to COVID-19. Through this bulletin, MassHealth is directing Accountable Care Partnership Plans (ACPPs), Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), One Care Plans, and Senior Care Organizations (SCOs) (collectively "managed care plans") to institute certain policies to continue to support member access to care during the state of emergency. Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) organizations should also follow the guidance set forth in this bulletin.

Extension of Certain Prior Authorizations for Hearing Aids

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, MassHealth is allowing flexibilities for the dispensing of hearing aids to MassHealth members. MassHealth providers who submitted and received prior authorization (PA) for hearing aids before March 1, 2020, had to temporarily discontinue the dispensing process due to the COVID-19 state of emergency. As a result, providers have been unable to dispense previously approved new or replacement hearing aids within the MassHealth PA 90-day timeframe for hearing aids. Extension of certain PAs for MassHealth members age 18 and older will allow providers to dispense hearing aids without the administrative burden of seeking new PA approval.

For such members, upon request of a provider, MassHealth will extend the length of PA approvals for the dispensing of new or replacement hearing aids issued from December 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. Such approvals will now extend through September 30, 2020.

Details around these flexibilities can be found in Acute Outpatient Hospital (AOH) Bulletin 36, Audiologist (AUD) Bulletin 6, and Hearing Instrument Specialist (HIS) Bulletin 13. Managed care plans and PACE organizations must conform their coverage policies to match those set forth in AOH-36, AUD-6, and HIS-13 when delivering Medicaid services.

Waiver of Six-Month Requirement for Audiological Evaluations for Hearing Aids for MassHealth Members Age 18 and Older

In addition, MassHealth will accept audiological evaluations dated on or after September 1, 2019, for hearing aids dispensed to MassHealth members age 18 and older on or after March 1, 2020. MassHealth will accept these evaluations through September 30, 2020. For hearing aids dispensed on or after October 1, 2020, to members aged 18 or older, the corresponding audiological evaluation must be within six months of the dispensing date.

Details around MassHealth's coverage of the dispensing of hearing aids can be found in Acute Outpatient Hospital (AOH) Bulletin 36, Audiologist (AUD) Bulletin 6, and Hearing Instrument Specialist (HIS) Bulletin 13. Managed care plans and PACE organizations must conform their coverage policies to match those set forth in AOH-36, AUD-6, and HIS-13 when delivering Medicaid services.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, managed care plans and PACE organizations are not required to implement the recordkeeping requirements in AOH-36, AUD-6, and HIS-13 pursuant to this bulletin.

Additional Information

For the latest MA-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 any questions about the information in this bulletin, please contact the MassHealth Customer Service Center at (800) 841-2900, email your inquiry to providersupport@mahealth.net, or fax your inquiry to (617) 988-8974.