

Behavioral Health Provider Guide for Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response
Frequently Asked Questions
3/24/20

Q: Will Optum continue to provide all their services during the current national response to COVID-19?

A: Optum Maryland will continue to operate as normal. Providers can continue to contact them at 1-800-888-1965. After hours and holidays will be covered by clinical night staff for crisis and emergency services.

Q: Has the Maryland Department of Health temporarily expanded Medicaid Telehealth Services with the Home as an Originating Site?

A: Yes; to prevent the spread of disease and control communicable diseases, Governor Hogan has temporarily expanded the definition of a telehealth originating site under COMAR 10.09.49.06 to include a participant's home or any other secure location as approved by the participant and the provider for purpose of Medicaid-covered services.

Please see the link below for the Maryland Department of Health's "COVID-19 #1: Temporary Expansion of Medicaid Regulations to Permit Delivery of Telehealth Services to the Home to Mitigate Possible Spread of Novel Coronavirus ("COVID-19")

[03-12-20: COVID-19 #1: Temporary Expansion of Medicaid Regulations to Permit Delivery of Telehealth Services to the Home to Mitigate Possible Spread of Novel Coronavirus \("COVID-19"\)](#)

Q: What are the requirements regarding Telehealth Program Requirements?

A: Any provider type is permitted to render telehealth services as a distant site within their scope of service. There are no geographical restrictions. Medicaid distant site providers delivering services via telehealth to a participant in their home must continue to comply with all other requirements of COMAR 10.09.49 and the Maryland Medicaid Telehealth Program Manual. Additional information regarding Telehealth Program requirements and FAQ's can be found online by clicking the link below:

<https://mmcp.health.maryland.gov/Pages/telehealth.aspx>

Q: Is the Maryland Department of Health now allowing Audio-Only Health Care Services?

A: Effective March 21, 2020, the Maryland Department of Health is temporarily authorizing the use of audio-only Health Care Services to mitigate the possible spread of COVID-19. Providers who are not able to meet in-person with a participant should make every effort to use the following technology, in order of priority:

1. Traditional telehealth technology which meets all formal requirements is strongly preferred. (These services remain unaffected by the measures in this guidance).

Maura J. Rossman, M.D., Health Officer

2. If Medicaid participants are unable to access originating sites possessing fully qualified technology (ability to pan/focus camera, multiple views, etc.) this emergency policy will permit the use of notebook computers, smartphones, or audio-only phones.
3. If Medicaid participants cannot access cell-phone based video technology, audio-only telephone calls will be permitted.

Please click below for the link that further outlines the services and providers that will be eligible for use with audio-only telephones:

[Click here to access the Telephone Services Authorized for Behavioral Health Services](#)

Q: When will the expansion of the telehealth program and audio-only health care services expire?

A: The new/expanded measures are restricted to use during the emergency declared by Governor Hogan to deal with the threat of COVID-19 and will expire immediately at the end of the declared emergency, unless Executive Order No. 20-03-20-01 is rescinded or superseded, amended, or revised by additional orders such that the Secretary's authority to issue this guidance no longer exists. [Please click on the link above for information and guidance about expiration of services.](#)

Q: Is there service delivery support on medication-assisted treatment (MAT) prescribing?

A: The State Opioid Treatment Authority is providing guidance to opioid treatment programs (OTP) and working closely with the Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has also provided guidance for OTPs. Please click on the link below for this guidance.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/otp-guidance-20200316.pdf>

<https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Documents/FAQ%20for%20OTPs%20-%20203.23.2020.pdf>

Q: What if I need to suspend clinic services or limit my hours?

A: This is determined by the LBHA/CSA/LAA and clinic provider. Any suspension must include the transfer of clients to another program or alternative manner of providing services to clients in crisis. If a licensed program closes or suspends operations, the BHA Office of Licensing must be notified.

Q: For group therapy sessions, are there recommendations for ratio or size?

A: On March 16, 2020, the White House provided guidance that social gatherings should not exceed 10 people. However, if groups are held, they should be smaller than 10 people in order to be carried out in compliance with the CDC guidelines that include social distancing of six feet. Please see links below for CDC and White House guidance.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf

Q: Will it be communicated that there is mandatory social distancing for providers that are offering round the clock care?

A: There is already guidance in effect from the CDC, SAMHSA, and MDH.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Documents/Recommendations%20for%20COVID-19%20Infection%20Control%20and%20Prevention%20-%20March%2010%202020.pdf>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf>

Q: Will BHA suspend fidelity reviews for dates of services delivered for evidence-based practices during the state of emergency?

A: CMS announced that it is suspending non-emergency survey inspections in order to focus on the most serious health and safety threats like infectious diseases and abuse. BHA will likewise suspend all fidelity reviews for evidence-based practices. Please see below for the link to CMS announcement and FAQ's.

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid19survey-activity-suspension-faqs.pdf>

Q: Will the Howard County Health Department/LBHA continue to provide guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: The Health Department/LBHA will continue to hold weekly phone conference calls to address provider questions/concerns. In addition, information will continue to be sent out through the Behavioral Health provider email list. If you are not receiving these emails and would like to, please contact Tia and/or Kayla to be added to the email list.