



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

**Eligibility Operations Memo 20-09**  
**April 7, 2020**

TO: MassHealth Eligibility Operations Staff

FROM: Heather Rossi, Deputy Policy Director for Eligibility

RE: **MassHealth Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

### **Introduction**

In response to the current Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) national emergency, MassHealth is implementing the following protocols to support the public health efforts to expedite medical care and maintain care for both new MassHealth applicants and existing members.

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

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

### **Effective Immediately**

- MassHealth will protect coverage for all individuals who have Medicaid coverage as of March 18, 2020, and for all individuals newly approved for coverage during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends. **These members will not lose coverage or have a decrease in benefits during this time period.**
  - Coverage will end only if an individual:
    - requests termination of eligibility;
    - is no longer a resident of Massachusetts; or
    - is deceased.
  - For individuals who have received notices that their coverage is ending on or after March 18, 2020, no change in coverage will occur. These individuals do not have to send in paperwork to keep their coverage at this time. MassHealth will ensure their coverage does not terminate during this period.

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## **Eligibility Operations Memo 20-09**

**April 7, 2020**

**Page 2**

- MassHealth has further expanded Hospital-Determined Presumptive Eligibility (HPE) to remove the restriction that an individual can only receive one HPE benefit every 12 months. This expansion will continue during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends. Individuals can apply for HPE at a participating qualified hospital. See Eligibility Operations Memo 20-06 published in March 2020 for more detail.
- If a member is closed due to a past due premium balance and is approved for a hardship waiver, the past due balance will be waived by MassHealth during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends. Individuals who have past due premiums, or who are unable to make a minimum payment, and are approved for a hardship waiver will not be prevented from receiving MassHealth during the national emergency and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends. The start date of the hardship waiver cannot be more than three months prior to the date that the member self-attested to the hardship, or when MassHealth received the hardship waiver application/request.
- If verification of eligibility factors is not available through an electronic data match or if an individual cannot produce documentation due to the COVID-19 national emergency, MassHealth will accept self-attestation for the eligibility factors listed below.
  - MassHealth will accept self-attestation during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends, for verification of:
    - Residency
    - Disability
    - Income
    - Assets
    - Relationship
    - Access to health insurance
    - Pregnancy
    - Breast and cervical cancer diagnosis and/or treatment
    - HIV status
  - MassHealth CANNOT accept self-attestation during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends, for verification of:
    - Citizenship/immigration status

- Regarding Fair Hearings during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends:
  - All appeal hearings will be telephonic; and
  - Individuals will have up to 120 days, instead of the standard 30 days, to request a fair hearing for member eligibility–related concerns.

### **For New MassHealth Applicants**

- If you live in the community and are younger than 65 years old, or are the caretaker for a child younger than 19 years old, you can apply
  - Online at [www.mahealthconnector.com](http://www.mahealthconnector.com);
  - Over the telephone at (800) 841-2900; or
  - Using a paper application, available at:
    - <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-application-for-health-and-dental-coverage-and-help-paying-costs-0/download>; or
    - by calling (800) 841-2900 TTY: (800) 497-4648.
- If you live in the community and are 65 years old or older, or are in need of Long-Term Care services, you can apply
  - Using a paper application, available at:
    - <https://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**

- Existing MassHealth members who have Medicaid coverage as of March 18, 2020, or who are newly approved on or after March 18, 2020, through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends, will not be terminated or downgraded during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends.
  - Past due premium bill balances will be waived during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of the month in which such national emergency period ends for members who qualify for a Premium Hardship Waiver.

### **Questions**

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